The FSAWWA has been involved in a partnership with high school academies throughout the state for the past nine years. We have committed to financial support for textbooks, laboratory supplies, and travel support for plant tours. This is a great program and expands every year with the addition of a new academy.

I would like to thank Shea Dunifon, education coordinator for Pinellas County Utilities, for the information about Seminole High School Academy, and Andrea Armstrong, career program specialist and academy coordinator with St. Johns Technical High School, for her “blurb of thanks” included here. I appreciate their continued relationship with FSAWWA.

Seminole High School Academy

The return to school in fall 2020 will be unlike any other. Long before COVID-19, plans were under way for Seminole High School Academy, which is part of Pinellas County Schools (PCS), to launch its new water resource sustainability program this fall. This program will enable the students to take three core courses:

- Introduction to Environmental Water Technology
- Intermediate Environmental Water Technology
- Advanced Environmental Water Technology

There’s also an optional water reclamation course during their senior year.

Students will then be granted permission via a waiver from the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) to take either the level 3 drinking water and/or C level wastewater operator licensure exam. Upon graduation, students will need to complete 2,080 hours of service at a treatment facility as an operator trainee to receive their license.

Starting a new program isn’t an easy feat, even for a seasoned teacher like Jerry Cantrell,
who will be leading the program as part of the PCS career and technical education (CTE) programs at Seminole High Engineering Academy. Cantrell and Jane Lucas, Seminole High principal, joined forces with the FSAWWA High School Operator Initiative in summer 2019 to learn more about career opportunities for their students, including alternatives to traditional college-bound programs.

First, Cantrell will need to study and receive operator certifications in both drinking water and wastewater, as well as pass a CTE certification. While this may seem like a lot of work, many FSAWWA members stepped up to help with the program’s progress and provide encouragement.

Working with the section’s Region IV members, Seminole High has received support through discussions with different community partners, like the Southwest Florida Water Management District, Tampa Bay Water, Pinellas County Utilities, City of St. Petersburg, City of Tarpon Springs, FDEP, Career Source Pinellas, and Pinellas County Economic Development to connect with the experts it needs to build a successful program.

In addition to building networks in the community, the FSAWWA board of directors approved the purchase of 10 copies of each of the four books required for study to take the level 3 and/or wastewater C operator licensure examinations. These books will be used by PCS students this fall.

“It’s the support from community partners, such as FSAWWA, that make it possible for public schools to provide full and enriching educational experiences for their students,” said Cantrell. “The literature provided by FSAWWA will enable Seminole High to train the next generation of water and wastewater operators.”

In addition to providing books for the students to use, FSAWWA is assisting Seminole High by finding grant funding for its courses, sponsoring enrichment opportunities for its students (e.g., the Model Water Tower Competition), printing marketing collateral for students via brochures, and donating “No Operator, No Water” wristbands.

In preparation of the launch of the new water resource sustainability program, Seminole High competed in its first Region IV Model Water Tower Competition in November 2019, where it took second place in the high school category. This past June, six students from Seminole High interned at the Pinellas County Utilities South Cross Bayou Advanced Water Reclamation Facility for two weeks to learn about the facility’s operations and the types of careers it offers. Students shadowed operators and electrical equipment technicians. The remaining four weeks, however, were done virtually due to concerns of rising COVID-19 cases across the state.

While some students will be returning to brick and mortar school buildings, and others will be attending from virtual classrooms, the water...
resource sustainability program will still go on as planned.

It’s important to note that, while the school year won’t proceed as usual, we’ll try to maintain some sense of normalcy, issuing student textbooks and continuing to connect teachers with the resources—including people—they need to keep moving forward.

There are a lot of people to thank, in addition to Jane Lucas and Jerry Cantrell, for making this partnership possible, including:

- Michael Condran
- Peggy Guingona
- Donna Metherall
- Mark Lehigh
- Jason Parrillo
- Kenneth Broome
- Daniel Glaser
- Steve Soltau

**St. Johns Technical High School**

The faculty and other personnel at St. Johns Technical High School and the Academy of Coastal and Water Resources want to express how much they appreciate the generous support FSAWWA gives to the CTE program each year. We recently received two hefty boxes full of the Sacramento State Water and Wastewater Treatment Plan textbooks, with online access, as well as the water and collection systems video training series, and I want to extend a big “thank you”!

The videos will be even more beneficial now that we are charting unprecedented waters in education, and students are learning in the classroom, as well as from home, simultaneously. Field studies are on hold, so the videos will help students see the various industry operations and mechanics.

Guest speakers most likely will not be coming to campus for awhile, so we are looking at scheduling virtual speakers. Going virtual will allow more opportunities to connect with folks—both statewide and nationally!

Steve Soltau, thank you! You are always so proactive in connecting us with the support systems and industry folks we need.

We sincerely appreciate the continued collaboration and support of FSAWWA and we look forward to working with you again this school year!

I would like to thank all of the high school academies for their commitment to developing the next generation of water industry workers, and the section will continue to do all it can to help them.

Please continue to stay safe and healthy!