By bringing together the natural sciences, social sciences and humanities, the School of Environment, Arts and Society (SEAS) is transforming the way we conduct research, educate students and engage the community. Because the world’s environmental challenges are multi-dimensional, the school’s revolutionary approach to full spectrum education will ensure our students become innovative leaders of the 21st century. SEAS includes three signature departments: Earth and Environment, Biological Sciences and English. The school also houses many of FIU’s prominent centers and programs including the Center for Humanities in an Urban Environment, International Center for Tropical Botany, Marine Education and Research Initiative, Southeast Environmental Research Center and the Tropical Conservation Institute.
We must act.

Repatriation and release of mountain bongo antelope on Mt. Kenya.

FIU Tropical Conservation Institute | School of Environment, Arts and Society

Building upon its history of excellence in conservation education and research, FIU has established the Tropical Conservation Institute (TCI). In partnership with the Rare Species Conservatory Foundation (RSCF), the School of Environment, Arts and Society (SEAS) in the College of Arts & Sciences will stop extinctions by empowering FIU graduates and conservation practitioners to protect ecosystems and species in the tropics and sub-tropics.

TCI will leverage SEAS’ broad portfolio of research, education, and outreach programs focused on tropical and sub-tropical ecosystems. FIU’s geographic expertise in conservation extends from South Florida to the Caribbean, Central and South America, Africa, the Pacific and Asia. These regions comprise the top global biodiversity hotspots - areas of exceptional species richness facing extraordinary threats. TCI will build upon the years of innovative and successful conservation methods and programs developed by RSCF and combine them with FIU programs to position TCI on the leading edge of tropical conservation action, education, research and outreach. The scope of the partnership will position TCI to be truly transformative on a global level.

The Need

Biodiversity, an essential foundation for a sustainable future, is being lost at an accelerating rate. We must act swiftly and decisively to protect biodiversity, and develop solutions to preserve critical species and their ecosystems while ensuring that human communities prosper. Nature’s plight demands new approaches to conservation, in particular those that focus on species survival and ecosystem protection. Innovation is key for implementing real-time conservation action and training the next generation of conservation professionals here and abroad. A novel academic platform is needed to deliver effective conservation education, training and on-the-ground programs — linking universities, practitioners and institutions dedicated to conservation.

The Vision

The FIU Tropical Conservation Institute will address the critical issues driving wildlife to extinction and the decline in ecosystems, including habitat loss, wildlife trade, climate change, competition over water and land resources and disruptions to coastal marine ecology, in effect, developing tools to prevent the extinction of tropical species. Our global collaborators in academic institutions, NGOs, governments, and the private sector have long recognized FIU’s leadership in conservation action, education, research and outreach. The scope of the partnership will position TCI to be truly transformative on a global level.

The FIU Tropical Conservation Institute will save species by establishing:
- Partnerships and collaborations to deliver transformative conservation programs.
- A network of Conservation Fellows — extraordinary scientists who will enhance research opportunities, provide field training for students, and deliver innovative courses for undergraduate and graduate students.
- Enhanced student and faculty professional opportunities, offering access to specialized conservation facilities in South Florida and around the world.
- FIU as an international leader in applied conservation training for local and international students. New professional master’s programs will attract conservation practitioners and decision makers from around the world.
- New collaborations between science and the humanities to increase public understanding of biodiversity loss.

Join Us

The impact of TCI will be global, long-lasting and meaningful. The success of the TCI will be measured by conservationists trained, new tools developed and by species and habitats conserved. However, this will only happen through collaboration with a wide variety of partners. TCI offers many ways for you to get involved including research collaborations, outreach and training programs, and joint funding ventures.

Recognizing the importance of TCI, the Batchelor Foundation has generously awarded FIU a $5 million challenge grant to match philanthropic contributions that support TCI programs.

For more information, contact Karen Wilkening at kwilkeni@fiu.edu or (305) 348-7602.

Above are members of Dominica’s parrot conservation and research program, a partnership between the Rare Species Conservatory Foundation and Dominica’s Forestry, Wildlife and Parks Division.