

# FKCC set to unveil high-tech marine facility – Students will learn engine repair, seamanship and other technical skills such as welding and fiberglass

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On Tuesday, May 6, Florida Keys Community College is going to unveil its new, cutting-edge marine technology building. It's unlike any other educational facility in this part of the world.

"We want to incorporate the hands-on work experience with education. That is something university instruction is missing," said Dr. Patrick Rice, the dean of career, technical and workforce development at FKCC.

The 30,000-square-foot \$7 million facility is three stories high. The top two floors are designed for classes in seamanship, engineering (with five tracks of specialization), fiberglass, welding and nearly every occupation to do with boats — a crucial workforce in the Keys, according to Rice.

The first story is an open garage-like space with a chain link fence surrounding it where faculty can store boats and marine engines that need repair. The engines will be handy for use in the classroom setting — there are two hatches on the roof of the first floor that open up into the second. A 2,000-pound winch hoists gasoline and diesel engines through the hatches.

"People donate boats that do not work and we fix them with the students. They get the gratification of seeing their work completed," said Rice. "We then can sell the boat and make a profit to help with more programs and equipment."

However, Rice is selective about the boats he will accept. That's because the boat needs to be repaired within a single semester.

When engines enter the second story, they arrive in a high-tech marine engine facility unlike any other in the entire Southeast, Rice said. Control rooms feature sophisticated ventilation systems and the most current equipment to test and diagnose engine problems. The college has procured five diesel

Yanmar engines for students to learn on.

The classes will also cover the basics of the science of marine construction and propulsion. Classrooms have a gigantic 90-inch monitor that professors can connect to iPads and computers or simply run a video. This way the instructor can work on an engine, video it with an iPad and display it for the entire class to see without having 30 students jockeying for the best view.

On the third story are massive classrooms with charting tables, high performance computers, meeting rooms, showers and locker rooms, break rooms and a breathtaking view of the Gulf. Again, there's more modern teaching equipment capable of transforming instruction into a virtual class.

"When the instructor puts on a lapel microphone, cameras follow him or her around the classroom and record the entire class including audio. The video can go online and if a student misses class, or wants to review the class, it can be done with this new technology," said Amber Ernest-Leonard, director of college and public relations.

There are numerous innovations to be excited about, according to Ernest-Leonard and Rice. Faculty are hopeful the facility will attract more students from the Keys and around the state. The public is invited to the ribbon cutting on Tuesday, May 6 at 5:30 p.m. to tour the building on the FKCC

[Key West](#) campus.

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