



# *THE PENINSULA*

## FCLCA Newsletter



## *What is FCLCA?*

*FCLCA is the Florida College Learning Center Association. We are a community of learning center professionals across colleges and universities in Florida. FCLCA is an affiliate of the International College Learning Center Association (ICLCA).*

## *What to expect from this newsletter.*

*The Peninsula is a brief newsletter that highlights FCLCA updates and exceptional learning centers and staff. In this issue, we highlight the University of South Florida and Keiser University's exceptional student staff. We also provide updates on the FCLCA conference.*

# Conference Updates

*The FCLCA 2025 conference, The Power of the Current: Strengthening Learning Center Connections, had **55** registered attendees from **4** state colleges, **4** state universities, **3** private institutions, and **2** out of state institutions.*

*This conference hosted **9** workshops, **8** featured presentations, and a student worker panel.*

*The FCLCA e-board welcomes Vice President Zoraya Betancourt from the University of South Florida, Professional Development Officer, Comfort Olugbuyi from Florida Atlantic University, and Membership Secretary, Ann Gunther from Keiser University.*



*Mark your calendars for FCLCA 2026, The Lighthouse Effect: Leadership that Illuminates Learning*

- **Location:** Jacksonville, FL
- **Dates:** April 22 - 24, 2026

# STAFF SPOTLIGHT



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*Arshia Esmailian, is one of the Chemistry Tutors and Peer Math Coaches at the USF Academic Success Center. He is currently pursuing a Bachelor's degree in Chemistry with a minor in French & Francophone Studies at the University of South Florida.*

*As an aspiring physician, Arshia views teaching as an essential skill, one that extends far beyond the classroom. Just as patients deserve to understand the intricacies of their care, students deserve to grasp the "why" behind every concept. Being part of the ASC has not only strengthened his communication and leadership skills but also reaffirmed his belief that education and empathy go hand in hand.*

*Arshia has always believed that learning becomes meaningful when abstract ideas start to make sense – when organic mechanisms or mathematical proofs no longer feel intimidating but instead a logical story. Through real-world analogies and a conversational approach, he strives to help students build confidence and see challenges as opportunities for growth.*

# STAFF SPOTLIGHT



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*Rachel is an amazing leader, student athlete, and scholar at Keiser University. She works hard to provide excellent tutoring services and truly cares about the students she works with! Rachel is a senior majoring in Exercise and Sport Science.*

*Rachel is a dedicated student tutor who was chosen as the Fall 2025 Seahawk Scholar of the Semester by her program faculty. She is an accomplished athlete on the KU Swim Team, where her women's team is currently ranked No. 1 in Swimming & Diving for the NAIA. With two years of experience as a tutor and certification as a Level 1 ITTPC CRLA tutor, Rachel provides one-on-one support in a variety of subjects, including College Algebra, Statistics, Human Anatomy & Physiology, and Physics. She also serves as an SI Leader for Statistics, consistently demonstrating a strong commitment to student success.*

# Recommended Readings

## Recommended article:

Ryan, H., & Hassler, R. (2025). *The Value of Video Demonstrations in Writing Center Classroom Promotional Visits*. *The Learning Assistance Review*, 29(3).

## Recommended text:

Agee, K.S., & Hodges, R. (2012). *Handbook for Training Peer Tutors and Mentors*. Cengage Learning.

Review: "The HANDBOOK FOR TRAINING PEER TUTORS AND MENTORS is a must-read for postsecondary faculty and learning center professionals who hire, train, and supervise tutors and mentors. This Handbook, a publication of the College Reading and Learning Association (CRLA), is designed to inspire development of training programs that meet the high standards of CRLA's certification initiatives: International Tutor Training Program Certification (ITTPC) and International Mentor Training Program Certification (IMTPC). The Handbook's 111 modules by 106 authors can also guide instructional development of tutor/mentor-training courses."

## Recommended text:

Brown, B. (2018). *Dare to Lead: Brave Work. Tough Conversations. Whole Hearts*. Random House.

Review: "Leadership is not about titles, status, and wielding power. A leader is anyone who takes responsibility for recognizing the potential in people and ideas, and has the courage to develop that potential."

When we dare to lead, we don't pretend to have the right answers; we stay curious and ask the right questions. We don't see power as finite and hoard it; we know that power becomes infinite when we share it with others. We don't avoid difficult conversations and situations; we lean into vulnerability when it's necessary to do good work."



# Op-ed

## *The Long-Lasting Impact of Mentorship on Leadership Development*

My most valuable professional development lessons come from mentors. In my twenty-three-year career in higher education I've had the fortune to work alongside the most giving and supportive colleagues. These include faculty, deans, and learning center directors. My mentors have challenged me, held me accountable, provided guidance, and constantly reminded me to learn and try new things. I have been at the most vulnerable professionally with my mentors having shed tears, disclosed my deepest frustrations, and confided feeling lost regarding my career. On the other side of this, I have benefited from genuine collaborative relationships and have been on the end of absorbing immeasurable wisdom. Moreover, my mentors have been there to cheer me on and encourage me when things get difficult.

In learning center work, we are privileged to be in positions of leadership that make long-lasting impact. These include the colleagues we work with and the students we serve. Organically the work we do is mentoring in nature. We guide, encourage, empower, and challenge our teams to grow through intentional interactions in support of their personal and professional development. My experiences both as a mentor and mentee have taught me that mentorship plays a critical role in leadership.

development. My perspective on mentorship is highly influenced by Brené Brown and her work on leadership detailed in her book *Dare to Lead* in which trust is at the core of her work. It is my view that strong mentoring relationships rely on trust and require reliability, accountability, integrity, non-judgment, and generosity.

I am thankful to my mentors, and I am the professional I am today due to their belief in me and my trust in them. Serving as Vice President on FCLCA is an opportunity to pay it forward and this year we are excited to put a spotlight on leadership development. Join us in beautiful Jacksonville and add to the conversation by sharing with colleagues and friends your daring leadership practices.

-Zoraya Betancourt, FCLCA Vice President and Director of the Academic Success Center at the University of South Florida



*We encourage learning centers in Florida to learn more about FCLCA on our website.*



*You can view our current members here and learn about the benefits of being an FCLCA member.*

*We also encourage learning center administrators to follow our page on LinkedIn. You can receive conference updates and learning center job opportunities.*



*Newsletter prepared by:*

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## *How to get involved?*

*Your Professional Development Committee is excited to support you in every way we can. To help us continue creating resources that truly meet your needs, please take a moment to complete our quick **Google form**. Your input is essential as we build meaningful and relevant professional development opportunities for all.*

*And get ready for the 2026 FCLCA Conference, taking place April 22–24 in Jacksonville, FL. We are already working to make this our most impactful and energizing conference yet, and we want your voice at the center of it.*

*Your engagement makes all the difference, and we're excited for what's ahead.*

*Comfort Olugbuyi Ed.D., FCLCA Professional Development Officer*