

2024-2025 **Annual Report**

State University of New York
College of Environmental Science and Forestry



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Message from the President

ESF is thriving. At the core of our mission is the empowerment and education of future environmental leaders. In looking back at the 2024-25 academic year, the accomplishments of our faculty, the advancement of our infrastructure, and the excellence of our students proves our mission is front and center. Our students are proof of how driven the ESF community is to both locally and globally improve our world. Students choose our institution because they are determined to make a difference, to be part of solutions, and the incredible hands-on learning, meaningful internships, and high job placement rate ensure that solutions can become reality.

ESF is a community of like-minded individuals but it is also a hub for change and innovation. With more than a century of dedicated work studying the environment, we grasp the urgency of the many challenges our environments are up against. In this report is just a sample of how much our faculty are thought leaders and pioneers in their fields. It runs in conjunction with a historic \$40 million campaign to support students, campus, and research.

It's been said before but it bears repeating: there is critical relevance in the work we do at ESF. Work we can't do alone. Our increased attention to student

experience, real world sustainable applications, and job creation, is evident in the year's data. We continue to craft actionable plans to strengthen and steward preservation, conservation, and innovation.

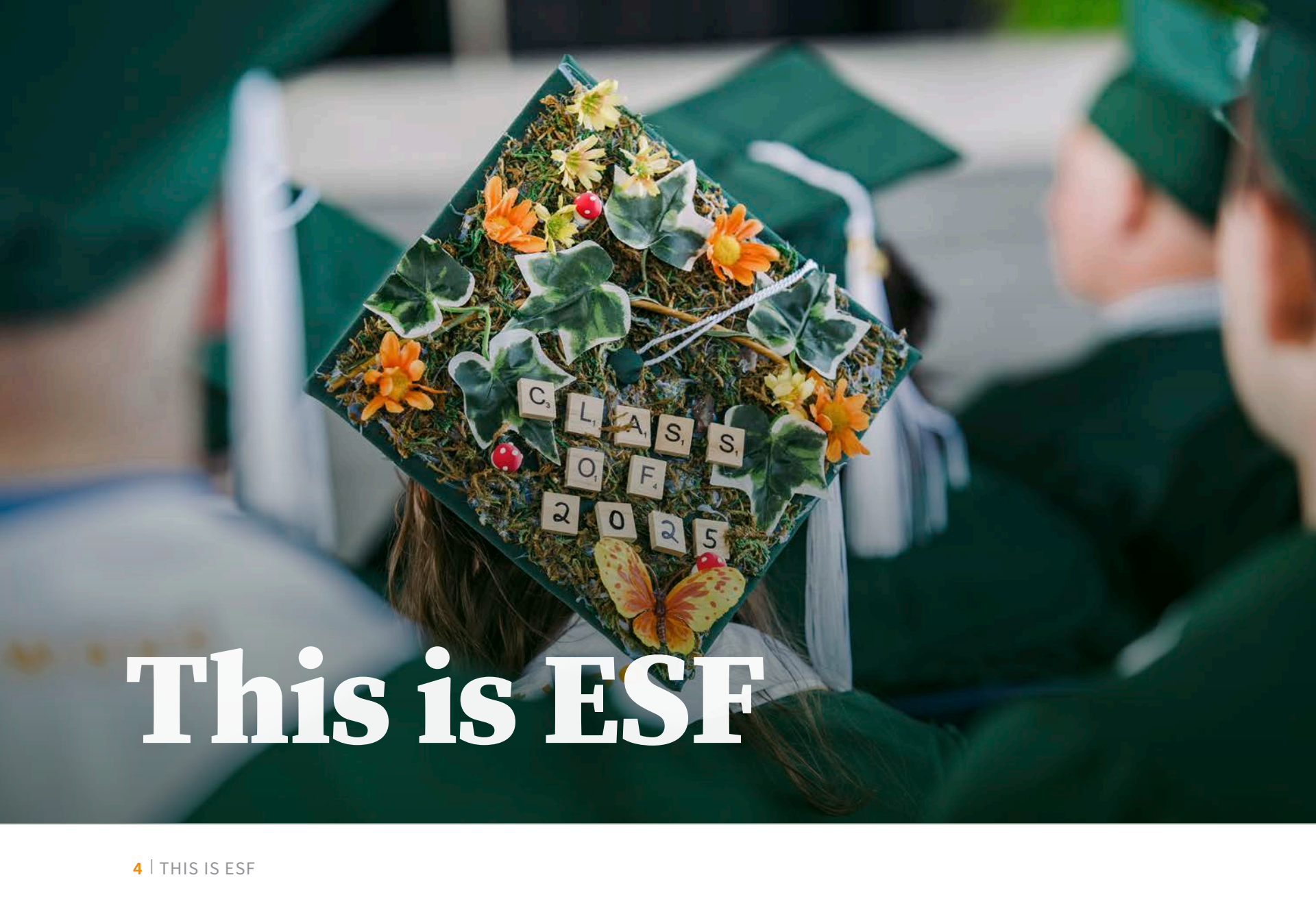
Over the course of the 2024-25 academic year, ESF has saw a continued increase in enrollment, research expenditures, and media attention. There are many examples of groundbreaking research, an expansion of student support opportunities, and continued concentration on enhancing the role we play in New York state and beyond. These initiatives are integral to one another and are just a few of the many our community holds dear.

Please join me in celebrating the varied and dynamic accomplishments of our College community. We remain committed to environmental stewardship, to empowering our students, and to paving the way for a more sustainable future. Let us not stop asking how we can improve our world.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joanne M. Mahoney".

Joanne M. Mahoney

President, SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry

A close-up photograph of a green graduation cap (mortarboard) decorated with a dense arrangement of artificial orange and yellow flowers, green ivy leaves, and small red berries. The words "CLASS OF 2025" are spelled out in wooden letter blocks on the front of the cap. The background is blurred, showing other graduates in green caps and gowns.

This is ESF



One of the nation's premier colleges focused on the study of the environment, developing renewable technologies, and building a sustainable future.

We work to address the Earth's most pressing problems — and students come here because they want to **be part of the solution.**

In the 2024-25 AY, the College continued the implementation of the action points of our five-year strategic plan. Built with a focus on three pillars (Growing Opportunity & Excellence for Student Success; Transdisciplinary Scholarship & Research Expansion; and Intentional Cultivation of Community & Belonging), the ESF Strategic Plan houses these goals, themes, and principals with a model supported by inclusion, diversity, equity, access, and social justice. By examining and refining these goals, a new committee and approach were built and are now in active play.



Our Community

We're a small college with BIG ideas. Our students, faculty, staff, and alumni make a global impact improving and sustaining the environment. We offer a world-class education among a close-knit community of more than 2,000 scholars with common values and a shared sense of purpose.



Our Campus

Our Campus: ESF is centered alongside Syracuse University in the heart of Central New York. We have a system of properties (across 25,000 acres) that broadly represent New York state's rich ecological diversity for scientific study and instruction.



Our Mission

To educate future environmental leaders of all backgrounds, advance knowledge and skills necessary to promote scholarship and stewardship of the natural to designed environments, and act both locally and globally to *Improve Our World*.



ESF by the Numbers

3,627 First-year applications

Fall 2024 First-Year Students



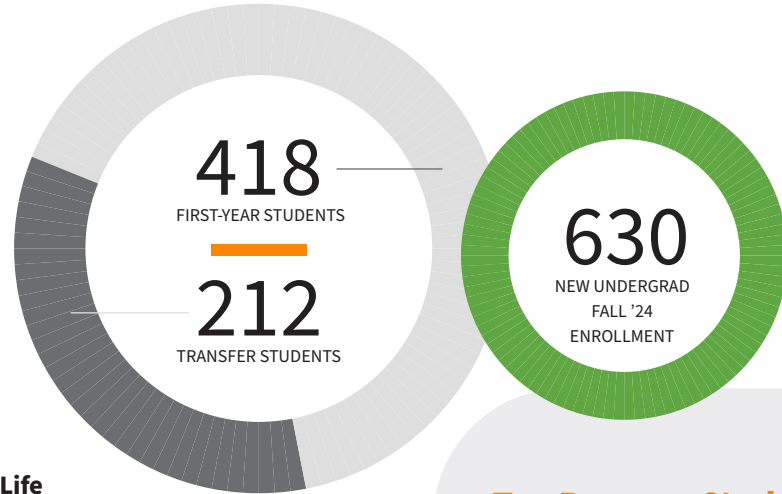
69% NYS

31% Out of State

Fall 2024 Transfer Students



80% from SUNY
Community Colleges



Campus Life

27 undergraduate programs

14:1 faculty ratio

24 average class size

12 athletics teams

40 student clubs
and organizations

25k acres of field stations
across NYS

Top Reasons Students Choose ESF

1. Specialized focus on the environment
2. Reputation for excellence in academics and research
3. Affordability and value
4. Sense of community
5. Strong outcomes and job placement after graduation
6. Hands-on research, lab, and studio opportunities
7. ESF's relationship with SU
8. Support from faculty and staff

A photograph of the Louis Marshall Memorial Building, a grand classical structure with a pedimented roof and a large clock face. The building is constructed of brick and stone, with columns visible at the base. Green foliage is in the foreground, partially obscuring the view. The text "Academic and Research Excellence" is overlaid in large white letters.

Academic and Research Excellence



Dr. Robin Kimmerer, Distinguished Professor in Environmental Biology, was honored with the 2023 National Humanities Medal at the White House on Oct. 21, 2024.

Dr. Lindi Quackenbush, current Vice President of Research and Interim Provost, received the NYS GIS Lifetime Achievement Award.

Dr. Deepak Kumar was named ESF's Exemplary Researcher for 2025-26.

ESF researchers were selected for \$725K grant to study the relationship between forest management, reactive nitrogen emissions, and climate change.



Dr. Chang Geun Yoo, Associate Professor in the Department of Chemical Engineering, was named an Energy and Fuels Rising Star for making significant contributions to discovering new knowledge or advancing technological development in his field of energy research.

Dr. Greg Boyer, Professor Emeritus in the Department of Chemistry, was honored with the National Harmful Algal Blooms (HAB) Committee's Lifetime Research and Service Award. The award, presented biennially, is the highest recognition given by the National HAB Committee.



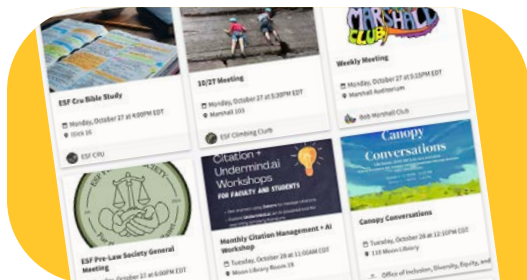
Dr. Yaqi You was honored as one of the inaugural faculty awardees of the Chancellor's Horizon Award for Faculty Research.

Dr. Cynthia Downs received a \$1.4 million National Science Foundation grant to study Immune System Differences in Mammals.

ESF researchers were awarded with a \$5 million NSF grant for the Global Center for Sustainable Bioproducts, an international research hub dedicated to developing sustainable bio-based solutions for environmental and economic challenges.



Exceptional Student Focus



There are over 2,500 active families engaged through the **ESF Family Connection**, with a 70% email open rate.

We hired the first-ever **Health & Wellness Coordinator** to expand support for students' physical and mental health. This staff member hosted 18 programs, led 16 trainings, and hosted vaccine clinics on campus.

We implemented a **Wellness Wednesday** series of tabling opportunities, where we brought in community resources to share information with individuals on a weekly basis between different agencies, and included tabling from our Peer Wellness Ambassadors about on-campus mental health resources.



OaksVote Launched, a non-partisan group developed through a grant to coordinate voter engagement and registration for students.

An Interfaith Space was opened, providing a dedicated space for prayer, meditation, or quiet reflection.

Students reported over **4,500 hours of community service**.

There were **1,370 events and programs posted on ESF Engage**, designed to enrich the student experience and support holistic development.

Class of '24 Outcomes

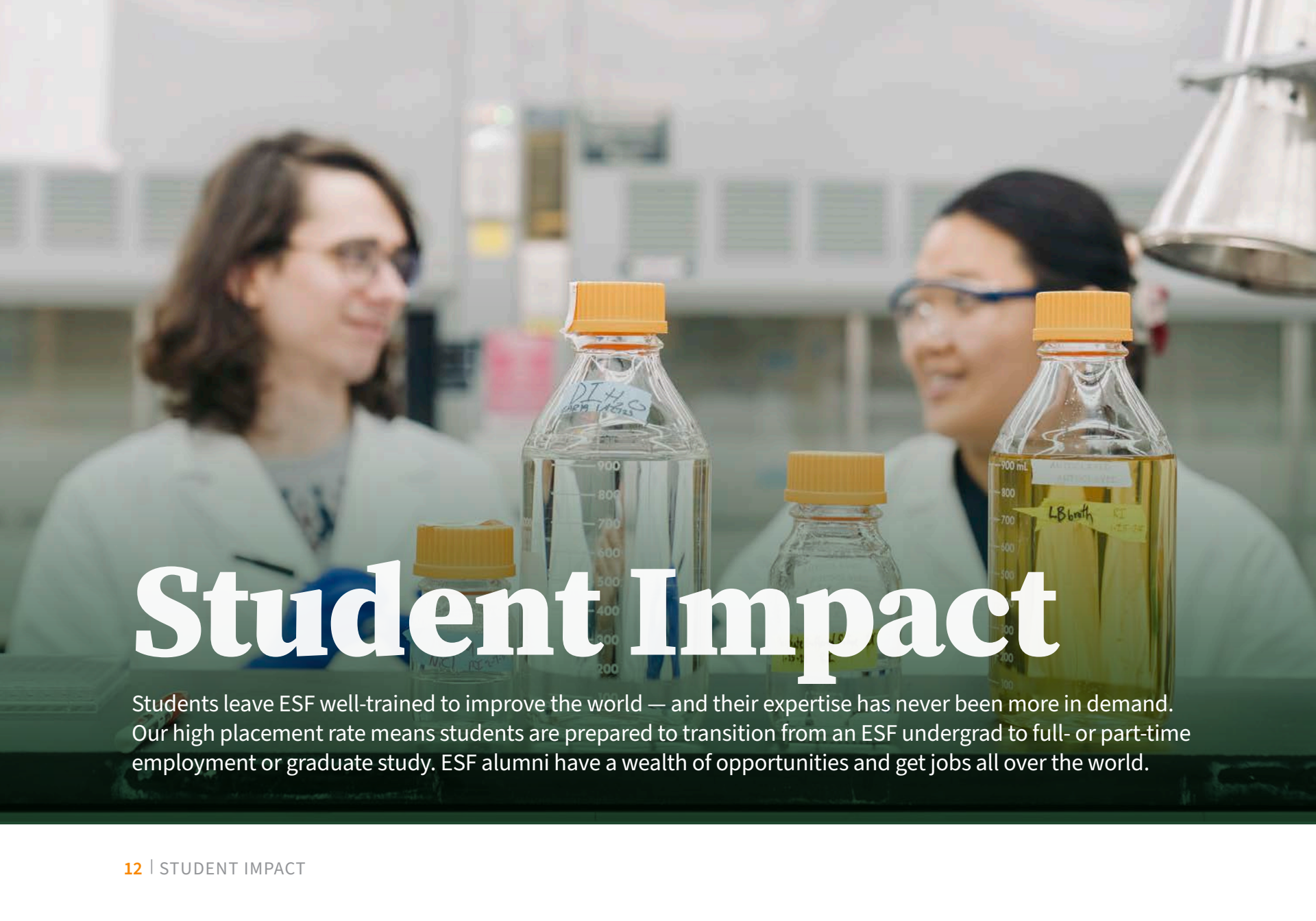
97% are employed or attending graduate school

90% are working in a job related to their degree

94% found a position within six months

74% are employed in NYS New York

76% secured their position through a campus connection



Student Impact

Students leave ESF well-trained to improve the world — and their expertise has never been more in demand. Our high placement rate means students are prepared to transition from an ESF undergrad to full- or part-time employment or graduate study. ESF alumni have a wealth of opportunities and get jobs all over the world.

Students Recognized by Chancellor

Two students received the 2025 Chancellor's Award for Student Excellence, the highest honor bestowed upon a graduating student by SUNY. Abhinaya "Abhi" Polaka and Eden Gardner were honored for demonstrating the integration of academic excellence with other aspects of their lives.

ESF Student Honored with Spirit of SUNY SA Award

Eden Gardner was recognized with the Spirit of SUNY SA Award. The award honors students who demonstrate exceptional contributions and dedication to the SUNY Student Assembly and the broader SUNY community.

Students Selected for SUNY Educational Opportunity Career Development Internship Program

Nicole Buitron and Ladjirah Lightner were selected for the inaugural cohort of the program, which builds on SUNY's vision of

providing an internship or other high-quality experiential opportunity for every SUNY student prior to graduation.

Mighty Oaks XC Teams Bring Home Fourth Consecutive National Titles

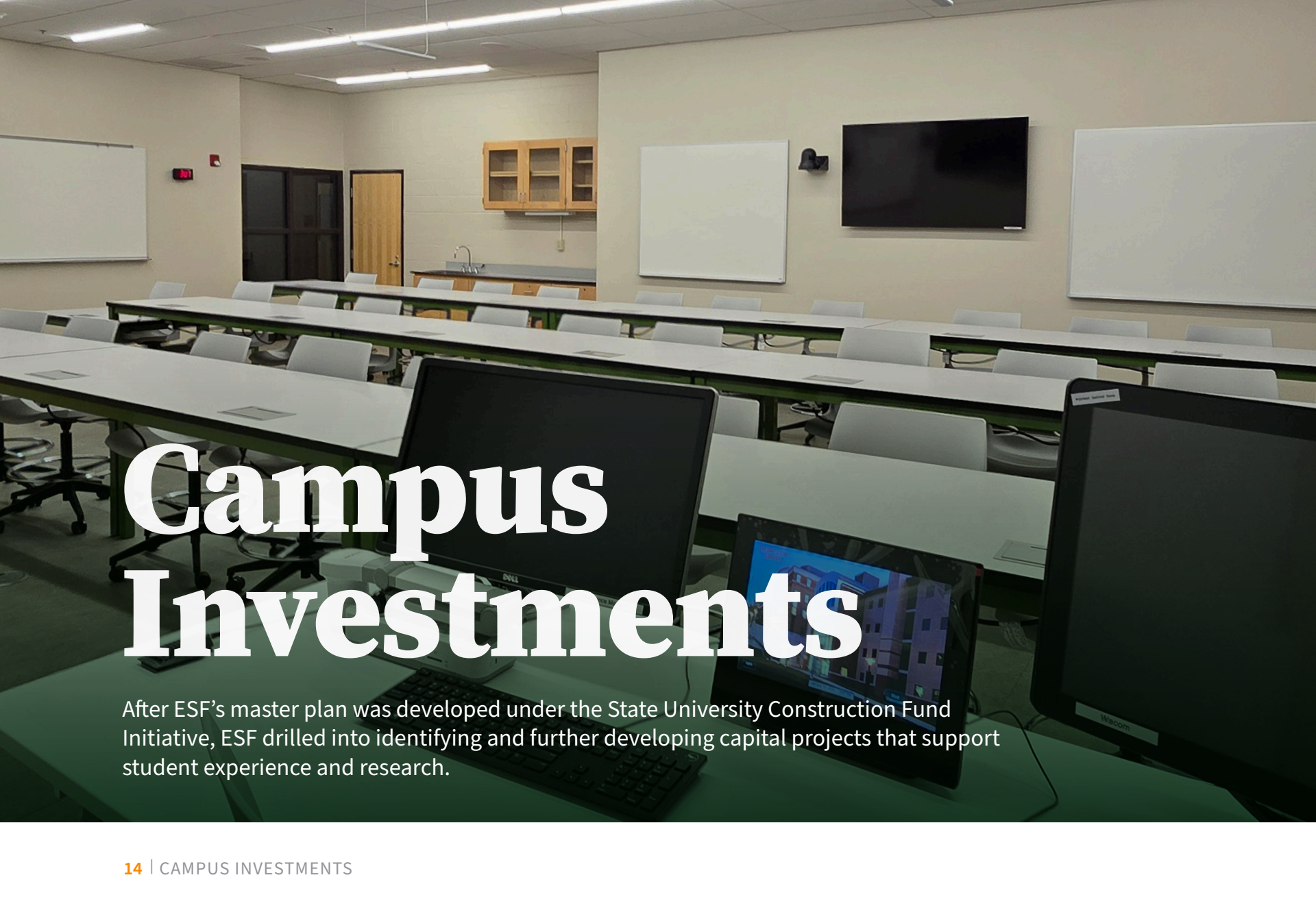
For the fourth consecutive year, the cross country teams brought home the United States Collegiate Athletic Association (USCAA) national championship titles. ESF is the only school in USCAA history to win four consecutive titles in the same sport for both women's and men's teams.



Biochemistry Ph.D. Student Selected as a National Microbiome Data Collaborative Ambassador

Isaac Okyere is a student in the lab of Dr. Jennifer Goff in the Department of Chemistry, where he is researching how microplastics can carry antibiotic-resistant bacteria in aquatic ecosystems. His work looks at how urbanization and rainstorms affect these bacteria on microplastics, helping to understand the potential public health risks of plastic pollution in the environment.





Campus Investments

After ESF's master plan was developed under the State University Construction Fund Initiative, ESF drilled into identifying and further developing capital projects that support student experience and research.



On-Campus Improvements

During the 2024-25 fiscal year, many upgrades, investments, and adjustments helped our campus properties remain accessible and inviting. With upcoming big projects such as Illick Hall, much work has been done to enable these, including the outfitting of Bray and Walters halls, which will accommodate moving faculty and staff in phases.

Some highlights include:

Classroom Technology Upgrades

Significant improvements were made to enhance teaching and learning environments across campus including classrooms in Bray Hall (Rooms 300 and 321) and Walters Hall (Rooms 210 and 211).

Campus Wayfinding

Phase II of the campus wayfinding project was completed, advancing the effort to create a cohesive and intuitive navigation system across campus. This phase focused on installing new exterior directional signage and building identifiers, laying the groundwork for the final implementation in the 2025–26 academic year.

Moon Library

Improved ADA access, including upgrades to lower-level entries and restrooms.

Physics Lab Renovation — 159 Baker Laboratory

A full renovation transformed 159 Baker into a modern physics lab, allowing classes to be held on the ESF campus and reducing costs previously incurred through Syracuse University. The new space features energy-efficient LED lighting, integrated classroom technology, and updated furniture with built-in power to support collaborative learning.



A photograph of four people in outdoor attire (hats, jackets) standing in a forest, looking at a large map or document spread out on a surface. The background shows trees and a body of water.

Community Impact

ESF is focused on serving as an integral partner and anchor institution — within SUNY, our local communities, and throughout the country. We develop strategic partnerships to help drive awareness of our impact and research.

ESF Awarded \$8 Million to Advance Low-Carbon Energy Crop Innovation

ESF was awarded \$8 million by the U.S. Department of Energy Bioenergy Technologies Office to spearhead advancements in willow biomass crops, a low-carbon intensity, purpose-grown energy crop. This initiative is pivotal in accelerating the nation's transition to a clean energy bioeconomy.

ESF's Center for Sustainable Materials Management Honored with Innovator Award

The Center for Sustainable Materials Management (CSMM) at ESF received the 2024 Rheaply Innovator Award, recognizing its creative use of the Rheaply platform to advance sustainability.

ESF Landscape Architecture Professor Honored By City of Syracuse

City of Syracuse Mayor Ben Walsh proclaimed April 22 as Emanuel J. Carter Day in Syracuse, honoring the ESF associate professor for his lifelong commitment to urban forestry and sustainable design.

U.S. Department of
ENERGY





We're Leading the Nation in
Environmental Science and Sustainability

Join us

The SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry is the most distinguished college in the nation that focuses on the study of the environment, developing renewable technologies, and building a sustainable future. We work to address the Earth's most pressing problems — and students come here because they want to help **find the solution.**

Marketing Advancements



STEM college



Experiential Learning



#4 Green College

With ongoing support from SUNY, ESF advanced their marketing efforts to support online programs, graduate certificates, and brand awareness.



Out of State Marketing Campaign

- Aggressive out-of-state brand awareness campaign ran from March 10–June 15.
- Campaign yielded 362 RFI's, 287 apply clicks, and over 7 million impressions.



Future Focus

Campaign yielded strong results in terms of brand awareness. Focus is on creative optimization with video, traffic campaign integration, and geographic focus.



Alumni Relations

The ESF Alumni Association has served ESF alumni since 1925. Association programs attract the support and participation of our more than 22,000 alumni.



Commemorating the Journey

The ESF Alumni Association welcomed new students to campus this past fall with a warm gesture — literally! Incoming students received official ESF beanies to keep cozy and show their school pride from day one. On the other end of the spectrum, as our newest graduates crossed the stage for graduation, they were handed a complimentary diploma cover — courtesy of the Alumni Association — as a symbol of their achievement and a reminder that they're now part of a lifelong ESF community.



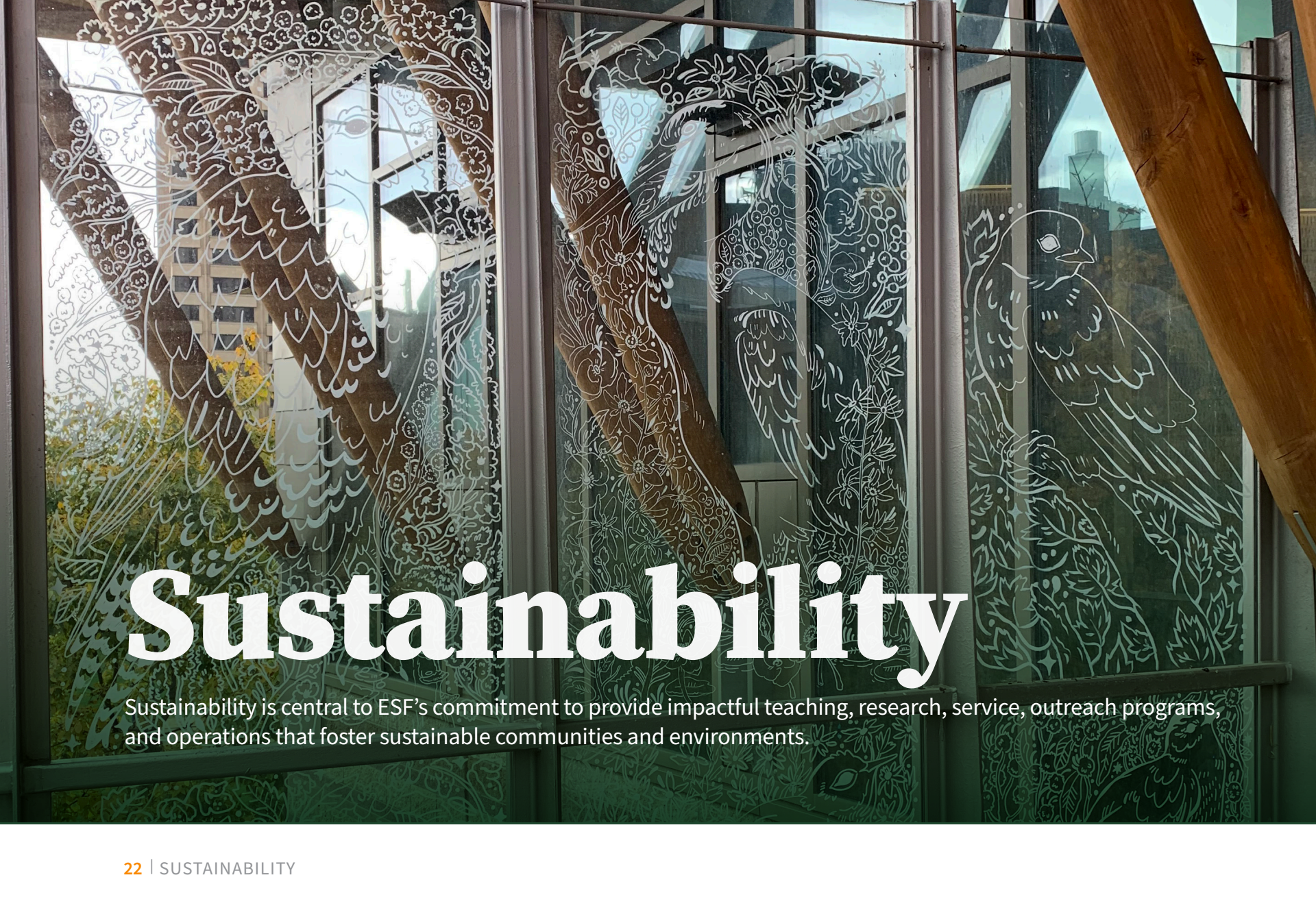
Celebrating Lifelong Connections

Over the past year, the Alumni Association proudly hosted 22 events, fostering meaningful connections across the ESF network. From virtual and in-person alumni gatherings to supporting student-led initiatives, the Association helped bring alumni and students together for professional development mixers, networking events, and mentorship programs. These events help students grow and alumni stay engaged.



Investing in Student Success

The ESF Alumni Association is committed to building strong connections through financial support. This past year, the Association awarded over \$35,000 in scholarships and grants to deserving students — helping fund educational expenses, professional development, and research opportunities. These investments not only ease financial burdens but also empower students to improve our world and make impactful contributions to their fields.



Sustainability

Sustainability is central to ESF's commitment to provide impactful teaching, research, service, outreach programs, and operations that foster sustainable communities and environments.

Sustainability remains at the core of our mission and daily operations.

Across campus, innovative projects and initiatives are driving measurable progress toward a more sustainable future. From reducing waste and extending the life of campus resources, to aligning academic programs and creating safer spaces for local wildlife — ESF continues to practice what we teach.

ESF Resource Exchange

The ESF Resource Exchange allows faculty, staff, and graduate students to view all surplus property available for reuse on campus in real time and to post items that are no longer needed but have reuse value. Since its launch in June 2024, 359 items have been exchanged, 11,017 pounds of material have been diverted from landfill and incineration, \$66,715 in value has been recaptured, and 13,677 kg of CO₂e has been avoided.



Alignment of ESF coursework to United Nations Sustainable Development Goals

Student employees in the Office of Sustainability reviewed all courses offered during the 2024-25 academic year and aligned each of them with applicable United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. They also categorized each course as sustainability-focused, sustainability-inclusive, or neither. Faculty members were asked to provide input, and alignments/categorizations were edited accordingly. One student employee then spent the summer and beginning of the Fall 2025 semester developing a PowerBI dashboard to display the data as an interactive tool.

Bird Strike Mitigation Murals

Students from the Guy A. Baldassare Birding Club and Ph.D. student Meredith Barges, created an iNaturalist community collision page to identify bird collision hotspots on campus. Meredith and student artist, Katie Mulligan, teamed up with the Office of Sustainability and the Division of Facilities Planning, Design, & Construction to add temporary bird strike mitigation murals to many freestanding glass panels on campus. These murals will hopefully be converted to permanent installations in the near future. The soon-to-be released annual update to the Sustainability Action Plan will feature a new bird-friendly action and the Illick Hall renovation will incorporate bird strike mitigation measures.



ESF College Foundation Impact

ESF experienced a year of remarkable growth and engagement, marked by strong financial performance, record fundraising, and increased support for students and academic programs.

Strong Financial Growth

As of June 30, 2025, total assets of ESF College Foundation and Subsidiaries equaled \$99 million as compared to \$87 million for the previous fiscal year. This 13.7% increase in asset growth is due to strong investment return coupled with nearly record fundraising results. The Foundation recorded cash donations of over \$6 million in fiscal year 2025, an 11% increase over fundraising results in 2024.

Increased fundraising is linked to participation in the Campaign for ESF that was publicly announced in May 2025. The \$40 million campaign will increase funding for students, academic researchers, and campus improvements. As of June 30, 2025, campaign commitments totaled \$36 million.

Engaging Alumni, Donors, and Corporate Partners

Alumni Relations had over 25,000 interactions with alumni and the wider ESF community. Social media, publications, events, and volunteer activities, highlighted the achievements of alumni, students, and the innovative research conducted by faculty. Donor stewardship activities continued to communicate the positive impact of philanthropy through program reports, events, and video. The annual Dale Travis Lecture Series brought over 250 campus and community members together to highlight ESF researchers. Career Services honored 143 Career Champions this year, recognizing faculty, staff, students, and new this year, employers, who demonstrate exceptional commitment to advancing career readiness and student employability. The

First Destination Survey for the Class of 2024 achieved an impressive 80.1% knowledge rate and a 97% outcomes rate, up from 90% for the Class of 2023. Full-time employment increased to 70% (from 61%), and the average undergraduate base salary rose to \$55,600, compared to \$52,600 for the previous class.

Increased Support for Students and Academic Programs

The Foundation awarded over 1,400 student scholarships totaling over \$1.8million and provided over \$2.5 million in funding for academic salaries, fellowships, travel, publications, and equipment. An expanded donor commitment to the Fink Career Development Program allowed over \$100,000 in awards for student career exploration activities.





Future Outlook



Over the course of the 2024-25 academic year, ESF moved forward with a plan assessing, implementing, and condensing the goals of the 2030 Academic Strategic Plan.

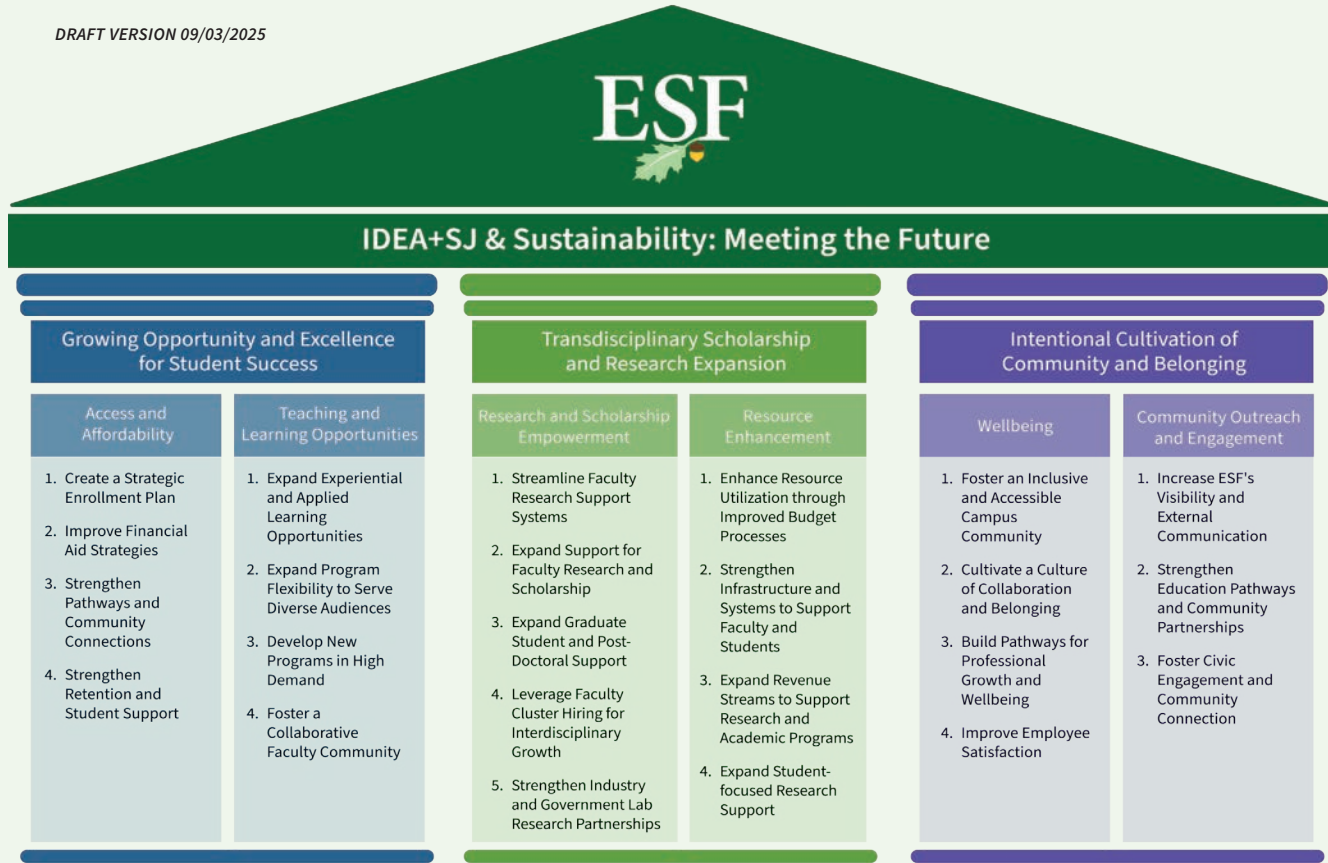
Using the existing structure of the Strategic Plan Developed over academic year 2022-23 and approved in August 2023, of three pillars (growing opportunity and excellence for student success, transdisciplinary scholarship and research expansion, and intentional cultivation of community and belonging) and six themes, the committee further implemented the plan, including condensing the structure, while maintaining the aim of the goals and action items.

This resulted in a revised plan of 23 goals (half of the original 46) which may be found on the following page.

ESF Strategic Plan

The mission of ESF is to educate future environmental leaders of all backgrounds, advance knowledge and skills necessary to promote scholarship and stewardship of the natural to designed environments, and act both locally and globally to improve our world.

DRAFT VERSION 09/03/2025



Thank you

Thank you to the students, faculty, and staff who work hard every day in contributing to our collective success and helping to *Improve Our World*. Our work has never been more important.

