

# 2021-2022 Annual Report

State University of New York  
College of Environmental Science and Forestry



Table of Contents

Message from the President..... 3

College Mission and Vision ..... 4

ESF by the Numbers ..... 6

Academic Excellence ..... 8

Student Experience..... 10

Student and Graduate Success..... 12

Research Excellence..... 14

Campus Investments..... 16

Community Impact..... 18

Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity..... 20

Sustainability ..... 22

ESF College Foundation Impact..... 24



Message from the President

ESF is home to an extraordinary group of faculty and staff who are dedicated to educating and supporting our students — climate-change warriors, sustainability advocates, and environmental champions who are passionate about

protecting our planet and improving our world. During the 2021-2022 academic year, we enthusiastically welcomed students back to campus and successfully reacclimated ourselves to in-person learning. We were laser-focused on ensuring a smooth and safe experience as we continued to navigate the pandemic. Once again, the ESF community proved itself adaptable and caring.

Every day, our researchers work to address the environmental challenges facing the world. Their expertise is sought not only to solve problems, but to explain the issues and solutions to the public and ultimately help effect change. During the past academic year, our faculty received numerous awards, grants, and recognition for their research, reinforcing our role as the premier college in the nation focused on the science, design, engineering, and management of natural resources and the environment.

At ESF, we practice what we teach by implementing systems and best practices that improve sustainability on campus, in the local community, and beyond. Sustainability is central to our mission, and we continually seek innovative ways to make our campuses environmentally friendly. We’re a proud leader on numerous national lists of “green” and

sustainable schools. Few institutions can compete with our living laboratories. ESF is one of the largest institutions of higher education in the United States, with 25,000 acres of field stations across New York state — including in the heart of the Adirondacks — where our students participate in hands-on learning and research.

ESF’s work has never been more important, and our students have never been more valuable upon their graduation. We have much to be proud of and we look forward to the future — but we know there is always more work to do. Last year was record setting for ESF, as we received more applications than ever before, and our strong enrollment reflects that.

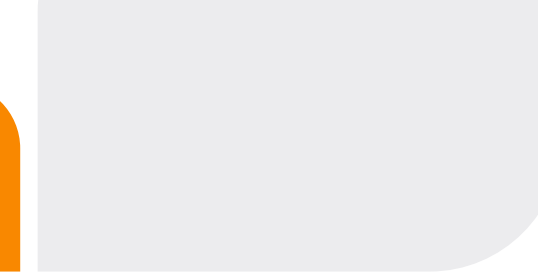
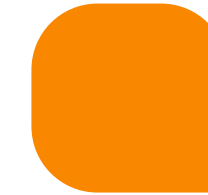
Please join me in recognizing the accomplishments of the College community and the initiatives we implemented to help enhance the ESF experience.

*Joanne M. Mahoney*  
**Joanne M. Mahoney**  
President, SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry





# College Mission and Vision



ESF's mission is to advance knowledge and skills and to promote the leadership necessary for the stewardship of both the natural and designed environments.

ESF's vision is *a better world through environmental discovery.*

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In other words: Students come  
to ESF to *Improve Your World.*





# ESF by the Numbers



### Fall 2021 First-Year Students



74% NYS

23 additional states, including NJ, PA, CT, VA, MA

### Fall 2021 Transfer Students



51% from 26 SUNY Community Colleges

85% NYS

### Campus Life

12 athletics teams

40+ student clubs and organizations

1 amazing partnership with Syracuse University

### Rankings

ESF is consistently ranked highly for its outstanding academics, unwavering commitment to sustainability, impact, affordability, and more. This recognition demonstrates our commitment to providing the best experience and outcomes for our students. Here are some highlights:

- #1 Sustainability Curriculum<sup>2</sup>
- #1 Bachelor's in Forestry<sup>4</sup>
- #2 Public Engagement<sup>2</sup>
- #5 Most Sustainable College Campus<sup>1</sup>
- #7 Top Doctoral Institution<sup>2</sup>
- #9 Top Green Colleges<sup>3</sup>
- Platinum STARS Rating<sup>2</sup>
- #54 Top Public School<sup>5</sup>
- #57 Best Value Public College<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Sierra Magazine, 2021 Cool Schools list  
<sup>2</sup>AASHE  
<sup>3</sup>Princeton Review  
<sup>4</sup>Study.com  
<sup>5</sup>US News & World Report





# Academic Excellence



## ESF is a small college with big ideas.

Our faculty, students, 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.

### ESF Welcomes New Provost

Dr. Samuel B. Mukasa joined ESF to serve as executive vice president and provost, effective Nov. 1, 2021, bringing an abundance of academic and administrative experience to ESF. He works closely with President Mahoney on behalf of faculty and students to help propel ESF to greater prominence within the SUNY system and on a global scale.

In his role at ESF, he sees himself as someone who motivates and empowers students, faculty, and staff. He pledges commitment to his most prized core values: student success, academic excellence, social justice, and fairness.

### Growth in Academic Programs

ESF launched a Master of Engineering degree in Environmental Resources Engineering, a first of its kind within the SUNY system. The intensive, 11-month program offers a practice-oriented course of study focused on engineering design and project management. The degree culminates in a team-based design project. The program is designed to fill the educational gap between the bachelor's degree in engineering and professional licensure.

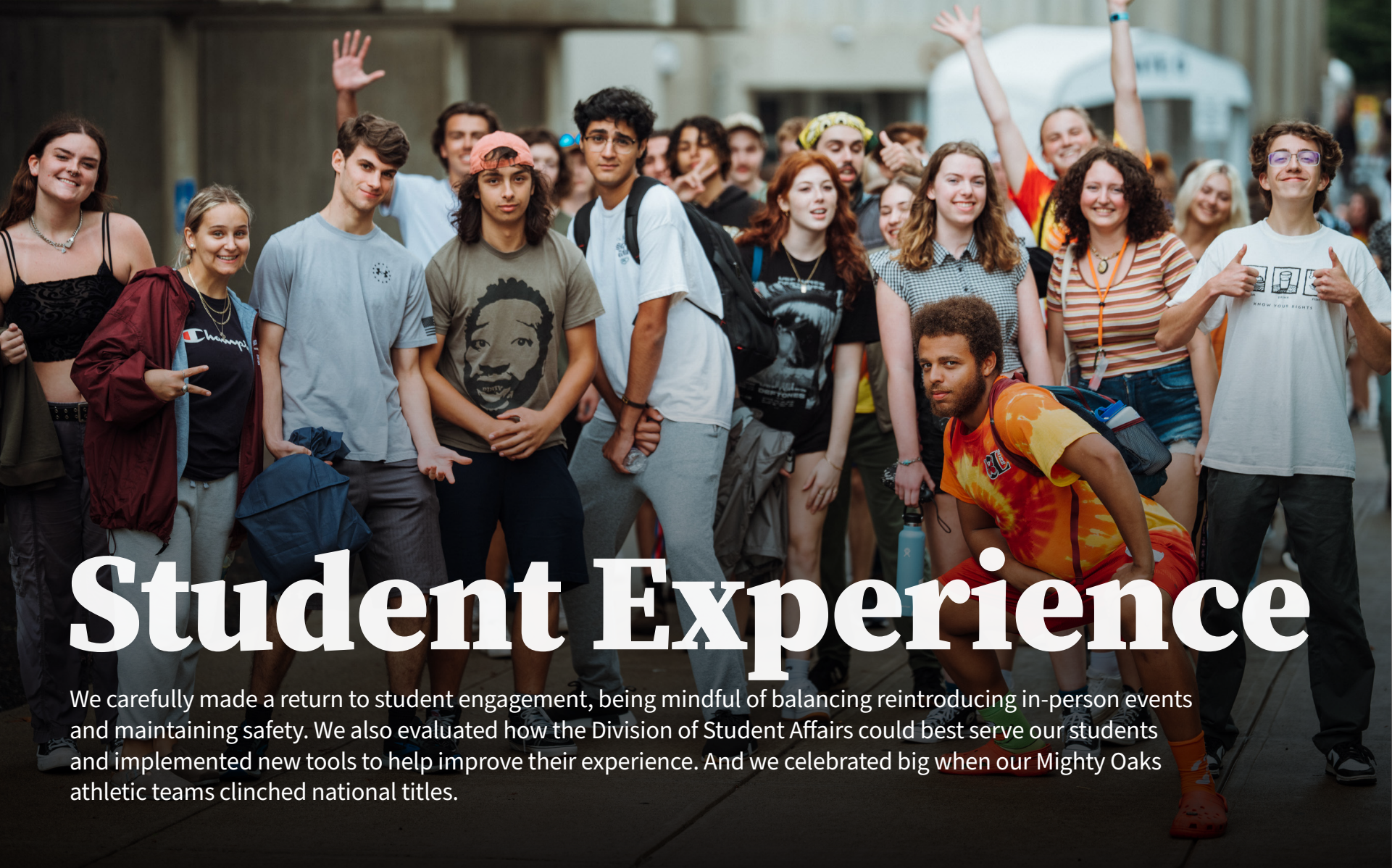
ESF also launched a new certificate of advanced study in Science and Environmental Communication and Public Relations Management to help environmental professionals, decision-makers, and engaged citizens learn to communicate effectively about the most pressing issues of our time.

### Faculty, Staff Receive Chancellor's Awards

Four staff and faculty members received SUNY Chancellor's Awards, an honor that recognizes outstanding professional achievement. Honorees include Dr. Stephen Shaw, for Excellence in Teaching; Maren King, for Excellence in Faculty Service; Dr. John Farrell, for Excellence in Scholarship; and Maura Stefl, for Excellence in Professional Service.

**20** average class size  
**14:1** student-to-faculty ratio  
**27** undergraduate programs  
**54** graduate areas





# Student Experience

We carefully made a return to student engagement, being mindful of balancing reintroducing in-person events and maintaining safety. We also evaluated how the Division of Student Affairs could best serve our students and implemented new tools to help improve their experience. And we celebrated big when our Mighty Oaks athletic teams clinched national titles.

## Reorganizing Staff for Maximum Impact

The Division of Student Affairs was reorganized to increase capacity and focus on the student experience. We organized a team in Student Success and Engagement that tracks the experience of students, utilizing technology to help produce data-driven insights. We mobilized a core team of people to enable us to be more intentional in fostering student success, chief among them increasing capacity to focus on the important transition of the first year of college.

## New Student Engagement Platform Launched

ESF launched a new student engagement platform called ESF Engage. At the new site and mobile app, students can explore campus events, organizations, and news. The platform also enables students to build their co-curricular experiences and transcript to better showcase how they spent their time at ESF. Through this vibrant virtual community, ESF motivates students to get involved and helps them increase their campus and community engagement.

## ESF Athletics Makes History with National Titles

The Mighty Oaks women’s soccer team won the United States Collegiate Athletic Association’s (USCAA) national championship in Virginia Beach, defeating Paul Smith’s College. This was the Mighty Oaks’ third appearance in the title match and their first championship victory. The team had only one loss in regular season play.

The Mighty Oaks women’s and men’s cross-country teams also won the USCAA national championship. The is the first time both teams have secured national championships in the same year. This was the second national championship for the women’s team. The Mighty Oaks have four previous national titles to their credit from 2011 to 2014.







# Student and Graduate Success

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 to pursue and get jobs all over the world related to their majors.

## Class of '21 Outcomes

- 94%** are employed or attending graduate school
- 84%** are working in a job related to their degree
- 92%** found a position within six months
- 66%** are employed in NY
- 40%** work in Central New York
- 52%** secured their position through a campus connection



### Graduate Student Receives NSF, GREAT Awards

Jordan Jessamy was awarded a prestigious National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowship Program grant to support his graduate research project. He also received the SUNY Graduate Research Empowering and Accelerating Talent (GREAT) award. A student in the College's graduate program in environmental science (GPES), Jessamy's project links the structure, composition, and function of urban trees in Syracuse to the vast disparity in opportunity and wealth among neighborhoods. He worked with the city of Syracuse and the U.S. Forest Service to develop recommendations for greening the city in a way that is more equitable in its distribution of ecosystem services.



### Three Students Win Chancellor's Awards

Three students received the 2022 Chancellor's Award for Student Excellence, the highest honor bestowed upon a graduating student by SUNY. Christopher Goonan, Emily Li, and Bridget Maloney were awarded for demonstrating the integration of academic excellence with other aspects of their lives.

These students truly exemplify the excellence that characterizes ESF students. Not only did they excel in the classroom, but they made time to give back to the community to improve the lives of others. We are proud of all they've accomplished while at ESF and look forward to watching their future successes.



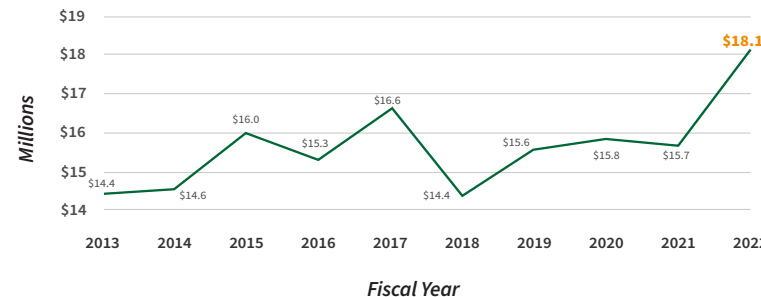


# Research Excellence

## New Vice President of Research Appointed

In his new role as Vice President of Research, Dr. John Stella is focused on expanding ESF's research programs and bringing attention to the work addressing the problems facing society and the environment today. Appointed on June 1, he took over the leadership of the College's research program. Stella joined ESF faculty in 2006 in the Department of Sustainable Resources Management, where his primary research lies in ecology and sustainability of river ecosystems globally. He has secured \$7.5 million in collaborative research funding, has published more than 50 peer-reviewed publications, mentored over 15 graduate students, and serves as a subject matter editor of the journal *Ecological Applications* since 2016.

## Sponsored Research Total Expenditures: 10-Year Trend



## Research Activity Hits All-Time High

Research growth at ESF is very healthy and growing. In the last year, ESF research expenditures across all sponsored grants and contracts totaled \$18.1 million, the highest level ever and up 16% over the prior year.

Proposal submissions increased 19% and revenue from indirect costs on grants increased 21%, allowing ESF to make critical investments in research facilities and support for faculty. Since fall 2021, 10 new staff members have been hired in the Office of Research Programs, including Tiffany Fleming as Research Development Director, a new and critical position to support faculty teams and individuals in developing research proposals and increasing grant success.

## '21-'22 Research by the Numbers

**\$18.1M** Total research program activity

**+20%** Increase in submitted proposals

**+16%** Increase in research project activity

**+34%** Increase in Business and Industry research, and **24%** increase in Federally-funded research

**184** Grad student researchers employed

**139** Undergrad student researchers employed

**10** New staff hired

**1** New Research Development Director hired





# Campus Investments



## ESF's facilities master plan was developed under State University Construction Fund initiative.

Our goals include identifying capital projects to help us improve the student experience and maintain our status as an effective research and Ph.D. granting institution. The College is making steady progress on its plan, with projects ready to be planned and implemented once additional funding is granted.

### Key Facilities Projects

*Marshall Hall* is undergoing a total renovation expected for completion in early 2023. The work includes extensive site improvements with a stair tower and elevator, and pedestrian bridge. These improvements will connect multiple levels of the campus and improve accessibility. When complete, this iconic academic building

will provide historically intact, state-of-the-art academic, technology, and studio spaces and serve as the home for Environmental Studies, General Education, and Landscape Architecture.

*Café@Moon* construction was complete in 2022, with the goal to create an additional quick-serve café for students at the Moon Library.



*Stadium Place* planning began in Spring 2021 to create an updated “gateway” building at one of the College’s main entrances. ESF is working with the State University Construction Fund to broaden the project to include accessibility improvements that would extend across campus.

### Satellite Properties Master Planning

ESF is home to one of the largest institutions of higher education in the United States with approximately 1 million square feet of facilities in 186 buildings on 25,000 acres. Facilities for education and research are provided on the Syracuse campus and at five regional campuses and three field stations. These include: the Ranger School, Cranberry Lake Biological Station, Heiberg Forest, Lafayette Road Experiment Station, Newcomb campus, and the Thousand Islands Biological Station. The College is working to optimize the opportunities and resources we can gain from our satellite properties.





# 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.

## Drawing on Indigenous and Scientific Knowledge

A new partnership between ESF's Center for Native Peoples and the Environment (CNPE) and The Nature Conservancy (TNC) serves as a bridge between traditional ecological knowledge and Western scientific approaches, embracing a “two-eyed” way of seeing and informing conservation.

The four-year partnership includes an \$800,000 grant from TNC and has three main components:

- New and strengthened relationships among ESF, TNC, and Indigenous Nations
- Advancement of land justice by increasing access for Indigenous Peoples to lands in their own original territories
- Re-story-ation, which involves co-developing a new narrative on TNC preserves that restores Indigenous Peoples' engagement with their ancestral homelands and gives voices to their perspectives in interpretation, education, and stewardship practices.

## ESF Creates New Electric Vehicle Charging Hub in Syracuse

Ten new electric vehicle charging stations installed by ESF created one of the largest and most affordable publicly accessible charging hubs in Syracuse. Four dual-port and two single-port Level 2 EV charging stations are located by three campus buildings: Physical Plant, Baker Laboratory and Walters Hall. These stations are available to current faculty, students and staff. Four dual-port stations, available to the public and campus community, are in ESF's parking lot on Standart Street. The project created one of the largest and most affordable publicly accessible charging hubs in the Syracuse area. Pricing is set with the goal of recouping the operational costs of the charging stations and will not be a profit-driven model.

## City and County Celebrate April 22 as SUNY ESF Day

ESF celebrated its recognition of April 22 as SUNY ESF Day in the City of Syracuse and Onondaga County on Earth Day. In 2020, the City of Syracuse and Onondaga County issued a joint proclamation marking the 50th anniversary of Earth Day and the contributions ESF has made to local, state, and national environmental and sustainability efforts. In recognition, it was proclaimed that Earth Day in the City of Syracuse and Onondaga County would also be known as SUNY ESF Day.





# Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity

At ESF, we welcome and celebrate people of all backgrounds.

Our diversity is what sparks our creativity, makes us stronger, fuels our success, and drives our innovation. Our campus is a place where we encourage students, faculty, and staff to be their authentic selves. We remain committed to further increasing the diversity of our student body, faculty, and staff through a number of initiatives.

## **Prestigious National Science Foundation Grant Drives STEM Diversity**

ESF was awarded a prestigious grant from the National Science Foundation (NSF) to help drive the success of underrepresented students in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM).

The grant is in partnership with six other regional colleges that together share a \$2 million grant to work toward doubling the number of bachelor's degrees completed in STEM fields within five years.

ESF will receive \$250,000 over the next five years to fund the ESF-directed project *Extending the STEM Pipeline at ESF*. The grant will enable ESF to provide highly qualified students in underrepresented minority groups with mentors, research opportunities, and financial support as they pursue studies or careers in STEM. ESF's Louis Stokes Alliance of Minority Participation Program Scholars will develop their research skills, as well as participate in STEM career awareness and readiness programs. ESF is the only college in grant alliance that offers Ph.D. programs that are solely focused on STEM.

## **Interdisciplinary Cluster Hiring Supports Faculty Diversity**

ESF launched a new Cluster Hiring Initiative to help the College meet its strategic goals to drive faculty diversity, increase student experiential learning, and grow the impact of institutional research. This creates a pathway to help advance ESF's mission of highly impactful research on environmental sustainability while helping to address the College's enrollment goals and commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion. The initiative is designed to help ESF strategically build a more diverse team of academic experts to help solve global environmental challenges.







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

ESF is dedicated to developing creative and effective solutions to complex sustainability challenges and adopting holistic practices and approaches that balance environmental, social, economic, and technological factors. We view campus sustainability as a living exercise in change management and view our operations through the lens of systems thinking. We strive to practice what we teach by exemplifying best practices that improve sustainability on campus, in the local community, and beyond.

**Green Purchasing, Banning Plastics**

In December 2021, ESF formally adopted its Green Purchasing and Break Free from Plastic Policy. ESF was the first college in New York State and third in the nation to develop a roadmap to a plastic-free campus by 2025. This initiative was created in conjunction with the New York State Center for Sustainable Materials Management.

**Highest Rating for Building Sustainability**

ESF achieved the highest STARS rating for Campus Sustainability from the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education (AASHE) in March 2021. We achieved a Platinum rating from STARS — the Sustainability Tracking, Assessment, & Rating System — which measures and encourages sustainability across all aspects of higher education, and ranks institutions. ESF is one of only 11 higher education institutions that have earned the highest rating level of Platinum, solidifying the College’s position as a global leader in campus sustainability.

**Clean Energy Master Plan Developed**


In 2021, ESF completed the College’s first Clean Energy Master Plan, in partnership with Ramboll, with funding support from the NYSDA Reforming the Energy Vision (REV) Campus Challenge. The plan lays out a vision for low carbon and renewable technologies; operational strategies to reduce fossil fuel use/dependency and increase electrification of utility operations; and maintain resiliency and reliability.







# ESF College Foundation Impact



The ESF Development Office and ESF College Foundation are committed to helping the College achieve its mission of education, research, and public service through resource development and fund management.

We build lasting relationships with alumni, parents, friends, students, faculty, staff, and other benefactors and partners whose support positively impacts thousands of ESF students every year.

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#### **Strong Financial Support**

The ESF College Foundation was the beneficiary of another strong year of philanthropic support. As of June 30, 2022, total assets of the Foundation equaled \$77 million, as compared to \$83.2 million for the previous fiscal year. Although assets decreased due to investment loss, another above-average year of donations helped maintain the Foundation's asset value above the 2020 fiscal year end value of \$74 million. The June 30, 2022 endowment value was \$42 million. The Foundation recorded cash donations of over \$4.6 million in fiscal year 2021, just shy of the \$5 million record fundraising year in 2021.

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#### **Student Scholarships**

Providing funding for ESF students and academic programs continues to be the primary focus of the ESF College Foundation development program. This year the Foundation provided nearly \$1.7 million in scholarships, over \$2.8 million for academic salaries and fellowships, faculty start-up packages, travel, publications, and equipment.

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#### **Donor Interests**

We continue to see increased interest from donors in supporting academic projects. This fiscal year saw continued increases in

philanthropic gifts from private foundations to support academic programs such as the Chestnut Restoration Project, the Center for Native Peoples and the Environment, and tree restoration. Funding from partners such as Templeton World Charity Foundation, the Sloan Foundation, and The Nature Conservancy are critical for advancing academic initiatives.

The ESF College Foundation development program compares well among SUNY peers. A recent SUNY Fundraising Report ranked ESF 8th among 31 colleges for total dollars raised in fiscal year 2020-21, rising from a ranking of 13th in 2019-20 and 17th in 2018-19.



# 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 Your World*. Our work has never been more important.

