



**Florida High Tech Corridor Council
Annual Report 2019-2020**



DEAR FRIENDS OF THE CORRIDOR:

This is my first opportunity to present the Florida High Tech Corridor Council (FHTCC) Fiscal Year Annual Report. I am honored to have been selected to lead this truly unique economic development initiative of three of America's top research universities.

The last year was truly transformational for our organization as a devoted leader retired. We owe Ed Schons our gratitude for carrying on the legacy established by founding president, Randy Berridge. Ed not only succeeded Randy, but has also served The Corridor Council as an adviser and partner in economic development from the outset.

Like so many others, our organization was faced with unprecedented challenges related to COVID-19 about halfway through this fiscal year. I'm proud of our team for achieving success despite these challenges and for approaching potential roadblocks as opportunities to think differently about our work.

The Matching Grants Research Program delivered on its promise to facilitate applied research partnerships. Special efforts included the University of South Florida's support of COVID-19-related projects to develop personal protection equipment, potential therapies. And, as a part of the University of Central Florida's COVID-19 relief efforts, an increase in MGRP match investments by up to 200% (compared to the previous fiscal year's match commitment) to support businesses impacted by the pandemic.

stemCONNECT delivered record-breaking results, creating a digital bridge for nearly 78,000 students and teachers to hear inspiring stories about high tech careers from hundreds of industry experts. We also provided much-needed support to educational partners confronting the virtual learning environment.

The Florida Virtual Entrepreneur Center (FLVEC) continued positioning entrepreneurs for success with a wealth of resources and tools, including information related to business sustainability through a pandemic. FLVEC also surpassed the milestone of 1,000 entrepreneur profiles, furthering the program's position as a leading community for business owners across the state.

This year, COVID-19-related safety and security concerns resulted in the cancellation of The Corridor Council's Talent Forum, our longstanding workforce development program, which historically brought career center directors from top universities across the country to The Corridor region to learn about Florida employers' talent needs and high tech job opportunities. We were saddened to postpone this popular effort and are already looking for new ways to help tech companies attract and cultivate top talent.

Finally, I encourage you to visit FloridaHighTech.com/Magazine to read regularly refreshed editorial content. You may also follow us on Facebook, Twitter or LinkedIn, and subscribe to our monthly email newsletter for the latest news of regional innovation. We appreciate your help in sharing these stories and supporting our efforts to generate broader awareness of The Corridor.

To the countless volunteers who dedicate their time and resources to advance our mission and lay the stage for an even stronger tomorrow – thank you for investing in our cause. If we have not yet met, I look forward to continuing to build relationships across the region and beyond.

In your service,



Paul A. Sohl | Rear Adm. USN (ret)
CEO, Florida High Tech Corridor Council



The Florida High Tech Corridor Council (The Corridor Council) saw another exceptional year in 2019–2020, marked by achievements and advancements of our three universities – the University of Central Florida, the University of South Florida and the University of Florida – and their industry and community partners.



AT-A-GLANCE

- **\$4 million** allocated by The Corridor Council to match industry investments of **\$10.4 million** in 58 research projects
- **77,900 students and teachers** hosted for virtual field trips led by 300 STEM professionals
- **283 success stories** published at fivec.com and floridahightech.com/magazine
- **\$466,500 committed** to support 41 economic development and educational initiatives
- **92 million stakeholders** reached with The Corridor’s story through digital and traditional media

Program Highlights

MGRP: Spurring Innovation Through Applied Research

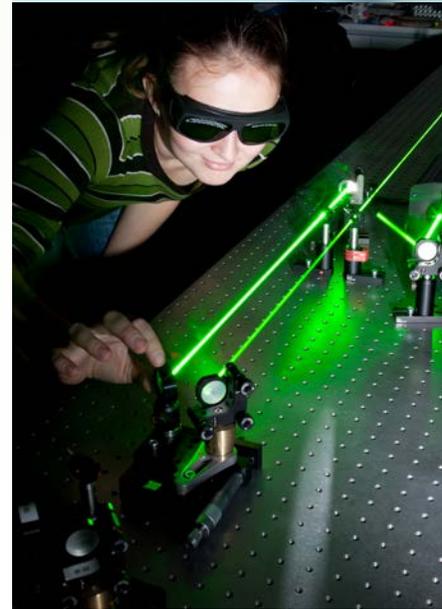
The Matching Grants Research Program (MGRP) fostered 61 applied research partnerships – three of which resulted from The Corridor Council’s partnership with FloridaMakes, established in the previous fiscal year – between 39 high tech companies and 43 research faculty and 172 student contracts from our three universities to advance innovation and support development of next-generation solutions that address business and societal needs. Cash and in-kind investments by industry partners totaled \$8.73 million and The Corridor Council’s cash match totaled more than \$3.93 million.

Since inception of the MGRP, Corridor Council investments have been matched by corporate cash and in-kind investments to generate more than \$1 billion in quantifiable downstream impacts.

stemCONNECT: Engaging the Workforce of Tomorrow

2019–2020 was yet another record-setting year for stemCONNECT, which helped more than 77,900 students and teachers – a 430% increase over the prior year – participate in virtual field trips led by nearly 300 STEM subject-matter experts using virtual video conferencing tools. Through stemCONNECT, high tech experts give students a behind-the-scenes look at viable opportunities in STEM, bringing the concept of contextual learning to new heights while helping students realize new possibilities for their future.

As COVID-19 took hold as a global pandemic, educators across the country sought out virtual resources to bolster student engagement, and stemCONNECT delivered. In collaboration with partners – including Boy Scouts of America and Junior Achievement of Central Florida – stemCONNECT expanded its reach and enhanced its impact during unprecedented times. Through these partnerships, as well as engagement with industry events like Otronicon and Interservice/Industry Training, Simulation and



Education Conference (I/ITSEC) – the world’s largest modeling, simulation and training conference – stemCONNECT contributed nearly 4,500 volunteer hours over the past year to facilitate K-12 STEM education to further bolster The Corridor region’s talent pool.

Talent Forum: Where Talent Meets Opportunity

Out of an abundance of caution, Talent Forum 2020 was canceled due to COVID-19-related safety and travel concerns. However, until the point of cancellation, The Corridor Council had secured 17 companies and 10 sponsors, with the goal of fostering relationships for the ongoing exchange of job leads and talent referrals. This level of engagement, combined with the secured signup of more than 50 universities from across the country, indicates a promising future for Corridor programs that attract world-class talent to the region.

FLVEC: Driving Florida’s Entrepreneurship Ecosystem

In the last year, the Florida Virtual Entrepreneur Center (FLVEC) – recognized as a preeminent business resource and entrepreneur directory in Florida – doubled down on its commitment to provide value for its entrepreneurial community and program sponsors, adding several tools at no additional cost.

Stories of entrepreneurial success remain the platform’s most popular and impactful tool. FLVEC surpassed the milestone of 1,000 entrepreneur profiles, which collectively generated 463,449 unique views, a 54% increase from the prior year. More importantly, these profiles continue to build the program’s community of business owners who meet regularly to share best practices and offer support, which often manifests in the form of business deals, peer mentoring and other opportunities for growth.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, FLVEC launched a new webpage with crisis management resources, which has already been viewed more than 1,000 times since publication. Because its entrepreneurial community could no longer attend in-person professional development events, the team also started an exclusive webinar series that has attracted 53 participants to three sessions to-date.

Most recently, the program’s new “Ask Me Anything” feature has become a key tool for business owners needing a rapid response to their questions. FLVEC guarantees a response to every inquiry within 24 hours or less.

Marketing: Sharing the Story of The Corridor

The Corridor Council’s strategic marketing programs are designed to strengthen the region’s positioning as a premier location for high tech industry and innovation, and the reputation of its three universities as world-class research institutions.

In 2019-2020, one of our milestone initiatives was generating awareness of and support for The Corridor Council’s new CEO, Paul Sohl, Rear Adm. USN (ret), while highlighting the organization’s vision for the future. The Corridor Council’s marketing team managed a multichannel communications campaign to promote the announcement, garnering nearly 4.2 million impressions through media relations efforts, direct communication with stakeholders, email marketing, social media promotion and more.

Additionally, stories about industry news, program milestones, events and research activity in the 23-county Corridor region reached a targeted audience of more than 92 million stakeholders through the digital magazine, email marketing, social media and traditional media channels.

Partner Support

The Corridor Council proudly supports our regional and county economic development partners and affiliates with the resources vital to continue their invaluable work in economic development. \$466,500 was committed to support more than 40 economic development and educational initiatives to stimulate high tech activity across the region. Beneficiaries included the National Academy of Inventors, the Florida Foundation for Future Scientists and the National Entrepreneur Center.

