

Harbor Branch campus is vital to the success of FAU



GUEST COLUMNIST
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The first time I visited Florida Atlantic University's Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institute in Fort Pierce, I was surprised at the natural beauty of the 144-acre campus along the Indian River Lagoon.

However, the wonders at Harbor Branch do not stop there. Enter any of the 32 buildings we own and operate on the campus, and visitors would be similarly astounded by the level of science conducted by our 180-plus marine scientists, engineers, educators and other professionals focused on ocean science. From aquaculture and stock enhancement to marine biomedical and biotechnology research, our scientific discovery at Harbor Branch is both broad and deep.

In January, after a competitive national search, the university appointed a new executive director at the institute. Anton Post, a world-renowned oceanographer and leading phytoplankton researcher, is charged with developing and implementing programs that build on the success of all marine and environmental research at the university. Post's field of research is particularly important to the communities surrounding Harbor Branch because environmental issues can affect the state's tourism industry and the economy at large.

His appointment was especially significant because Post also is director of one of four "pillars" that form the cornerstones of the university's strategic plan, Race to Excellence. The plan is designed to guide the university through to 2025, and the four pillars define institutional programs focused on creating knowledge that benefits society.

One of the four pillars — ocean science and engineering/environmental sciences — exists, in part, because of Harbor Branch. With Post guiding both the pillar and the institute, the prominence of Harbor Branch's role in the university's future success cannot be



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Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institute in Fort Pierce is helping to make Florida Atlantic one of the fastest-improving universities in the nation.

understated.

Appointing Post as executive director, and positioning Harbor Branch as mission-critical to the successful implementation of the university's strategic plan, underscores the institute's importance to FAU as a whole. The university is committed to continuing to hire leading faculty at Harbor Branch. Parallel to this commitment is support for the institute's funding.

The annual budget of Harbor Branch is approximately \$21.2 million. Of this, approximately \$8 million comes from grants, \$9 million comes from FAU's central budget, \$2 million comes from a state license plate program that supports research at Harbor Branch and another \$2 million is from the Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institute Foundation. FAU will invest an additional \$6.5 million over the next five years to further develop Harbor Branch's research mission.

The Harbor Branch Oceanographic

Institute Foundation is a very important component of the university. It is a certified Direct Support Organization of Florida Atlantic University. These are a category of not-for-profit organizations created by the Florida Legislature that exist for one reason: to benefit the university with which they are affiliated. Because of their unique and important purpose, DSOs have several special legal benefits and responsibilities.

To fulfill their mission, DSOs might receive, hold, invest, administer property and make expenditures to or for the benefit of the university. To operate most efficiently and cost-effectively, DSOs could use university property, facilities and personnel services. To ensure DSO accountability and consistency with a university's mission, the university boards of trustees oversee affiliated DSO boards and approve DSO budgets, and university presidents or their designee supervise DSO senior administrators.

The Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institute Foundation became a DSO of FAU in 2008 as part of the \$69 million transaction in which Harbor Branch became a part of FAU. Its sole and unique mission is to support the research, educational programs, infrastructure and overall mission of FAU and Harbor Branch.

Post's appointment, FAU's significant investment in its ocean, environmental and ocean engineering sciences pillar and the world-class research already underway at Harbor Branch will help the institute further its reputation and global impact in marine and related sciences.

The university also will continue to support Harbor Branch through strategic investment of resources, which in turn will support our efforts to position Florida Atlantic University as the fastest-improving university in America.

John Kelly is president of Florida Atlantic University.