

Innovative Outreach to Scholastic Journalism Award

FIU faculty work with high school journalists to inform public on sea level rise

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Four Florida International University faculty members have been named the 2015 winners of the Innovative Outreach to Scholastic Journalism, an annual competition sponsored by the Scholastic Journalism Division of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication.

Dr. Robert Gutsche Jr., Dr. Susan Jacobson, Professor Kate MacMillin and Dr. Juliet Pinto worked as a team to create “Sea Level Rise: South Florida and eyesontherise.org” – a project involving FIU students and high school students attending MAST@FIU BBC. The Marine Academy of Science and Technology (MAST) is a STEM magnet high school and the only public magnet high school in Florida that resides on the campus of a public university.

“Sea Level Rise is a very innovative collaboration of college faculty and students with high school faculty and students,” said Julie Dodd, coordinator of the Innovative Outreach competition.

“The project is a great learning opportunity for the high school students – both to learn about the political, economic and social issues involved with sea level rise and to develop multi-media skills as journalists.”

The 150 students attending MAST@FIU BBC and their teachers were involved in the project, which included



Winners of the 2015 Innovative Outreach to Scholastic Journalism Award are Florida International University faculty (from left) Ted Gutsche, Kate MacMillin, Susan Jacobson and Juliet Pinto. Photo by Katie Lepri

FIU students in the School of Journalism and Mass Communication, FIU faculty members and community members.

The high school students learned how to create and use an app for the project, learned how to analyze Web analytics, and used mapping strategies to tell the story of sea level rise in an engaging approach for the community.

In addition to the high school students reporting in the high school newspaper, they partnered with news outlets including National Geographic, NBC’s TODAY show, and the Weather Channel. The high school students also were involved in planning and leading a Sea Level Rally and were involved in hands-on work in building and testing water sensors.

The four FIU faculty took a team approach in developing and coordinating the project. Gutsche oversaw the integration of journalism curricula and assessment between college and high school classes. Jacobson led

education faculty and media programs to support high school journalism.

The competition is designed to recognize programs that promote interest and training in scholastic journalism at the secondary and pre-secondary level (K-12) that provide models of innovative programs that higher education media programs could replicate.

The ability to replicate the outreach program is a major factor in the selection of the top programs. These can include one-day workshops, online training or summer training. The division established the award in 2003.

Last year’s winner was Nicole Kraft of Ohio State University, for her project “Learning to Roar: World Languages Meet Scholastic Journalism at Columbus City Schools.”

Gutsche, Jacobson, MacMillin and Pinto will receive the Innovative Outreach to Scholastic Journalism Award on Aug. 6, at the AEJMC Convention in San Francisco.

the development and testing of the Sea Level Rise technology applications. MacMillin guided college students in producing their own documentary about the Sea Level Rise project that will air in primetime on local public television. Pinto coordinated community partnerships related to the project.

The AEJMC Scholastic Journalism Division hosts the Innovative Outreach to Scholastic Journalism competition to provide national awareness of top programs and to encourage other higher



Students from Florida International University and from MAST@FIU, a STEM magnet high school, reported to NBC’s TODAY show about sea level rise in South Florida in October 2014.