

B-CU Partnership Continues to Build STEM Workforce

Bethune Cookman University is an institutional partner in the [Center for Coastal and Marine Ecosystems II \(CCME II\)](#). Through this partnership, B-CU contributes to the mission train a new generation of U.S. Citizen scientists in STEM disciplines that confront issues in marine and coastal communities. The center is funded by the Office of Education at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). [Dr. Hyun 'J' Cho, Ph.D.](#), professor in the Department of Integrated Environmental Science serves as the institutional primary investigator. She is joined by other BCU faculty and staff such as Dr. Brandon Vernier and Kelly San Antonio who also support student success and educational development. Center highlights at B-CU include the following:

- Multiple BCU students presented research at the 11th Biennial Education and Science Forum in Princess Anne, MD. The event covered research topics within promote healthy oceans, environmental intelligence, a weather ready nation, as well as resilient coastal communities and economies.
- CCME II affiliated faculty, staff and students presented research at meeting such as the following: AGU conference (Dec 2024), ERAU Sustainability Conference (Nov 2024), Indian River Lagoon Symposium (Feb 2025), Florida Society of Geographers' annual meeting (Feb 2025), and Central Florida GIS Workshop (Aug 2025).
- B-CU students, Samantha Houser and Josie Fountain received awards (first place and third place, respectively) at the NOAA Biennial and Education Science Forum for their research presentations
- BCU faculty and staff traveled to Pacific Marine Environmental Laboratory to learn about NOAA aligned research and expand research collaborations
- Imani Ford, a BCU master's student was [featured in a center highlight](#) for NOAA Experiential Research and Training Opportunity (NERTO) Internship at the Office for Coastal Management (OCM) in Silver Spring, Maryland
- In Spring 2025, Imani Ford completed her master's in integrated environmental science
- Through a NOAA Planet Stewards Award, BCU offered a spring course on marine debris which was offered to other partner institutions.
- CCME II affiliated faculty and staff published research articles in Remote Sensing, Ecological Restoration, Water, Sustainability, Gulf and Caribbean Research, and Remote Sensing Handbook (Vol. V).
- BCU Research Faculty, Kelly San Antonio, offered a 10-week training of GIS to the NOAA-CCME II scholars in summer 2025.

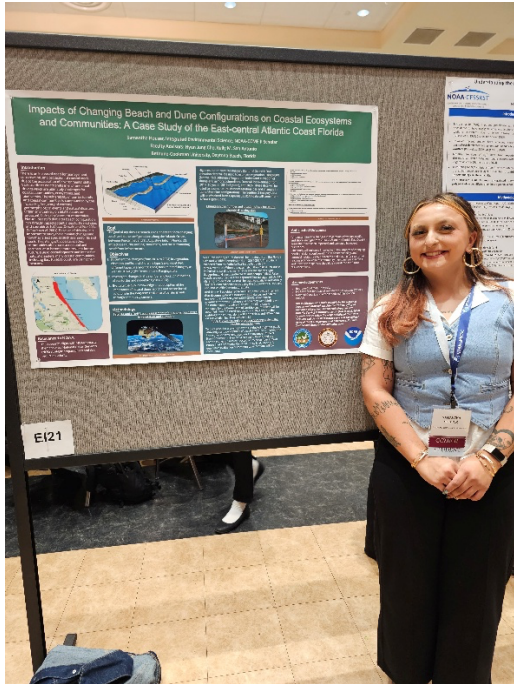
The NOAA-CCME II award provides broader benefits to the B-CU community. It has enhanced student research opportunities by funding theses, internships, and national conference presentations (e.g., AGU, CERF, GIS Symposiums). The award supports community-based learning and outreach, including Planet Stewards' Marine Debris initiatives and Living Seawall workshops that engage local municipalities and residents. Faculty benefit from professional development, expanded research capacity in geospatial and satellite-based coastal resilience, and leveraging additional awards (NSF-CIVIC, NASA-DEAP, Title III ADAPT-EI). The grant has

contributed to building a pipeline of STEM talent, increasing graduate enrollment and applicants nationwide. These attributes strengthens-BCU's leadership in environmental intelligence, coastal resilience, and place-based conservation—directly aligning with Florida's state priorities for resilient community adaptation, harmful algal bloom investigation, and workforce development.

Sample Photos



CCME II affiliated staff at BCU Kelly San Antonio and CCME II scholars at BCU Imani Ford, Samantha Houser, Jackson Evans and Josie Fountain at the NOAA Biennial Education and Science Forum in Princess Anne, Maryland



CCME II scholar at BCU, Samantha Houser at her research poster at the NOAA Biennial Education and Science Forum (She won the first prize for poster presentation; along with Josie Fountain who won the second-place poster presentation award)



BCU Faculty, staff and students pictured with other members of the CCME II network at the Center wide Core Competency Course in Corpus Christi, Texas