Research Skill
“A Cascade Effect: Florida Bay, Climate Change & Us”, CURFIU, Everglades Spring 2018

This independent research study is one of my best works of my undergraduate career at FIU, and for several reasons. I had never anticipated to undertake a research project that would be presented at a conference. But being a student in the Everglades: Beginning to End? course of the Honors College, I was surely going to make it happen. I find myself lucky that I had the mentors that I did, namely Professors Machonis and Graham. They guided and monitored us every step of the way and always provided help, such as in contacts and overcoming obstacles.

Another reason why this is one of my best works is because of the meticulous effort I put into it. As an English major who took upon a science-based topic, I made sure that I read up as much as possible on algae blooms, the ecosystem of the Florida Bay, and the local economies that rely on the Bay’s health. I maintained an annotated bibliography for the texts I read, noting points of issues that I would focus on and make integral to my project. I also created an outline for not only the individual parts of the project and how to execute them, but also when to execute them by. I also kept track of all of the scientists I spoke to, making sure to prepare informed questions and transcribe my interviews with them. I was careful to do each of the necessary tasks on a timely basis and regularly by every week or so. Because of this organization, I was really able to maximize active production of work towards the project.

Lastly, I was very proud of my work, though a typical research project, because of the experts that I had privilege to talk to. I spoke to five different scientists, two of them social scientists that study local fishing communities in Southern Florida, including the Florida Keys. They were all equally helpful. Another person I interviewed, who is not included in the final product of my conference poster, was a local longtime fisherman. It was interesting to get an in-person perspective on environmental changes across the years in the general area of the Florida Bay rather than just from the social scientists I spoke to. Although I was only able to interview one fisherman, doing so allowed me to put an actual face to those communities at stake because of extreme changes in climate.

I sifted through a lot of information throughout the months I worked on this project. That wasn’t the particularly difficult part. The challenge was to synthesize all the information to what was necessary to what I wanted to convey. Part of this synthesis was also based on how it would fit and look on the poster itself. I had to be conscious in making my poster and the information on it appealing enough, aesthetically as well, without losing the major points I wanted to make.

One way I could have definitely improved upon the impact of my project was to have interviewed more fishermen who have experience in fishing by the Florida Bay. It would have involved a bit of improvising on my behalf. By that I mean is to have gone to fish markets in Miami and approach fishermen that were willing to be interviewed. Perhaps I didn’t have enough belief in myself to do that. But it is something I think on even today in terms of ways that I could have improved upon the project. Doing so would have surely fleshed the project out more.