



Office of
COMMUNITY RELATIONS

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Joseph H. Simmons Named FGCU's Backe Chair in Renewable Energy

FORT MYERS, FL – Florida Gulf Coast University announces the appointment of Dr. Joseph H. Simmons as Eminent Scholar to fill the FGCU Backe Chair in Renewable Energy. He will join the university during the fall 2011 semester.

The Backe Chair in Renewable Energy at Florida Gulf Coast University was established by John D. Backe of The Backe Foundation, Inc. through a generous \$1 million gift to Florida Gulf Coast University that will be matched by the State of Florida through the state's matching gift program for an additional \$750,000.

In November 2010, Florida Gulf Coast University received a \$200,000 grant award under the New Florida Initiative Scholars Boost Program to assist FGCU in recruiting the Backe Chair in Renewable Energy.

“The State of Florida has tremendous potential in fueling economic development with renewable energy research, enterprise and business,” said Simmons. “I am very excited to have the opportunity to bring my experience from Arizona to lead in the development of renewable energy growth in biofuels, solar energy, energy storage and the smart grid at FGCU and Southwest Florida.”

Simmons currently heads the Arizona Research Institute for Solar Energy (AzRISE) at the University of Arizona. He holds a Ph.D. in Physics from the Catholic University of America, a Master of Science in Physics from John Carroll University, and a Bachelor of Science from the University of Maryland.

A fellow of the American Ceramic Society, his research experience includes serving as Research Physicist for NASA at the Lewis Research Center in Cleveland, Ohio and Senior Physicist for the National Bureau of Standards in Washington, DC. Simmons is a recipient of the George W. Morey Award for Research Excellence (American Ceramic Society), the Excellence in Engineering Teaching Award from the Florida Chapter of Alpha Sigma Mu, the Ford Motor Company Outstanding Research Award, and was named to the Greaves Walker Honor Roll.

Associate Vice President for Research Dr. Tom Roberts said, “I am extremely excited to have an opportunity to work with such an accomplished and experienced scientist as Dr. Simmons. His enthusiasm for renewable energy research and related initiatives is contagious and I am quite confident that this will quickly become an area of great emphasis and positive recognition for FGCU.”

The Backe Chair's leadership, knowledge and cutting edge research will enhance the learning experience of FGCU students at the undergraduate and graduate levels. The Chair's duties include: conducting research in the field of renewable energy; conducting outreach activities including seminars and symposia for the community about the benefits of renewable energy; supporting efforts to attract industry partners in renewable energy; and establishing an Institute for Renewable Energy Research at FGCU.

For more information, media representatives should contact Dr. Roberts at (239) 590-7021.

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