

MARITIME ADMINISTRATION  
U.S. Department of Transportation  
Center of Excellence (CoE) for Domestic Workforce Training and Education

**The College of the Florida Keys – Key West, Florida**

The Secretary of Transportation redesignates The College of the Florida Keys (CFK) as a Center of Excellence for Domestic Maritime Workforce Training and Education (CoE) for its location, marine science and engineering programs, and commitment to workforce development across the Florida Keys archipelago. Operating from its primary campus in Key West along with centers in the Middle and Upper Keys, CFK serves as an educational and technical training hub for commercial fishing, diving technologies, marine engineering, and coastal resource management.

**Operational Footprint & Assets**

Marine science and technology infrastructure incorporates working vessels, specialized marine laboratories, and custom renewable energy test platforms.

- **Marine Engineering & Seamanship (AAS-MEMS):** Offers a 66-credit Associate of Applied Science alongside embedded College Credit Certificates (CCC) in Marine Technology and Professional Welding. Core instruction covers marine diesel overhaul, two- and four-stroke outboard repair, applied marine electricity, fiberglass boat repair, and seamanship.
- **Diving Business & Technology (AAS-DB&T):** Delivers a 62-credit Associate of Applied Science with four stackable CCC pathways: Professional Research Diving, Fundamentals of Professional Diving, Diving Medical Technician, and Professional Dive Instructor. Training features an on-campus open-water Underwater Training Area (UTA) equipped with recompression chamber access and underwater communications.
- **Marine Environmental Technology & Applied Sciences:** Grants an Associate of Science (A.S.) in Marine Environmental Technology (including a Tropical Ornamental Mariculture Technician CCC) and a Bachelor of Science (B.S.) in Marine Resource Management. Houses the Southernmost Marine Aquaculture Research and Training (SMART) Center.
- **Training Vessels & Specialized Platforms:** Operates the *M/V FKCC-2* (a 42-foot custom motorized catamaran carrying up to 49 passengers or 30 divers) and a 10-meter 100% solar/wind-powered Renewable Energy Test Vessel (RETV) for marine hydrokinetic and dive research.
- **Industry Certifications & Accreditations:** Recognized as an American Boat and Yacht Council (ABYC) Marine Trades Accredited School and an official Yamaha Technical School Partner issuing Yamaha Maintenance Certification Program (MCP) credentials. Prepares students for American Welding Society (AWS), PADI, and AAUS Scientific Diver certifications.

**Workforce & Regional Impact**

Maintains close links with regional employers, state environmental agencies, and federal military installations.

- **Enrollment & Completion Trends:** Since its initial 2021 CoE designation, enrollment in the AAS-MEMS program expanded by 24%. Student semester hours in Marine Technology (MTE)

courses increased by 18% between 2019 and 2023.

- **High Course Success Rates:** Maintains an 80% course passing rate across its technical marine coursework. Surveys show that 50% to 60% of MEMS graduates enter directly into maritime industry positions.

- **Defense & Federal Agency Pipeline:** Placed graduates and interns with the Naval Research Laboratory (Trumbo Point Annex), Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary / NOAA, U.S. Coast Guard Sector Key West, and the NOAA Commissioned Officer Corps.

- **K-12 & Public Charter High School Integration:** Launched the CFK Academy in August 2023, a tuition-free public charter high school focused on STEM and CTE, allowing students to complete dual-enrollment college credits toward associate degrees or technical certificates before high school graduation.

## **Strategic Outlook**

Supported by nearly \$10 million in external STEM research grants (including NSF, NOAA, and U.S. Department of Energy awards) and state capital approval for a 240-bed on-campus dormitory, The College of the Florida Keys continues to expand its maritime training capacity. By integrating traditional seamanship, commercial diving, marine mechanics, and emerging offshore renewable energy technologies, CFK secures a trained workforce for the Florida Keys' marine economy and national maritime infrastructure.