



Alumni



SAM HENDERSON
BS, ENVIRONMENTAL
SCIENCE & POLICY '10
MLA, LIBERAL ARTS '14

Sam Henderson, the august mayor of Gulfport, FL, is without a doubt a leader who knows the proverbial “lay of the land” – literally! With a background in environmental science and management, Sam brings

extensive knowledge and practical skills to his work. Elected as mayor of the City of Gulfport in 2013, Sam first honed his public service skills as a Gulfport City Council member. In March 2009, he defeated three candidates, including the incumbent, to win his first term on City Council. Sam was re-elected to a second term in 2011.

Concurrent to his municipal activities, Sam was also completing his university undergraduate degree in Environmental Science and Policy, with a minor in Geography. In 2010, while considering a master’s degree in Environmental Science, Sam taught science labs for four semesters as a teaching assistant for Dr. Jim Krest and Dr. Iuri Herzfeld. During the same year, he received the USFSP Regional Chancellor’s Award for Civic Engagement. Combining his interests in the natural world and government, Sam opted to pursue a master’s degree in Florida Studies, with a concentration in public policy and ecology. To expand his understanding of document collection and preservation, Sam compiled Pinellas County public records while employed in 2013 as a graduate assistant under Jim Schnur, the expert USFSP Special Collections librarian.

Integrating these various professional experiences, Sam continues to navigate our community’s complex interactions with foresight and precision. Sam was a voting member of the Tampa Bay Regional Planning Council from 2011-13. He also became the first representative from Gulfport to serve on the Pinellas Planning Council, serving from 2012-14. Currently the Chair of the Florida

League of Cities' Energy, Environmental and Natural Resources Legislative Committee, Sam was Vice Chair in 2013-14. Sam's zeal for effective public service shows no signs of abating. He plans to run for a second term as Gulfport's mayor in 2016 – and he is actively seeking a new and meaningful career in environmental policy and public lands management.

“My time at USFSP was challenging, enlightening and transformative. As a 38 year old returning to college after more than 15 years working in the environmental field, I was very invested in broadening my education, expanding my knowledge and attaining my degrees. Our intimate campus, burgeoning cutting-edge facilities and picturesque setting in the heart of St. Petersburg provided an ideal home away from home for my studies and recreation. I was fortunate to learn from several well-versed influential professors with diverse backgrounds who cared about my experience and success. I also enjoyed the camaraderie of many motivated classmates with whom I formed friendships that have extended beyond the classroom. If there is one person to whom I owe the greatest thanks, it is Professor Chris Meindl who guided me through both a Bachelor's degree and a Master's Degree. His patience and dedication to my scholarship, his understanding and encouragement of my unique situations outside the classroom, and his engaging friendship made all the difference in my USFSP journey.”



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