

# FIU Launches Sustainability Program To Balance Tourism With Environmental Concerns

By Hank Tester May 12, 2021 at 6:55 pm Filed Under: Environment, FIU, Hank Tester, Local TV, Miami News, Tourism



MIAMI (CBSMiami) – Tourism along with Florida’s environment and natural wonders are the lifeblood of the state’s sun-bathed economic engine. The two go hand in hand in drawing visitors who spend \$100 billion a year and support millions of jobs, according to Visit Florida.

“Are we being good stewards of the community by protecting natural resources, and if we are, are we directly protecting our tourism dollars?” asked Joseph Cilli, Director of Distance Learning for Florida International University’s Chaplin School of Hospitality and Tourism Management.



The COVID pandemic taught several environmental lessons. For example, with cruise ships not sailing, the harbor channel in Key West became clear got the first time in years. It was a lesson on the impact that the overpopulation of tourism has on the environment.

“It was direct evidence of you know, the damage what we are doing with overpopulation and the need for us to protect the environment,” said Cilli.

To address the tourism and environment issue, Florida International University is [launching a degree program](#) in January 2022 to provide, “the global hospitality and tourism industry with sustainability-oriented managers who will know how to balance travelers’ desires for memorable experiences while protecting nature, culture, communities, and the planet,” according to the university.

“The idea behind our program is to basically educate and then create the managers at the next level who have sustainability principles in mind when they are dealing with their management,” said Cilli.

Students will learn how to promote sustainability in tourism for businesses, government, and non-governmental organizations anywhere in the world.

“Roughly half of the courses will be hospitality and tourism-related, the other half will be from environmental studies,” said Cilli.

Many airlines, cruise lines, hotels, convention and visitor organizations, and theme parks have individuals designated as responsible for sustainability. The FIU program hopes to funnel someone with a degree in that area into those organizations.

“I would not be surprised that within the next five to ten years we start seeing larger organizations with a Vice President of Sustainability,” said Cilli.

The hope is that many of those jobs will be filled by FIU graduates.