The College of the Florida Keys invites the community to celebrate the groundbreaking for its new Upper Keys Campus, which will be front and center on US1 at Mile Marker 106.4 as you enter the Keys. The new campus is scheduled to open in August 2021 and will enable CFK to add nine programs and serve more than 300 students annually.

The Foundation has been working with the college towards this goal for many years and we are thrilled to celebrate and support their progress! The Upper Keys have a critical shortage of both skilled employees and educational opportunities. We expect the opportunity afforded by the new campus will not only be a game-changer for the Key Largo community, but will also produce employees needed by the Ocean Reef community and help both areas to develop and retain skilled workers and their families.

History of the College
The College of the Florida Keys, which operates from its main campus in Key West with satellite spaces in the Middle and Upper Keys, was first established as a community college in 1965. You may know them as Florida Keys Community College or FKCC, but with the addition of bachelor’s degrees to their offerings, the legislature recently approved the name change. Although many students get an associate or bachelor’s degree, the college maintains the highest percentage of students in direct-to-workforce programs in the state at 64 percent.

Program Plans
Today the college’s Upper Keys offerings of degrees and workforce-training programs are quite restricted in the inadequate space CFK currently occupies at Coral Shores High School. The immediate plans for the new campus will enable it to double the number of students they can enroll and expand five existing programs in the Upper Keys: nursing, emergency medical technician/paramedic, marine environmental technology, public safety (law enforcement and corrections academies), and trade apprenticeships.

These programs will all clearly benefit the Ocean Reef community, and the Foundation is collaborating with the College to develop new programs to meet the needs of Ocean Reef employers such as the Club, Community Association and Medical Center.

While the project has been in the works for years, CFK was finally awarded a $16 million grant from the U.S. Department of Commerce’s Economic Development Administration (EDA) to construct the new facility last year. Monroe County recently approved $100,000 contributed from the Monroe County Sheriff’s fine-and-forfeiture fund. Foundation plans include contributing significantly to the additional $3.4 million still needed.

The groundbreaking ceremony will be held at the site of the new building at Mile Marker 106.4 on the Overseas Highway in Key Largo on Friday, March 27 at 9:30 a.m. The 2.12-acre property, which previously housed a “Shell World” store, has been cleared to prepare for construction of the 38,000-square-foot CFK facility. The Foundation is planning transportation from Ocean Reef for the groundbreaking event and a few seats are still open. Please email foundation@oceanreef.com or call 305-367-4707 to reserve a spot and/or for more information about the project.

The College of the Florida Keys will break ground on its 38,000-square-foot Upper Keys Center at MM106 on Friday, March 27 (architectural rendering above).