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Overview of the NCHC Faculty Institute in Miami and the Everglades

Peter Machonis
Florida International University

The Honors College at Florida International University recently hosted a Faculty Institute for fifteen honors program and honors college professors entitled "Miami and the Everglades: Built and Endangered Environments." Participants came from Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, Ohio, Kentucky, New York, Pennsylvania, Iowa and Arizona. The Institute was organized by the Honors Semesters Committee of NCHC.

Participants used FIU's Wolfsonian Museum on South Beach as a base for exploring the various communities of Miami Beach, using the City as Text© methodology—an approach to active learning that integrates direct experience, inquiry and knowledge. They also took part in a one-day field exploration to the Everglades National Park, including a fifteen-mile bike tour of Shark Valley. They spent the last day of the seminar at FIU's Honors College on the University Park Campus applying these practical immersion learning experiences to projects for their home institutions.

Everything went smoothly from our first meeting at the Wolfsonian Dynamo Café to our final dinner at La Carreta, Kendall. It was a great group of professors who meshed well and took the written assignments seriously. Many in the group anticipate a reunion next November in Philadelphia at the NCHC National Conference, where they have proposed a forum session to review and expand on their Institute experiences.

The following essay by Joy Ochs, a participant in the Faculty Institute, provides an insider's view of the experience.

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