

DISTANCE LEARNING & STUDENT SERVICES NEWS

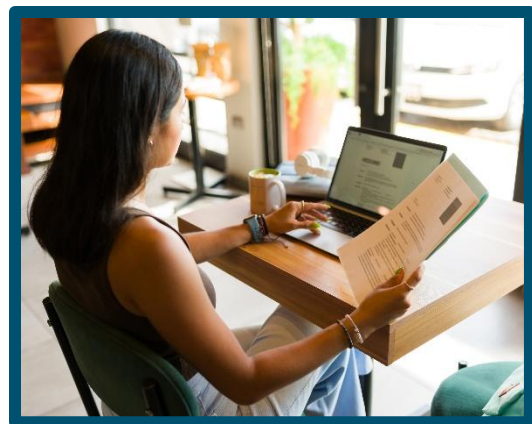
TOP NEWS

How Gen Z in Florida is Navigating a Weaker Labor Market in the Age of AI

“The state’s unemployment is outpacing the national average. [The candidate pool is flooded with graduates seeking similar work.](#) And artificial intelligence (AI) is changing the game for employers and job seekers alike.

Brenda Abreus, 21, graduated in May from the University of Central Florida with a degree in media production and management. She’s two months into her job search with no luck...”

(Source: WUSF)



How Florida State University Is Building Its AI Ecosystem

“Faculty and students, academic researchers, the staff and administrators working behind the scenes at colleges and universities around the country are all leveraging artificial intelligence to teach, learn, and work more efficiently and effectively.

One recent survey, in fact, found that 95 percent of students and educators are actively using AI tools...

In this environment, a growing number of colleges are creating programs to ensure the official AI solutions on their campuses align not only with their academic and administrative needs but also with their institutional policies. [The Information Technology Services department at Florida State University shared some of its strategies for success.](#)”

(Source: EdTech Magazine)



90 Percent of Students Use AI in the Classroom, Instructure Poll Finds

“Higher education has been grappling with AI use in college classrooms and boardrooms since late 2022 when ChatGPT first launched... [A large majority of college students — 90 percent — report using artificial intelligence in class at least occasionally.](#) according to new survey data from ed tech provider Instructure. Nearly two-thirds of college instructors, 61 percent, said the same. But the survey, released on July 21, also found that only 11 percent of higher ed instructors received comprehensive AI training, while 41 percent said they had not received any formal training on AI.”

(Source: Higher Ed Dive)





DLSS UPDATES

FL-IDN's July 2026 Webinars Promoted the Learner-Centered Approach

Earlier this month, on July 7, FL-IDN hosted a lightning round webinar with two presentations, “Bear-ing the Load Together: Collaborative Course Design for Impactful Online Learning” and “Your Crystal Ball is Broken: Why Student Behavior Still Surprises Us.”

For the first presentation, participants joined a dynamic dialogue between learning experience designers and lecturers as they shared how collaborative partnerships, shared frameworks, and values-driven processes have led to innovative, high-quality course designs — both for new courses and redesigned ones. Grounded in instructional design principles and adult learning theory, this session showcased practical examples that reflect a strong commitment to student-centered learning, Universal Design for Learning (UDL), and accessibility. Participants walked away with research-based strategies and course development practices they can apply or adapt within their own institutions.

Lindsey Morris, Kristen Risinger, Ryann N. Shelton, and Leanne Howell (Baylor University) were our guest speakers.

For the second presentation, participants joined a discussion that uncovered a surprising complexity in the way we think and act. Anyone can be lazy in certain circumstances; high-performing students can still have gaps in their understanding; and unmotivated students can demonstrate great focus and enthusiasm in unlikely scenarios. It's not unusual to hear student behavior defined by these supposed personality traits. These statements speak to the frustrations of many instructors but fail to provide a workable solution. The implicit conclusion is that it's just the way students are. In this session, participants looked at research in neuroscience and human behavior to better understand those complexities in order to create workable solutions for their students.

Caitlin Malone (University of Tennessee, Knoxville) was our guest speaker.

- [Watch the recording from the FL-IDN webinar on July 7.](#)
- [View slides from the first presentation on July 7.](#)
- [View slides from the second presentation on July 7.](#)

Last week, on July 21, FL-IDN hosted a second webinar, “Revolutionizing Learning with Interactive Avatars.” Imagine immersive learning environments where lifelike avatars simulate real-world scenarios, adapting their words, tone, and emotions in real time. These generative AI-driven avatars move beyond scripted responses, allowing learners to engage in dynamic, authentic role play that fosters empathy, critical thinking, and practical skill development. From healthcare to leadership training, they offer diverse, flexible opportunities across disciplines and delivery modes. This session explored how to design hyper-realistic avatars that reflect complex traits like emotion, unmet needs, and conflict — breaking from AI’s traditional helpfulness. Participants learned best practices for avatar creation, integration strategies, and methods to boost learner engagement and performance, equipping learners for high-stake, real-world challenges.

John Bellotti and Rebecca McLagan (University of Wisconsin, Oshkosh) were our guest speakers.

- [Watch the recording from the FL-IDN webinar on July 21.](#)
- [View slides from the presentation on July 21.](#)

UF Researchers Use AI, Digital Twin Tech to Make Air Travel More Efficient, Resilient

“Airports can be frustrating. Between long lines, complicated security protocols and lost baggage, a fun vacation or an important work trip can easily become a stressful experience.

[University of Florida researchers are working to make that experience smoother by using digital twin technology and artificial intelligence](#) to mimic a real-life airport in action and to design systems that anticipate and prevent problems.

The Strategic Partnerships for Enhancing Airport Resilience (SPEAR) study is being done by faculty from UF Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (UF/IFAS) Department of Agricultural and Biological Engineering (ABE) and is funded by the National Science Foundation.”

(Source: UF News)

At USF's First AI Camp, Teens Explore Technology's Limits, Potential

"They slid on headsets and steadied themselves.

The two boys had a full view of the lecture hall in the University of South Florida's engineering building and all the other high school kids there with them.

But through their glasses, they also saw a table with colorful building blocks in front of them. They reached out, each slowly grabbing a block, then placing it atop a stack of others.

To the other kids, it looked like they were picking up and tossing cubes of air. To the boys, it looked real.

[The simulated pieces are part of something called augmented reality, according to the USF students assisting with the class.](#) Hand-tracking software translates physical movement to the virtual world, so the students can interact with the simulated blocks the same way they could with real ones..."

(Source: Tampa Bay Times)

QM License Renewal for 2026-2027

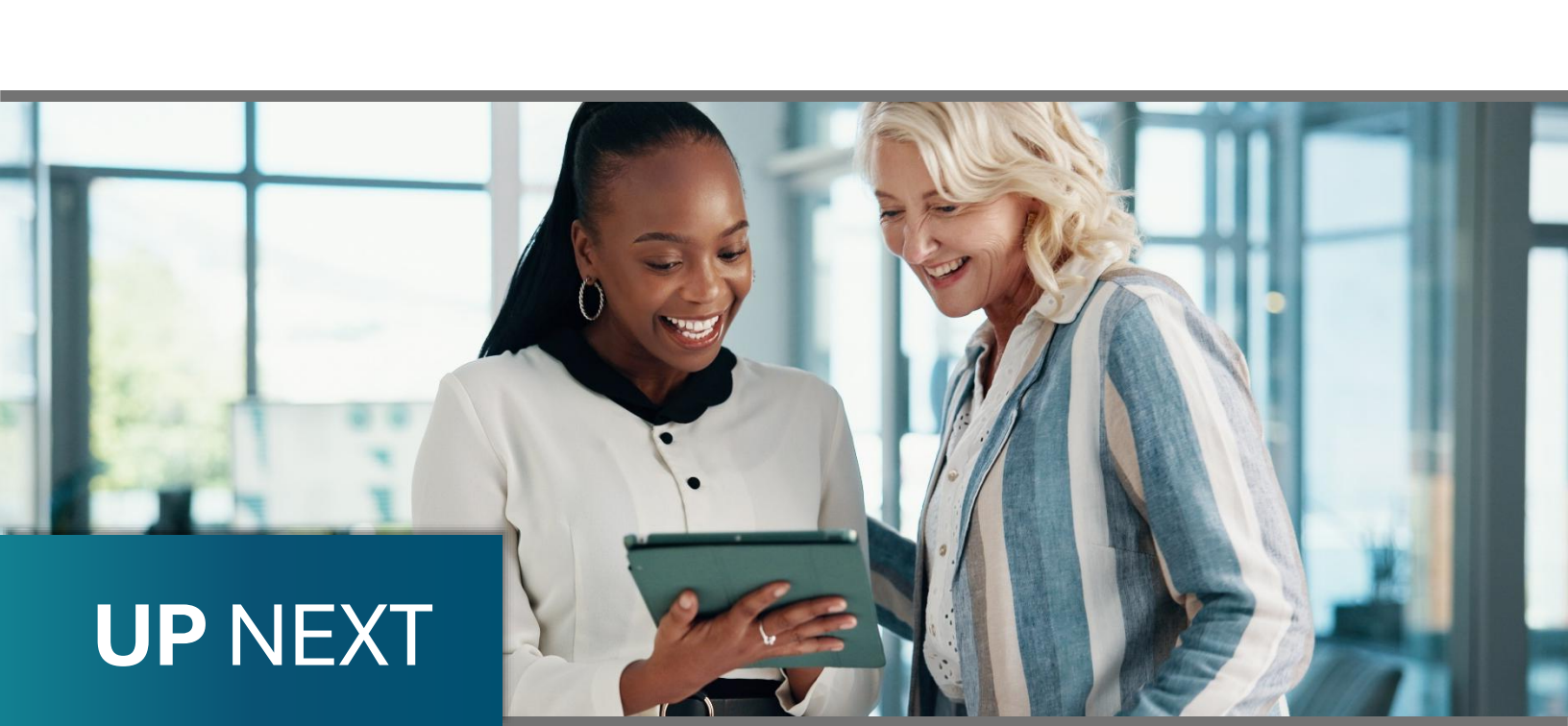
The [Florida Quality Matters Consortium \(FLQMC\)](#) currently has 35 affiliate institutions. FLQMC will continue making efforts to help our affiliate institutions save costs and maximize the QM professional development benefits that the [QM System License Subscription](#) offers.

Your total annual QM subscription cost for 2026-2027 includes two parts:

1. Affiliate Institution Subscription Fee (\$1275)
 - a. QM will invoice your institution, and you will pay QM this amount directly.
2. FLVC QM MOU Fee (The [\\$6355 QM Lead Institution Fee for System License Subscription](#) is divided evenly among all affiliate institutions in the system.)
 - a. FLVC will invoice your institution, and you will pay FLVC this amount directly, [as detailed on the FLQMC website.](#)
 - b. The MOU fee for 2026-2027 is \$182 for each affiliate institution. This MOU fee amount is based off the total number of institutions participating in the FLQMC System License Subscription for the 2026-2027 contract term. For the three institutions who added the supplemental IYOC license subscription, the evenly shared IYOC fee amount will be added to your invoice.

FLVC cannot issue the QM MOU fee invoices to member institutions until on or after July 1, 2026 due to the new or renewal contract starting date with QM. Please prepare to pay the MOU fee amount from your 2026-2027 budget.

If you have any questions, please feel free to [reach out to Tom Tu.](#)



UP NEXT

FL-IDN's Upcoming Webinars Will Promote Accessibility Awareness Month

Next month, on August 4, FL-IDN will host a webinar, “Applying UDL Principles to the Design & Facilitation of Instructor Workshops.” Oftentimes, Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is discussed within the context of classroom teaching and learning. However, these same principles can be applied to our design and facilitation of professional learning experiences for instructors. In this interactive session, participants will explore how they can leverage UDL to create more engaging and effective workshops for instructors. Participants will also discuss how implementing UDL in your workshops can serve as an important model for instructors. They will leave the session with practical strategies and resources that can help them design and facilitate with UDL in mind.

Tolulope Noah, Ed.D. (California State University, Long Beach) will be our guest speaker.

- August 4, 2026
- 2:00 – 2:50 PM (ET)
- [Registration for the FL-IDN webinar on August 4 is free.](#)

Later next month, on August 18, FL-IDN will host a lightning round webinar with two presentations, “Make a Plan for Digital Accessibility” and “Enhancing Accessibility in Course Content: Our Journey from 'Wait, What?' to 'We're on It'.”

For the first presentation, join a discussion that shows how one institution planned for digital accessibility. Digital accessibility is a best practice for online teaching, and it is also a legal responsibility. However, many faculty created their instructional materials before becoming aware of this responsibility, and they are overwhelmed by the task of addressing accessibility barriers in all those materials.

At the University of Missouri, a workbook was developed to help their instructors create a project management plan for this work, setting priorities and identifying strategies. In this webinar, participants will receive their own copy of this workbook and guidance for using it.

Laura Foley and Manon Allard-Kropp (University of Missouri) will be our guest speakers.

For the second presentation, join a discussion that shares insights on creating and implementing accessible digital course materials at the college level. With the recent updates from the Department of Justice to Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act regarding the requirement for accessible web content, it is essential that digital course materials are equitable and accessible for all students. This presentation will share our experience, at Le Moyne College, in addressing accessibility issues within the Canvas Learning Management System (LMS), with a specific focus on its use with screen readers. The insights gained and the strategies employed to ensure that instructional content is inclusive and accessible to all students, regardless of ability, will be highlighted. Participants can look forward to gaining valuable knowledge on effective methods, as well as our ongoing efforts to train both faculty and students to navigate and overcome these accessibility challenges.

Mounika Ragula, Ph.D. (Le Moyne College) will be our guest speaker.

- August 18, 2026
- 2:00 – 2:50 PM (ET)
- [Registration for the FL-IDN webinar on August 18 is free.](#)

The recordings and other resources related to these webinars will be sent to the FL-IDN and MCDLSS listservs as soon as they are made available.

FLVC's Upcoming Webinar Will Take Another Deep Dive Into SARA

Next month, on August 14, FLVC will host a webinar, “Navigating Distance Education with FL-SARA.” This session will cover critical compliance frameworks for out-of-state distance education, including navigating the institutional application process and evaluation criteria, maintaining strict adherence to core compliance requirements, and implementing vital operational and consumer protections for online students. This is a unique opportunity to strengthen your institution’s compliance efforts and get answers to your most pressing questions.

Brady Lyon (Educational Policy Director, Commission for Independent Education, Florida Department of Education) will be our guest speaker.

- August 14, 2026
- 10:00 – 11:00 AM (ET)
- [Registration for the FLVC webinar on August 14 is free.](#)

The recording and other resources related to this webinar will be sent to the MCDLSS listserv as soon as they are made available.

WCET's Upcoming "Closer Conversation" Will Explore Emerging Digital Learning Topics

Next month, on August 28, WCET will host an online event, "What's Next for Digital Learning." This interactive Closer Conversation will explore emerging digital learning topics that should be on every institution's watch list.

This member-only discussion will offer space to share insights, ask questions, and consider how evolving learner needs, workforce connections, and flexible pathways may shape the future of online education.

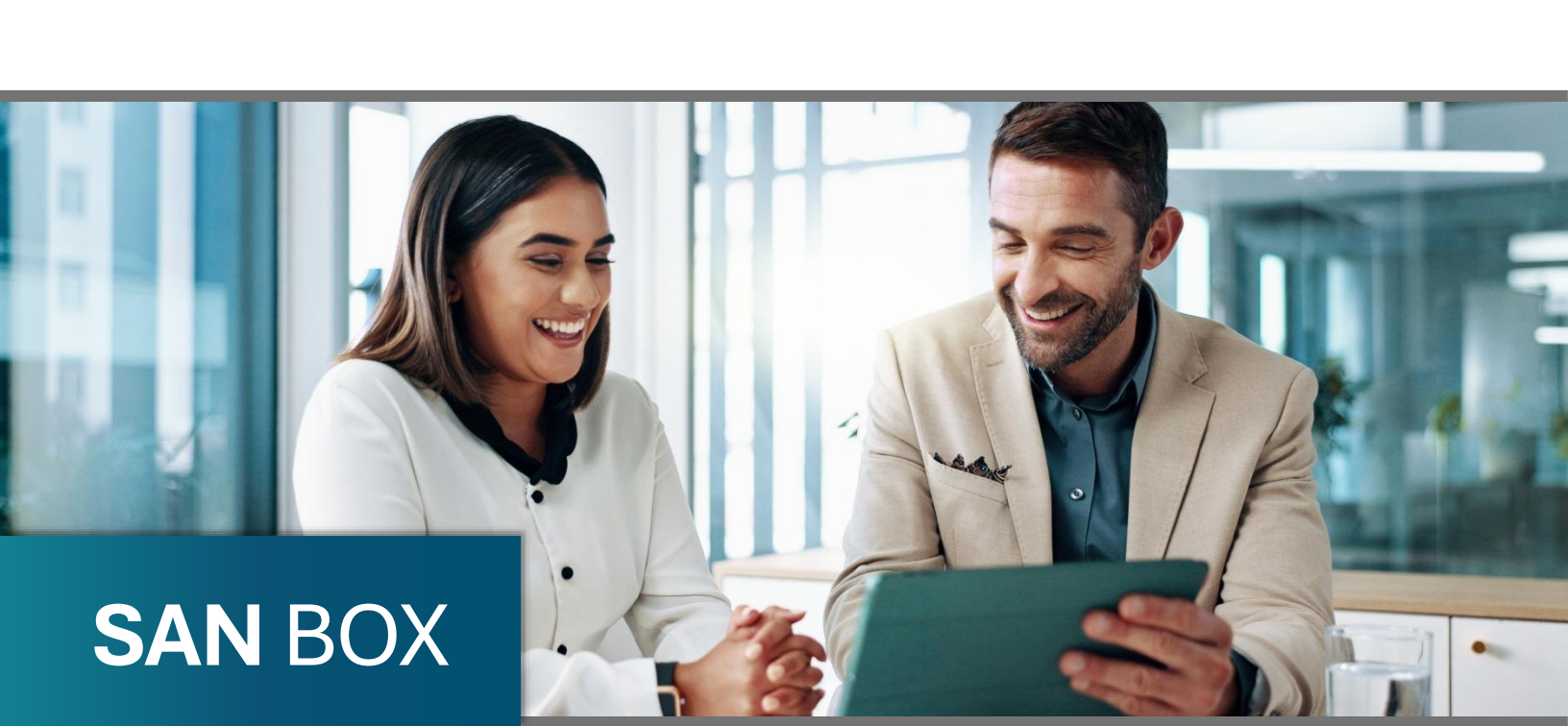
Discuss how online learning is ripe to support apprenticeship models and strengthen connections between education and workforce development.

Gain an understanding of the rise of student-designed online pathways and what greater learner agency means for institutions.

Consider how online student services can better meet the needs of nontraditional learners navigating complex academic, personal, and professional responsibilities.

Dr. Van Davis (WCET) and Dr. John Opper (FLVC) will be our discussion leaders.

- August 28, 2026
- 2:00 – 3:00 PM (ET)
- [Registration for the WCET webinar on August 28 is free.](#)



SAN BOX

Florida State Authorization Network Listserv

FLVC has launched the Florida State Authorization Network Listserv to help institutional contacts stay informed with timely updates, alerts, and developments related to state authorization. We also encourage you to use this Listserv to ask questions, share resources, and exchange best practices with your colleagues across the state. As a reminder, the Florida Virtual Campus provides an annual group membership to the State Authorization Network (SAN) for all Florida College System (FCS) and State University System (SUS) institutions. Since 2011, SAN — a division of WCET — has been a national leader in providing guidance, professional development, and support on regulatory compliance for out-of-state activities of postsecondary institutions. FLVC has periodically hosted SAN representatives at Members Council meetings to share expertise and insights.

- [SAN Member Portal Access](#)
- **Username:** Florida Virtual Campus
- **Password:** SANhelps1819



ARTICLE DIGESTS

Technology Disruption: Rethinking Instructional Continuity

“The recent Canvas data breach and resulting service disruption raised a critical question for higher education: What happens when the digital infrastructure that underpins teaching and learning becomes unavailable? [On May 15, more than 300 members of the EDUCAUSE teaching and learning community joined a panel-led QuickTalk to explore this question through the lens of instructional continuity.](#) The conversation was not simply about the Canvas incident but was framed more broadly around institutional readiness for digital disruption. Despite the fact that colleges and universities — prompted by COVID-era necessity — have spent years preparing for disruptions that require learning to quickly move online, the discussion made clear that many institutions are far less prepared for the reverse scenario.”

(Source: EDUCAUSE)

Canvas Pauses Data Delivery Due to Potential ‘Security Threat’

“Two months after Instructure made a deal with hackers to salvage troves of stolen user data, the company — which owns the popular learning management system Canvas — has paused the delivery of data related to the breach [because of a potential security threat with a third-party delivery platform.](#)”

(Source: Inside Higher Education)

Human-Centered Workforce Development in an Age of Advanced Technology

“Ever since computer and communications technologies became common in the workplace, educators have explored the best uses of those technologies — not just to boost speed and efficiency, but to leverage [the latest technologies with human-centered skills that truly empower students as they take their places in the workforce](#). How can we feature those skills in workforce education programs in our colleges and universities?”

(Source: Campus Technology)

To AI-Proof Lawyers, Some Law Schools Restrict Technology

“...In July, the University of Chicago Law School announced that it will ban laptops, tablets and phones in the classroom for first-year law students beginning this fall as part of its broader strategy of adapting legal education for the AI era. [The ban is intended to prevent generative AI from undermining the Socratic method](#), which has long been a hallmark of legal education; instead of spending class time lecturing, law professors probe students with questions about legal theories and principles.”

(Source: Inside Higher Education)

The Current State of Play: AI in Higher Education and the Road Ahead

“Higher education keeps applying tactical fixes to what is really a structural challenge, launching AI pilots where strategies are needed and issuing use policies in place of a clear philosophy of learning. [The article discusses ten interconnected conditions](#), beginning with a broken data foundation of siloed systems, weak governance, and rising cybersecurity pressure that stands between institutions and meaningful AI use. Several conditions reframe weaknesses that AI merely exposed, including assessment built to produce grades rather than measure learning and a static curriculum whose scarcity value is fading as knowledge tools take over much of the curation. Others point to opportunities, such as freeing faculty from routine knowledge transfer to focus on mentoring and relationships, and moving from personalized learning toward precision learning tuned to each student. Most higher education institutions do not have a real AI strategy yet. How is your institution moving from scattered AI pilots toward a strategy grounded in a clear philosophy of learning?”

(Source: EDUCAUSE)

FUN STUFF

Movie Must-See: The Odyssey

“[Odysseus, king of Ithaca, embarks on a perilous journey to return home after the Trojan War.](#) Crossing the Mediterranean Sea with his fellow soldiers, they soon find themselves battling not only the elements, but an array of deadly obstacles and mythical creatures along the way.” Now showing in theaters.

(Source: Rotten Tomatoes)



Spine-Benders: Monthly Picks for July 2026

“Summer is in full swing, which means your reading list needs a fresh update. [This month's picks](#) include an edge-of-your-seat hotel mystery, an oceanic survival story, and our 2026 Discover Prize Winner, so every reader has something to look forward to.”

(Source: Barnes & Noble)



You Gotta Try It: Smoke & Donuts BBQ (Orlando)

“[This casual barbecue spot in Orlando’s Milk District](#) pairs Texas-style smoked meats with freshly made donuts. What began as a pop-up has evolved into a relaxed, counter-service restaurant with an open kitchen and an unfussy, no-frills atmosphere. The barbecue leans traditional, with smoked brisket, turkey and house chorizo served simply with classic accompaniments. Sides like beans and slaw play a supporting role, and indulgent mashups, like a griddled crepe filled with mac and cheese, reflect a playful side of the menu. The real surprise comes at the end of the meal, however, with made-to-order donuts ranging from simple glazed versions to more indulgent creations, including maple-bourbon glazes and savory-sweet toppings.”

(Source: Michelin Guide; Smoke & Donuts BBQ)



You Gotta Go: Don Pedro Island (Placida)

“A three minute ferry ride will whisk you away to Don Pedro Island — and transport you to another world, one that’s ideal for nature enthusiasts seeking solitude and a peaceful retreat. Just a splash away from Englewood on Florida’s southern Gulf Coast, [this seven mile long escape](#) promises world-class shelling and birding, epic sunsets, and pristine beaches. The fishing is spectacular, with the area’s waters yielding trout, redfish, snook, tarpon and grouper.

Accessible only by boat, ferry, or private watercraft, this barrier island encompasses Palm Island Resort, Don Pedro Island State Park, and single family homes. Cars are a rarity, and almost everyone gets around via golf carts, which are available for rental.”

(Source: Visit Florida; Palm Island Vacation)

