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New USFSP Grad Publishes Research in National Journal

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For her senior honors thesis in 2013, Lauren Dellert began a research journey when she sought to discover the impact of beach renourishment on the endangered Loggerhead Sea Turtles. This summer her work, “Effects of Beach Renourishment and Clutch Relocation on the Success of the Loggerhead Sea Turtle (*Caretta caretta*) Eggs and Hatchlings,” was published in *The Journal of Herpetology*. Dellert is first author in the publication, a notable accomplishment for an undergraduate student.

“We are so proud of Lauren and her recent publication, not only because her research expands our understanding of local Loggerhead Turtle populations, but also because this is a shining example of the endless possibilities that can occur through faculty- mentored undergraduate student research,” said Frank Biafora, Ph.D., dean of the [College of Arts & Sciences](#).

Dellert, a recent USFSP grad, was volunteering at the Clearwater Marine Aquarium and participating in its sea turtle nesting program when she saw an opportunity to do more.

“I knew the Aquarium had data that was not being analyzed,” said Dellert. “I asked them if that was something I could take on, especially knowing how important Loggerhead Sea Turtles are to our local estuary eco-system and our community.”

With her all-female research team – USFSP professor, Deby Cassill, Ph.D., Biological Studies, and the Aquarium’s Danielle O’Neil – Dellert used an analytical data statistics program called JMP to help piece together the data, until a story emerged. Cassill notes that this is the most comprehensive study of its kind, to date. The happy ending: The sea turtle eggs and hatchlings were not affected by the renourished beaches.

“This is a win for tourism and our state, and a win for the sea turtles,” Cassill said. Today, Dellert teaches science to 6th and 8th grade students at Pinellas County’s Thurgood Marshall Fundamental Middle School. She boasts that half the students in her elective STEM class are girls.