

SUMMARY STATEMENT OF NEED
For the Conservation Education Center
At the SFA Pineywoods Native Plant Center

The Stephen F. Austin State University Foundation, Inc. is working to raise \$1.2 million for the construction of a Conservation Education Center consisting of an Education Building and an Outdoor Teaching Pavilion at the Pineywoods Native Plant Center (PNPC). *Construction of dedicated space for developing and presenting environmental education programs will allow Stephen F. Austin State University (SFA) to expand programs to reach more under-served students throughout East Texas and to fulfill the mission of the PNPC to educate the public about growing and conservation of native Texas plants.*

The environmental education program at the SFA Pineywoods Native Plant Center (PNPC) began to gain momentum with a two-year Meadows Foundation grant in March 2005 whose intent was to help the PNPC develop science and environmental education programs for public school students and their teachers, many of whom come from under-served, rural areas of the region. The successful completion of that effort in March 2007 was a significant milestone in our mission to educate public school students and adults about the natural environment in its many dimensions. As a program of the Arthur Temple College of Forestry and Agriculture at SFA, the PNPC has evolved since its dedication in 2000 by Lady Bird Johnson to be a leader in environmental education programming.

The goal of the PNPC is to improve educational opportunities for all students while expanding their options for learning about conservation and the environment. Key assets available to the PNPC to achieve this goal include:

- Master Plan for development of the PNPC, including the Conservation Education Center
- 40 acres of protected woodland and four distinct ecological habitats
- Over two miles of asphalt trails through the 40-acre PNPC forest that comply with ADA standards, providing universal access for all visitors
- 16 environmental programs that educate over 10,000 K-12 students each year
- A full-time Environmental Education Coordinator, now funded fully by SFA
- Architectural drawings for a four-building complex

These assets together represent an investment in the program to date of \$2.5 million, with \$1 million coming from grants and endowments secured since 1996 and \$1.5 million from SFA—the 1986 purchase price for the nature center site. To expand our potential in environmental education, the next logical step is to capitalize upon these assets by building the Conservation Education Center at the PNPC by 2012.

The 2000 Master Plan indicated four buildings, clustered around a central patio meeting area and connected with covered walkways and porches for use in all weather conditions—designed to fit into the site and reduce construction impact on our native woodland at the PNPC.

Phase I construction of the Environmental Education Building and Porch (3,000 sq. ft.) and the green-roofed Outdoor Teaching Pavilion (1,320 sq. ft.) will meet our most critical needs. Of the \$1.2 million needed to build the CEC, \$510,000 has been pledged by interested private parties in the East Texas region. We invite you to participate in helping us build this important project.

