

SEPTEMBER 29, 2026 | NEWS

Shumaker Advisors Helps Secure \$364,811 for Eckerd College Search and Rescue

INDUSTRY SECTOR

Public Sector

SERVICE LINE

Government Law & Policy

RELATED PROFESSIONALS

Alan J. Suskey

MEDIA CONTACT

Wendy M. Byrne

wbyrne@shumaker.com

State investment will strengthen the nation's only college maritime search and rescue program, supporting equipment and critical waterfront infrastructure

PETERSBURG, FL — Shumaker Advisors helped secure \$364,811 in state funding for Eckerd College Search and Rescue (EC-SAR), providing a significant investment in the student-run program that responds to maritime emergencies throughout Tampa Bay 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

The funding, included in Florida's 2026-2027 budget, will support critical equipment and infrastructure improvements needed to keep EC-SAR operating and responding to emergencies in Tampa Bay.

"Eckerd College Search and Rescue is a remarkable example of how an investment in education can also be an investment in public safety and workforce development," said Alan Suskey, Executive Vice President and Principal State Practice at Shumaker Advisors. "These students are gaining real-world skills and experience while providing an invaluable service to Tampa Bay. We were proud to work alongside Eckerd College and state leaders to help secure the resources needed to strengthen this program for years to come."

Founded in 1971, EC-SAR is the only student-staffed maritime search and rescue program at an undergraduate college in the United States. Its highly trained student volunteers work alongside the U.S. Coast Guard, 911 emergency responders, and other state and local agencies to provide free maritime assistance throughout Tampa Bay and surrounding waterways.

The program's students receive extensive training in areas that include medical response, navigation, firefighting, boating safety, technical rescue, seamanship, and search operations—experience that can also prepare them for careers in emergency response, maritime operations, and other related fields.

The new state funding will help address both equipment and infrastructure needs, including engine replacements, hull repairs, and improvements to aging dock infrastructure at Eckerd's waterfront. Some of the infrastructure supporting the program is more than 30 years old.

"This funding is about much more than maintaining boats and docks; it is about making sure these students have the resources they need to continue answering the call when someone on the water needs help," Alan

added. "EC-SAR combines education, service, and public safety in a way that directly benefits the entire Tampa Bay community."

EC-SAR has built a more than five-decade legacy of service. The team was among the first rescue units to respond to the Sunshine Skyway Bridge disaster in 1980 and later developed a search pattern for locating people in the waters surrounding the bridge that was recognized by regional emergency response organizations and the U.S. Coast Guard. In 2019, the program received the U.S. Coast Guard Meritorious Public Service Award for its service.

The program currently includes dozens of student volunteers who dedicate their time without pay or academic credit, responding to hundreds of maritime distress calls each year.