



THE
COLLEGE
OF THE
FLORIDA KEYS

MASCOT MANUAL

2024-2025



The College of the Florida Keys Mascot Manual & Procedure 47.4

OVERVIEW

The Mascot Manual outlines the roles and responsibilities of Mascot Performers and Mascot Handlers as well as procedures for recruiting, selecting, and training them. It also includes the process for scheduling appearances of the mascot. This manual is maintained by the Office of College and Community Engagement.

ABOUT THE MASCOT

The College of the Florida Keys adopted Shel the Tuga as its official mascot in 2021 following the College's name change from Florida Keys Community College and rebranding in 2019. Tuga is an abbreviation of "Tortuga," the Spanish word for turtle. The fictional sea turtle sports CFK's colors with an Ocean Blue body and a Sunset Orange shell. The Tuga is the face of CFK athletics and is a source of collegiate spirit for students, alumni, employees, friends, fans, and the community. Appearances by Shel the Tuga via a performer in the mascot costume attract engagement with and build affinity toward the College.

MASCOT COSTUME

The Shel the Tuga costume is a custom designed, full-body suit that consists of a jumpsuit, shoulder padding, flippers and shell, a full helmet mask with a circulation fan, and shoes. The costume is stored in and maintained by the Office of College and Community Engagement. The costume jumpsuit is machine washed after every performance. The other components are spot cleaned as needed.

MASCOT PERFORMERS

A Mascot Performer wears the Shel the Tuga costume to represent CFK at scheduled events and photo opportunities. Depending on the nature of the activity, the Mascot Performer may interact with event attendees, perform, and pose for photos. The Mascot Performer is guided by a Mascot Handler at all times.

Requirements:

- Be a current CFK student in good academic standing or a CFK employee.
- Be at least 18 years old.
- Be between 5'6" and 5'10' in height, due to costume size.
- Be in good physical health.

Roles:

- Interact with event attendees without speaking.
- Be friendly, courteous, and animated.
- Perform gestures (examples listed in training section).

- Stay in the Shel character while in costume. Only break character once completely out of public view.

Responsibilities:

- Take care of the costume and props when in your possession. Report any damage to the costume immediately.
- Be clean when wearing the costume. Do not wear perfumes or other scented products.
- Wear a light layer of clothing and socks underneath the costume.
- Only appear in full dress, and only use approved accessories.
- Do not remove any part of the costume in public.
- Do not speak or make sounds in the costume.
- Do not eat or drink while in costume or partially dressed.
- Do not show anger or frustration.
- Do not agitate people.
- Do not lift or hold anyone, including babies, children, adults, or animals.
- Do not take personal photos of yourself or anyone else wearing the costume or parts of the costume unless authorized.
- Comply with CFK's Student Code of Conduct, if applicable.

MASCOT HANDLERS

A Mascot Handler accompanies the Mascot Performer at all times to support a smooth mascot performance and ensure the safety of the Mascot Performer. Depending on the nature of the activity, the Mascot Handler may help the performer navigate venues, manage crowd interactions, take photos, monitor the time, and check the comfort of the Mascot Performer.

Requirements:

- Be a current CFK employee.
- Be at least 18 years old.

Roles:

- Assist Mascot Performer with costume as needed, including getting in and out of costume and adjusting costume during performances.
- Guide and accompany Mascot Performer at all times, always within arm's reach.
- Act as Mascot Performer's "eyes and ears" to physical surroundings, fan interactions, and potential hazards.
- Manage crowd interaction (e.g., setting up a line for photos, assisting with photography, asking fans to be respectful).
- Communicate on behalf of Shel (Shel does not speak). Be able to answer common questions about Shel and the College. Refer to Shel FAQ sheet.
- Keep time during mascot appearance for safety of the Mascot Performer (maximum of 30 minutes) and effectiveness of the mascot appearance.

Responsibilities:

- Be clean and well groomed, appropriately dressed (CFK shirt can be provided).
- Transport mascot costume and supplies to and from appearances, as needed.
- Take photos for CFK publication as needed.
- Recognize the distress signal from the Mascot Performer and take immediate action.
- Carry a mobile phone while accompanying the Mascot Performer.

APPLICATION AND SELECTION

Mascot Performer and Mascot Handler applications are available on the College's website (Forms 47.4(A) and 47.4(B)). The Office of College and Community Engagement promotes the opportunities to CFK students and employees at the beginning of each fall semester or as needed.

Applicants must meet the respective requirements and submit a complete application to the Office of College and Community Engagement. Mascot Performers and Mascot Handlers will be selected and notified by the Office of College and Community Engagement.

AGREEMENT

Individuals selected to be Mascot Performers and Mascot Handlers will be required to sign a Mascot Agreement (47.4 (C)), which includes a waiver, release, and hold harmless agreement. The agreement will be on file for one year.

TRAINING

Mascot Performers and Mascot Handlers must complete a brief training session prior to participating in any mascot performances. Training includes a review of roles and responsibilities. Mascot Performers will be required to try on the costume and practice walking and performing.

MASCOT GESTURES

- **Waving** — Use your entire arm/flipper for a big wave in situations where you really need to stand out, such as at a sporting event or walking in a parade. Simply open and close your hand/flipper when waving to a small child in a meet and greet situation.
- **Laughing** — Bring your flippers up to Shel's mouth and nod your head forward in a rapid motion to signal laughing.
- **Blowing a kiss** — Put your flipper to Shel's mouth and then flat out in front of the head, with the palm up.
- **Hugging** — Be gentle when hugging. Remember that children may feel shy or intimidated by Shel's presence. A strong, forceful hug — especially to an adult or teenager — may initiate an aggressive or confrontational situation.

- **I love you!** — Point to yourself, then use both flippers to draw a heart in the air and point to the recipient.
- **I'm scared!** — Run in a circle, cover your eyes and shake your knees. Lifting one flipper up to peek out can be comical and endearing.
- **Aww, shucks!** — Give a little sweeping kick forward while hooking your arm in front of you.
- **Swimming** — Move your flippers in a swim stroke.
- **Fist/flipper bump** — Gently lift a folded flipper toward the person and let them do the “bumping.”
- **Break/distress** — Tap shoulders with both hands.

SCHEDULING MASCOT PERFORMANCES

CFK employees may request a mascot appearance via the Mascot Event Appearance Request Form, 47.4 (D), that is located on the College’s website. The form must be signed by a CFK employee and their supervisor and submitted to the Office of College and Community Engagement. Preference will be given for events with large audiences and or high impact on the College’s reputation and or relationships with key audiences. (e.g., Commencement, Community Day, Scholarship Social). The mascot can attend in costume for a maximum of 30 minutes at a time with a minimum of one hour in between if it is the same performer. Requests should be made with ample notice. Requests submitted less than two weeks in advance may not be approved. Approval by the Associate Vice President of College and Community Engagement is required for all mascot appearances.

The Office of College and Community Engagement is responsible for coordinating approved mascot appearances and arranging schedules with the requestor, a Mascot Handler, and a Mascot Performer. Arrangements will include times, locations, and directions for costume pickup, preparation/dressing, the performance/appearance, and costume return. The Office of College and Community Engagement may cancel the appearance with little notice to ensure the safety of the performer, handler, and integrity of the costume (i.e., damage due to weather). The Office of College and Community Engagement or the handler has the authority to cancel the appearance at any time during the appearance to ensure the safety of the handler, performer, image of the College, and integrity of the costume.

PERFORMER SAFETY

A Mascot Performer has limited vision when in costume, mostly seeing through the mouth. The oversized body can inhibit the performer’s awareness of their immediate surroundings. A handler will be present at all times to guide and assist the mascot. The costume is warm. Performers will not be in costume longer than 30 minutes at a time. The Mascot Handler is responsible for monitoring the time and checking on the Mascot Performer. Both the performer and handler must be familiar with the distress signal. The Mascot Handler must carry a mobile phone to communicate in the case of an emergency or if additional support is needed.

- In case of medical emergency, dial 9-1-1.

- In case of unruly behavior, contact Campus Security at 305-809-3543.

MASCOT FORMS

47.4 (A) Mascot Performer Application

47.4 (B) Mascot Handler Application

47.4 (C) Mascot Agreement Form

47.4 (D) Mascot Event Appearance Request Form