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Passing of the torch

By Special to Highlands News-Sun Courtesy Archbold Biological Station
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Dr. Aaron David at the entrance to Archbold.
COURTESY PHOTO/KAREN RICE-DAVID

VENUS — Since June 1988, Dr. Eric Menges has served as an outstanding scientist and leader

of scientific research, conservation and education activities in Archbold's Plant Ecology Program. At last count, Menges has published 183 scientific papers and nearly 200 technical reports. Under his leadership, the "Plant Lab" has trained and supervised 33 research assistants and 127 Archbold interns, nearly all of whom have gone on to great careers across the nation and internationally. On June 30, Menges will retire, assuming his new title: Emeritus Research Biologist on July 1.

A former Plant Ecology Program intern now returns to Archbold, as Menges prepares to retire after a remarkable 33 years of service. Dr. Aaron David assumed the position of director of Plant Ecology on June 1. Menges first welcomed David to Archbold as an intern in 2009, serving as an inspiring mentor and introducing him to the world of scrub plants and field ecology. After his internship, David received his PhD from the University of Minnesota in 2016, a post-doctoral associate position at the University of Miami from 2016-2018, and a research ecologist position with the U.S. Department of Agriculture Invasive Plant Research Laboratory in Fort Lauderdale since 2018.

David shared, "I'm thrilled to be back at Archbold working in the Florida scrub. The station has meant so much to me over the years, and I'm honored to have this opportunity to continue the Plant Lab's legacy."

During the month of June, the two program directors will overlap and work with their research assistants and interns to ensure a smooth transition. Archbold Executive Director Dr. Hilary Swain remarked, "Dr. Menges has been a wonderful scientist and mentor and leaves a living legacy of those he trained and supervised in the Plant Ecology Program.

"We are delighted to welcome Dr. David and fully anticipate his knowledge and skills will continue to expand the field of plant ecology at the Station, building upon Eric's great success story."

Menges added, "It has been a privilege to work at Archbold and in the Florida scrub all these years. I am confident that Aaron will bring the Plant Ecology Program in some exciting new directions."

Welcome, Dr. David, and best wishes for a long career at Archbold! Congratulations, Dr. Menges, and best wishes for the next chapter of your life!



Dr. Eric Menges in the Florida scrub at Archbold. Photo by Dustin Angell.