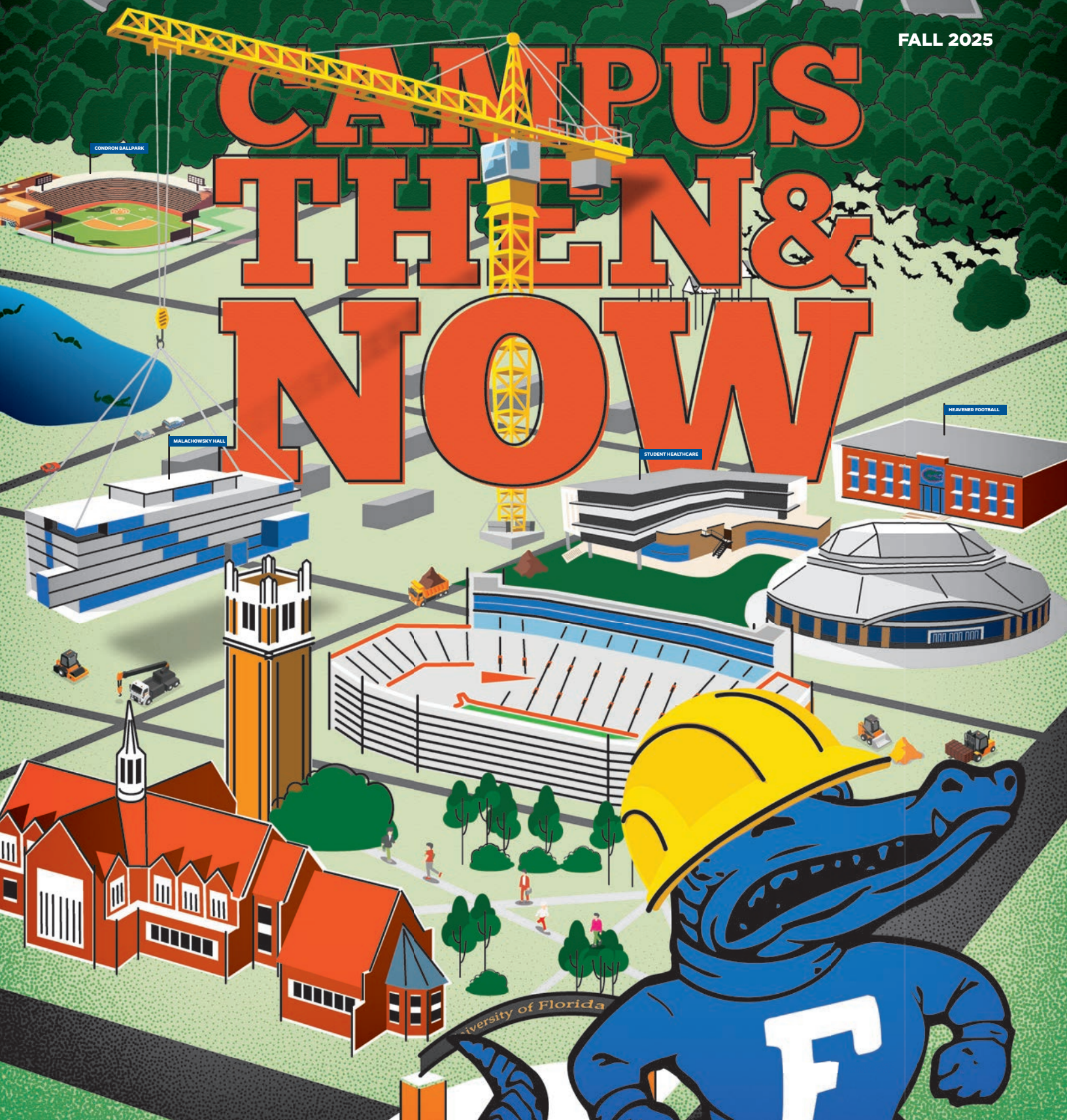


GATOR

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FALL 2025

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June 25-27, 2026



FLORIDA GATOR

FALL 2025

2 Your Letters

5 Editor's Note

UNIVERSITY AVENUE

10 Research universities fuel AI

12 Interim president appointed

13 A new Seahorse Key marine lab

14 Rub this gator's nose for good luck

16 Gators keep Director's Cup streak going

18 A brand with bite

20 Object Lessons: A Frank Lloyd Wright model in the archives shows what might have been

21 The Big Idea: Weather is even trickier in space

22 Our Alma Mater is 100

GATOR NATION

56 Gators Doing Good: Dr. Jeffrey Levenson illuminates the world

59 Why I Give: Paul and Charity Ackerman

60 Women's basketball pioneers

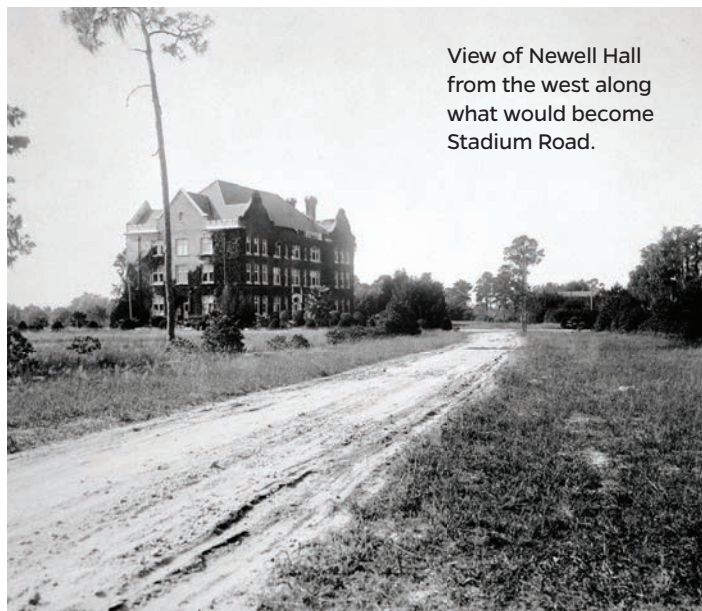
71 Books: Of Mangoes and Mom

24

MAIN FEATURE

FROM RAT CAPS TO HARD HATS

The University of Florida opened with two buildings and 102 students. As it grew, each generation saw a different UF, from Collegiate Gothic to contemporary, but each knew a pride of place. Take a stroll through time with us as we explore the past and present and contemplate the future.



View of Newell Hall from the west along what would become Stadium Road.



30

THEN AND NOW

From Collegiate Gothic walls to ultramodern halls, the newest Gators have elite places to live and learn.



42

GOOD GAME

Yahn Bernier traded law for a tech start-up when he joined the video game company Valve, and he hasn't slowed down since.



48

MINDFUL MOVEMENT

UF Mindfulness has spent a decade teaching its life-changing techniques to the campus community.

UF UNIVERSITY of
FLORIDA

FLORIDA GATOR
The University of Florida's Alumni Magazine
Volume 13 Issue 1

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UF ALUMNI ASSOCIATION CONTACT INFO

ufalum@ufalumni.ufl.edu
352-392-1905
P.O. Box 14425
Gainesville, FL 32604-2425

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Music on Repeat

Letter writers still jamming to Spring music issue

The spring 2025 issue of Florida Gator was terrific, as always. As editor Cindy Spence wrote, “No matter when you attended UF . . . you have that music, too, a soundtrack that takes you back to your college years.”

Thank you for doing such a good job with this and every issue of Florida Gator.

I appreciate the way you remember the past, cover the present, and speak about the future of UF.

I’m so grateful to have earned three degrees from the University of Florida. In addition, my daughter, son and sister also graduated from UF.

Michael House (BS ’75, MED ’78, PHD ’87)

I loved the cover of the Florida Gator Spring 2025. I was looking for a representative of the band Goose Creek Symphony. I remember seeing them at the old UF Auditorium in 1974. They were a cross between the “hippies” and “rednecks” in the sunrise era of country rock. Check them out and give them a listen. Keep up the good work.

Stanley Sims (BA ’75, MED ’76)

I have two additions to your music memory cover: Dizzy Gillespie performed on campus in 1982, I believe in the University Auditorium. Wendy O. Williams and the Plasmatics played at the Bandshell in 1981.

Andrew Northrop (BSBA ’82)

The Florida Gator Spring 2025 “Soundtracks” edition reminded me of one of my first experiences with a concert at UF.

The fall of 1965 was my sophomore year, and one of my fraternity brothers was Interfraternity Council chairman. In early November he took me aside and told me I was driving to Jacksonville the next day to pick up Lesley Gore at the airport. She was scheduled to perform at Florida Gym with The Platters for the IFC Fall Concert. My first reaction, after the thought that I was Lesley Gore’s designated escort for her concert appearance, was that I didn’t have a car and had never driven to the Jacksonville Airport. Nor had I driven anywhere in or around Gainesville. He quickly assured me that I could use a brother’s car, they would write detailed instructions of how to get to the airport, and it was only about an hour away. He calculated that if I left late afternoon, I would be at the gate by 5:00-5:30, her plane arrived at 6:00 and we could be back in Gainesville by 7:30. The show started at 8:00. No problem.

This was before cell phones, Google or even MapQuest. I was on my own. No problem.

I arrived at the gate, a chain link fence separating the tarmac from a parking lot, by 5 p.m. The plane arrived before 6 p.m., Lesley and an older guy were the first two off the plane. I waited to greet her and grab her bags from the cart. The older guy stepped in front of me, extended his hand saying, “I’m Leo Gore, are you the young man driving us to the show?” Yup, no longer her date or even escort, now I’m the driver. No matter, at least I would be taking her to the concert and maybe we could ditch her dad afterwards.

We headed for Highway 90 toward

301 for the hour or so to Gainesville with plenty of time to get to Florida Gym before 8 p.m., except I missed the turn for 301 and suddenly, with about 45 minutes till showtime, we are in Lake City.

Mr. Gore is getting very impatient with me, I am struggling to find the correct road, and time is running out. We were going to be late. We arrived at Florida Gym at about 8:15, about a dozen of my fraternity brothers on the street and clearing a path to the entrance.

I grabbed the suitcases and followed the entourage that had developed to her dressing room and waited outside to escort her. Mr. Gore came out, immediately told us they would be going back to Jacksonville immediately after the show, and to find someone who knew how to drive directly to the airport hotel. My date with Lesley Gore was ended abruptly.

**“Driver” Marc J. Dunn (BS ’69)
Murrieta, CA**

The best show I saw at UF was The Rolling Thunder Revue at Florida Field featuring Bob Dylan, Joan Baez, Kinky Friedman, Joni Mitchell, T-bone Burnett and many others. Seeing Simon and Garfunkel my freshman year was a distant second.

**Howard M. Rosenblatt (BA ’69, JD ’81)
Gainesville**

Did Jimmy Buffet and the Coral Reefer Band play on the Reitz Union lawn in the fall of 1975? Loved the spring edition of the Florida Gator magazine.

Rick Lenner (BA ’79, JD ’81)

Why was Mel Tillis not included in the cover photo? He was a student when I was and performed on campus including Gator Growl on his way to

 Check out our Gator Nation playlists on Spotify at



becoming a recognized professional musician.

Wayne Smith (BS '60)

Your "photo" of past performers at UF did not include Cher! How disappointing. One of the most iconic performers of the past 60 years. I was shocked that she was not included as her show at the O'Dome was sold out as soon as tickets went on sale. Hope it was just an oversight.

Wendy Obermeyer (BA '78)

Championship Vibes



I'm not an alum, but I'm a longtime, long-suffering Gator fan, and your magazine was sent along by a friend. Loved it. Still pinching myself over the championship season in basketball. Thank you for a great (but too short) synopsis. I would have read plenty more, particularly about those improbable, late-game wins. What a season!

J.J. Lewis

what you're saying

Michael Pardo

Read the whole thing already. Wonderful!

UF Alumni Assoc.

Flipping through the latest edition of the Florida Gator Magazine



Heather Collins (Grattan) Floyd

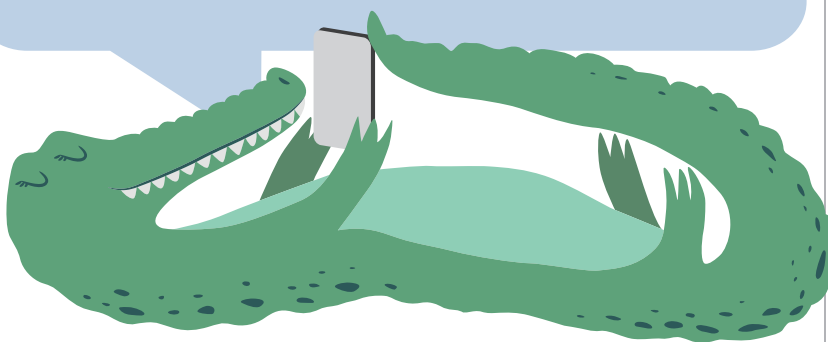
I love seeing the UF campus in the backgrounds, too :)

Caryn Clark

Such a great issue! Nicely done!!!



Social media director Suzy Rodriguez baked a cake to celebrate our 30,000th follower on Instagram. Give us a follow (we like cake!)



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Letters

Florida Gator welcomes letters from our readers. Please send them to floridagator@ufalumni.ufl.edu. Include the writer's name, graduation year, address and daytime phone number. Letters may be edited for clarity and space.

Flori-DUH

We welcome your corrections. After all, humans still produce this magazine.

Riley's so competitive, not even Hodgkin lymphoma can keep up.

During her senior year in high school, Riley McFadden was diagnosed with Hodgkin lymphoma. She faced a difficult fight in the year that followed. She could not go out into the sun while receiving treatment and had to learn to walk again. After her last chemotherapy infusion, she and her friends rushed to the beach to celebrate. Riley is now cancer-free and is back working part time as a lifeguard. Besides swimming almost every day and going to the beach with her friends, she's a strong advocate for clinical trials, to ensure kids and teens like her have access to the most advanced care available.



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From the Editor



Cindy Spence

One of the things

I've always loved about working on campus is helping the occasional visiting alum with directions. Even recent alums, map in hand, are prone to say something like, "Where did that building come from?"

Or, "What happened to the building (tree, parking lot) that used to be here?"

As someone who has worked at UF in four units and gone to school here twice, I know the feeling. It seems there are only two constants on campus. One is construction. The other is that we love "our" campus, the one we remember.

In this issue, we hope you'll see your campus even as we update you on some changes, "then and now" fashion.

I'm lucky that in writing about UF over the past few decades, I've had a chance to hear the stories of Gator generations before me and see the campus through their eyes. It's almost like a ride in a campus time machine.

One of my favorite glimpses of the past came from Bill and Jane Emerson. In an interview not long after Emerson Alumni Hall was dedicated, they told me about their newlywed days in UF's Flavet Village in military barracks repurposed as married student housing for soldiers like Bill returning from World War II.

In 1941, he had been listening to the radio on a December evening when Pearl Harbor was bombed. He and a buddy slept on the post office steps to be first in line to enlist in the Marines the next morning.

When he returned to UF after the war, he joined thousands of soldiers using the GI Bill to continue their education. Jane spruced up the spartan Flavet barracks with stylish ruffled curtains her Mom had given her. She tied them back, framing the window so perfectly that President John J. Tigert would stop by when he gave campus tours to dignitaries. Jane told me she grew weary of keeping things tidy, ready for Tigert's unannounced visits, but recalled the Flavet community fondly: "We all took care of each other," she said.

The Flavet buildings were gone when I arrived as a freshman and moved into nearby East Hall, but some traces remained. I parked my Mustang (illegally) in the dirt lot, and often cut through on my way to Lake Alice. You could almost imagine the aroma of fried chicken drifting from open windows as giggling kids played tag before they were called home for dinner.

The post-war era also saw another campus revolution: The crumbling of the gender barrier with the admission of women in 1947.

For a 2005 story in the alumni magazine, I talked to several of those first co-eds, getting a glimpse of the era when the "boys of Old Florida" welcomed the Gator girls.

Betty Wood, who transferred in from the women-only school up the road, joined 601 women on a campus with 8,177 men. Telling me about her arrival on campus, she said she thought, "There is a God, and he has directed me to the right place." UF was not quite ready for the influx and deployed Quonset huts as makeshift housing. The Florida Alligator, helpfully, published a list of all the ladies' restrooms, no small investigative feat on a campus built for men.

Decades later, women were everywhere and dorms were co-ed as my freshman daughter moved in 2012 into a newish Hume Hall rebuilt for the Honors College. Even younger alums only have to blink to see something new, though. Today, my daughter looks at the sleek new Honors Village and, less than 10 years after her graduation, marvels at how times have changed.

I guess it's a UF thing. One Gator's UF is very different from the next Gator's UF. The 102 students in 1906, attending a campus with two buildings, knew growth was coming. In 2025, with 61,000-plus students, about 900 buildings and 2,000 acres, it still is. But each UF is part of a history we share.

And so we grow, Gators. Then and now, but also, always. And, as always, Go Gators!

Cindy Spence (BS '82, MA '17)
Editor

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Cindy Spence
(BS '82, MA '17)
Editor

James Baer (BS '97)
Art Director

David Finnerty
Paige Fry (BS '19)
Writers



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THEN . . .

When the University of Florida moved to Gainesville in 1906, our Gator ancestors envisioned stately buildings spread across sandy acres of longleaf pine, far from the town center of Gainesville.

IMAGE COURTESY OF UF DIGITAL COLLECTIONS





... AND NOW

Could the Gators of 1906 have envisioned this? The main campus houses 16 colleges and more than 300 academic degree options, making it one of the nation's top three universities in the number of majors offered on a single campus. With HiPerGator, the fastest supercomputer in higher education, faculty and students alike have an eye on the future.

PHOTO BY BRENTON RICHARDSON/UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA

UF and other research universities — not Silicon Valley — will fuel AI. Here's why.

BY ALINA ZARE (BS '03, MS '08, PHD '08)



In the global AI race between small and major competitors, established companies versus new players, and ubiquitous versus niche uses, the next giant leap isn't about faster chips or improved algorithms.

AI agents have already vacuumed up so much of the information on the internet. The next great uncertainty is where they'll find the next trove of big data. The answer is not in Silicon Valley.

It's all across the nation at our major research universities, which are key to maintaining global competitiveness against China.

To teach an AI system to "think" requires it to draw on massive amounts of data to build models. At a recent conference, Ilya Sutskever, the former chief scientist at OpenAI — the creator of ChatGPT — called data

the "fossil fuel of AI." Just as we will use up fossil fuels because they are not renewable, he said we are running out of new data to mine to keep fueling the gains in AI.

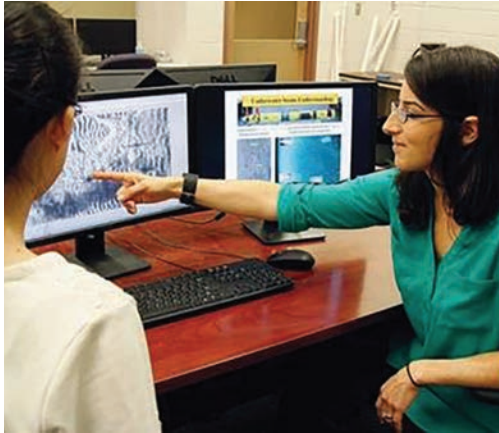
So much of this thinking assumes AI was created by private Silicon

I believe AI has its own renewable fuel source: the data and expertise generated from our comprehensive public academic institutions.

Valley startups and the like. AI's history is actually deeply rooted in U.S. universities dating back to the 1940s, when early research laid the groundwork for the algorithms and tools used today. While the computing power to use those tools was created only recently, the foundation was laid after World War II, not in the private sector but at our universities.

Contrary to a "fossil fuel problem," I believe AI has its own renewable fuel source: the data and expertise generated from our comprehensive public academic institutions. In fact, at the major AI conferences driving the field, most papers come from academic institutions. Our AI systems learn about our world only from the data we offer them.

Current AI models like ChatGPT are scraping information from some academic journal articles in open-access repositories, but there are enormous troves of untapped academic data that could be used to make all these models more meaningful. A way past data scarcity is to develop new AI methods that leverage all of our knowledge in all of its forms. Our research institutions have the varied expertise in all aspects



TOP LEFT Alina Zare's Machine Learning and Sensing Lab was an early collaborator on AI across disciplines, teaming up with units as diverse as agronomy, psychology, the Florida Museum, horticulture, entomology, ecology and of course, her own field of electrical and computer engineering.

ABOVE One expanding use of AI is in digital twins, like the one envisioned for the city of Jacksonville. A digital twin allows leaders to input scenarios — rising floodwaters, for example — and model how a city might react.

LEFT HiPerGator AI was installed at UF's East Campus in January. The number of researchers tapping in to the elite processing power grew to 8,000 in 2025.

of our society to do this.

Here's just one example: We are creating the next generation of "digital twin" technology. Digital twins are virtual recreations of places or systems in our world. Using AI, we can develop digital twins that gather all of our data and knowledge about a system — whether a city, a community or even a person — in one place and allow users to ask "what if" questions.

The University of Florida, for example, is building a digital twin for the city of Jacksonville, which contains the profile of each building, elevation data throughout the city and even septic tank locations. The twin also embeds detailed state-of-the-art waterflow models. In that virtual world, we can test all sorts of ideas for improving Jacksonville's hurricane evacuation planning and water quality before implementing

them in the actual city.

As we continue to layer more data into the twin — real-time traffic information, scans of road conditions and more — our ability to deploy city resources will be more informed and driven by real-time actionable data and modeling. Using an AI system backed by this digital twin, city leaders could ask, "How would a new road in downtown Jacksonville impact evacuation times? How would the added road modify water runoff?" and so on.

The possibilities for this emerging area of AI are endless. We could create digital twins of humans to layer human biology knowledge with personalized medical histories and imaging scans to understand how individuals may respond to particular treatments.

Universities are also acquiring increasingly powerful supercomputers that are supercharging their

innovations, such as UF's newest HiPerGator, recently acquired from NVIDIA, which is being used for problems across all disciplines. Oregon State University and the University of Missouri, for example, are using their own access to supercomputers to advance marine science discoveries and improve elder care.

To see the next big leap in AI, don't immediately look to Silicon Valley. Start scanning the horizon for those research universities that have the computing horsepower and the unique ability to continually renew the data and knowledge that will supercharge the next big thing in AI.

Alina Zare is director of UF's Artificial Intelligence and Informatics Research Institute. 

Donald W. Landry appointed interim president



Dr. Donald W. Landry started as the interim president of the University of Florida on Sept. 1.

Landry, chair emeritus of Columbia University's Department of Medicine, is an internationally renowned physician-scientist, president of the American Academy of Sciences and Letters, and a recipient of the Presidential Citizens Medal, the nation's second-highest civilian honor.

"It is an extraordinary honor to serve the University of Florida at such an important moment in its history," Landry said. "UF has made remarkable strides over the past 10 years and is now recognized as one of the top public universities in

the country, and I look forward to working with its remarkable faculty, staff, and students to continue building on that momentum."

Landry was the Hamilton Southworth Professor at the New York Presbyterian/Columbia Medical Center and director of the Center for Human Longevity at Columbia.

Under his leadership as chair of Columbia's Department of Medicine, philanthropy grew fourfold, NIH funding tripled, and the department rose to No. 3 in the national NIH rankings. Faculty numbers doubled and clinical revenues reached record highs.

Landry's research contributions

span artificial enzyme approaches to cocaine addiction and overdose, small molecule drug development across neuro, cardiac and oncologic targets, and the discovery of the syndrome of vasopressin deficiency in vasodilatory shock states. He has published over 150 articles and holds 50 U.S. patents. He was a member of the President's Council on Bioethics in 2008-09 and was elected to the National Academy of Inventors in 2015.

Landry is both a Ph.D. and an M.D. He completed his doctorate in organic chemistry under Nobel laureate R.B. Woodward at Harvard University in 1979 and earned his medical degree from Columbia in 1983.

UF faculty conducted a record \$1.33 billion in research in fiscal year 2025, advancing new medical treatments, supporting Florida's farmers and helping to grow statewide industries such as aerospace and semiconductors.

Total research expenditures were up about 4.5%, or \$57.3 million, over FY 2024. Spending on federally funded projects awarded over the past several years was up 5.4% to \$612.4 million, while spending on state-sponsored projects was up 14.5%, or \$29.4 million, to \$231.9 million. Industry-funded research was up 11.8% to \$41.5 million, and projects supported by nonprofits were up 10% to \$60 million.

"We continue to closely follow the discussions in Washington regarding proposed changes in federal funding for research," said Vice President for Research David Norton, "but with the remarkable support we receive from the state of Florida, I am confident that UF researchers will remain competitive in securing research funding that will position us to succeed under any funding model."

The numbers reflect spending for the fiscal year that ended June 30 and are based on the National Science Foundation's annual Higher Education Research and Development Survey.

Help for Seahorse Key

UF/IFAS seeks to replace marine lab destroyed by Hurricane Helene

When Hurricane Helene churned through Northwest Florida last fall, the storm ravaged Seahorse Key, a 165-acre island three miles off the coast of Cedar Key, and flooded a lab that served as a cornerstone of UF/IFAS marine research and educational programs.

“The lab was a gateway to marine science for students of all ages,” said Mike Allen, director of the UF/IFAS Nature Coast Biological Station (NCBS) in Cedar Key.

Allen said NCBS is approaching the \$350,000 project to rebuild the lab with resilience in mind. The marine lab will morph from a trailer-like building to a robust outdoor learning station better equipped to withstand future storms. No longer powered by propane and gasoline hauled from the mainland by boat, the lab will run off a new solar power system with a backup generator for emergencies. Overhead fans will mitigate the heat. Touch tanks will hold easily accessible marine life.

UF/IFAS has used Seahorse Key and the marine lab for research since the 1950s. Generations of researchers from other schools – including Santa Fe College, Purdue



University and the University of Tennessee – have also used the island facilities. K-12 students, too, visit the island lab. The budding researchers collect specimens and bring their discoveries back to the lab for inspection, identification and, sometimes, dissection. The experience offers an up-close introduction to sea life that’s unavailable in traditional classrooms.

Generations of fourth graders from Oak Hall School have relished Seahorse Key field trips. Helen Hite, a fourth-grade math teacher, has spotted dolphins with her students every time she chaperones a trip to Seahorse Key.

“The kids see the beauty of our great state of Florida during these outings,” Hite said. “When they graduate from Oak Hall as seniors, many say their favorite school memory was the trip to Seahorse Key.”

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Give that cat a lab coat

Scientist’s cat — again — helps discover new virus

Pepper, the pet cat who made headlines last year for his role in discovering the first jeilongvirus found in the United States, is at it again. This time, his hunting prowess helped identify a new strain of orthoreovirus.

John Lednicky, Pepper’s owner and a UF College of Public Health and Health Professions virologist, took Pepper’s catch — an Everglades short-tailed shrew — into the lab for testing, which revealed a previously unidentified strain of orthoreovirus.

Viruses in this genus are known to infect humans, white-tailed deer, bats and other mammals. While orthoreoviruses’ effects on humans are not yet well understood, there have been rare reports of the virus being associated with cases of encephalitis, meningitis and gastroenteritis in children.

“The bottom line is we need to pay attention to orthoreoviruses and know how to rapidly detect them,” said Lednicky, a research professor in the PPHP Department of Environmental and Global Health and a member of UF’s Emerging Pathogens Institute.

The UF team published the complete genomic coding sequences for the virus in the journal *Microbiology Resource Announcements*.

“We know that there are many unknown viruses that are present all around us, and I feel like a sleuth tracking them down,” said lead author Emily DeRuyter, a UF Ph.D. candidate in One Health.

The Lednicky lab’s jeilongvirus and orthoreovirus discoveries come on the heels of the team’s discovery of two other novel viruses in farmed white-tailed deer. Given the propensity of viruses to constantly evolve, finding new viruses isn’t entirely surprising.

With so many unanswered questions about orthoreoviruses and their modes of transmission, more research is needed, DeRuyter and Lednicky said.

For his part, Pepper appears to be up to the challenge and willing to collaborate.

“This was an opportunistic study,” Lednicky said. “If you come across a dead animal, why not test it instead of just burying it?”

— Jill Pease



Good luck gator

Libraries celebrate centennial with “new” gator



PHOTOS BY PAE RIISKA/UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA LIBRARIES

When Judy Russell became the first dean of the George A. Smathers Libraries in 2007, she found one of the perks was watching football games in the President’s Suite. Athletics comes with its own pomp and circumstance, and one tradition she noted was that football players patted

a gator head for luck as they took the field.

“I quickly decided that the libraries should have a gator that students could pat before taking a test or turning



Libraries dean
Judy Russell

in a paper,” said Russell, who will retire next summer.

Libraries benefactor **MaryEllen Burnett** (MEd ’79) commissioned the life-size bronze bull gator sculpture by David Price, and the A.H. Burnett

Foundation donated it in 2016.

The 400-pound, 9-foot-long gator was tucked away on the third floor of Library West, just waiting for its moment in the sun.

That moment came on the first day of fall semester, when the statue found a new home and a flock of admirers on the renovated library colonnade.

“I want to call special attention to the name the artist gave him: Focused Attention,” Russell said at the unveiling. “Focused Attention: The key to success in academics and athletics. I encourage each of you to rub his nose or pat his head before you leave today . . .”

At least five other gator statues call the UF campus home: two outside Ben Hill Griffin Stadium at gate 18 and in front of the F Club, one next to University Auditorium, Albert and Alberta at Emerson Alumni Hall, and Ubiquity Gator at Heavener Hall.



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CAMPUS GATOR STATUE!
MAYBE we’ll put you in the next
issue of Florida Gator Magazine





Master of Health Administration graduate Paris Richardson was recently recognized as Miss Florida 2025.

Miss Florida is a Gator

And a Miss America runner-up

Paris Richardson (BPH '23, MHA '25) was crowned Miss Florida 2025 this summer and in September became second runner-up in the Miss America pageant.

Richardson is the first Miss Florida representative from Gainesville since 1952.

"I am so grateful for this opportunity to be the next Miss Florida, and I am so thankful for the Miss Gainesville and Miss Ocala organization for giving me the tools and preparation that I needed to walk confidently across the stage," Richardson said in a press release.

Richardson impressed judges with her acrobatic dance talent and her passion for advancing health equity through her community service initiative, C.R.O.W.N. of Health, a resource to empower communities interested in wellness, advocacy and leadership opportunities. Richardson founded COH in high school.

In addition to her Miss Florida title, Richardson won a \$24,000 scholarship.



RANKINGS UF has ranked No. 7 among public universities in the country, marking the eighth consecutive year UF has placed among the nation's top 10 public institutions, according to the 2026 U.S. News & World Report "Best Colleges" rankings. In addition, Forbes has named UF the No. 5 public university in the nation and among the top institutions in the country for return on investment, according to the 2026 rankings. Both organizations listed UF as No. 30 among universities overall. Forbes noted that Florida offers low tuition while boasting excellent student outcomes, including high job placement rates and competitive salaries for new graduates. In addition, UF received 91,884 applications for roughly 7,500 spots in the Class of 2029 — a 23% increase over last year and the highest in the university's history, with the most academically competitive pool yet.

OUT-OF-STATE STUDENT FEES The UF Board of Trustees has approved a 10% increase in out-of-state student fees effective this Fall. It is the first out-of-state fee increase in 10 years. Despite the increase, the cost of attendance at UF is among the lowest in the U.S. for out-of-state students. Out-of-state students who demonstrate a significant hardship can apply for a one-year waiver of the increase.

TECH TRANSFER UF set new records in innovation and technology transfer for fiscal year 2025, which ended June 30. UF Innovate | Tech Licensing registered 446 technology disclosures, up from the 369 disclosures reported in the previous fiscal year. UF also executed 131 licenses, up from 121 in the previous fiscal year, and 859 material transfer agreements, a slight increase from 848. Patent applications increased from 418 to 455. The number of startups created remained steady at nine, maintaining the university's commitment to fostering entrepreneurship. UF established its first startup incubator in 1995. Since then, the economic impact of the commercialization enterprise has exceeded \$25 billion.

DRINK UP Gatorade, the thirst-quenching invention of UF's Dr. Robert Cade, turned 60 this year. Gatorade's quest to keep athletes hydrated began in 1965 when Cade and his team concocted a formula of water, sodium, sugar, potassium, phosphate and lemon juice to keep the Gators football team in top shape. The team credited Gatorade for its 1967 Orange Bowl victory, and the rest is history.

NEW FRC The Florida Recovery Center has opened a state-of-the-art campus near the UF Health Springhill complex, increasing patient capacity from 80 to 124 beds. Ranked the No. 1 addiction treatment center in Florida and No. 5 nationwide by Newsweek, the FRC is one of a handful of addiction recovery centers in the country that are part of an academic health center. The center serves people from all walks of life seeking help with behavioral health issues, including substance use and addiction. The 5-acre campus includes 47,600 square feet of residential, therapeutic and recreational space. Amenities include a swimming pool, gym, outdoor recreation area and pickleball court.

Gator Athletics Program Seventh in the Nation

The final LEARFIELD Directors' Cup standing placed Gators Athletics No. 7. Florida is the only program to finish among the nation's top 10 in each of the last 41 national all-sports standings.

BY MARY HOWARD - FLORIDAGATORS.COM

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lorida's third NCAA men's basketball title led nine top-10 team finishes as the Gators athletics program placed seventh in the 2024-25 LEARFIELD Directors' Cup standings.

Florida is the only program to finish among the nation's top 10 in each of the last 41 national all-sports standings.

Florida's Top-10 Finishes

Men's basketball's third NCAA title led the Gators' nine top-10 team finishes in 2024-25.

This is the 16th consecutive complete season with a Gators team winning a national team title. Florida is one of two programs with a national title each complete season since the 2008-09 campaign. UF has 28 championships in that span.

Individual NCAA Champions

Five Gators claimed five NCAA individual titles across two sports in the 2024-25 season. Florida has won five or more individual titles in each complete season since 2007-208 (17 seasons) and at least one each of the last 44 complete seasons.

Individual National Champions

Men's swimming recorded individual national champions: Josh Liendo in the 100 Freestyle and 100 Butterfly; Julian Smith in the 100 Breaststroke, and Jonny Marshall, Julian Smith, Josh Liendo and Alexander Painter in the 400 Medley Relay. In Men's Track & Field, Malcolm Clemons was the individual national champion in the long jump.

LEARFIELD Directors' Cup

#1 Texas	#6 Tennessee
#2 Southern Cal	#7 Florida
#3 Stanford	#8 Ohio State
#4 North Carolina	#9 Oklahoma
#5 UCLA	#10 Duke

The LEARFIELD Directors' Cup, presented annually by the nation's athletics directors, recognizes the schools with the best overall sports performances in an academic year. The scoring system uses finishes in NCAA Division I men's and women's basketball, baseball, women's soccer and women's volleyball championship action. Additionally, a program can receive points in up to 14 other sports toward its final score.



Top 10 Finishes

#1 Men's Basketball

#3 (tie) Men's Golf

#3 (tie) Lacrosse

#4 Men's Swimming & Diving

#6 Women's Swimming & Diving

#7 Gymnastics

#7 (tie) Softball

#8 (tie) Men's Outdoor Track & Field

#9 (tie) Volleyball

2025 WINS



In LEARFIELD Directors' Cup standings. The **ONLY** program to finish among the nation's top 10 in each of the last 41 years.



CONSECUTIVE complete seasons with a Gator team winning a national team title.



Men's basketball's **THIRD** NCAA title led the Gators' **NINE** top-10 team finishes.

2 conference titles: men's golf and lacrosse.

93 percent graduation rate

3.4 grade point average by Gator student-athletes

NFCA Freshman of the Year



Taylor Shumaker

NCAA Basketball All-Tournament*



Walter Clayton
*also NCAA Tourney MVP and SEC Male Athlete of the Year

NCAA Basketball All-Tournament



Will Richard

NCAA Lacrosse All-Tournament



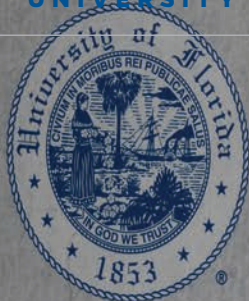
Kaitlyn Davies

NCAA Lacrosse All-Tournament



Gianna Monaco

UNIVERSITY AVENUE



A few Florida Gators logos from back in the day.

Gators



A Brand with Bite

The Gator logo evolved into one of the most recognizable symbols in sports

BY CHRIS HARRY - FLORIDAGATORS.COM

In 1987, Mary Howard was in her first few months as the sports information department contact for the University of Florida women's golf team. The Lady Gators were coming off a second straight NCAA championship, and Howard hit a snag in putting together the team's home tournament program.

The team logo.

Or logos.

"We had so many," recalled Howard, now a senior associate AD for communications. "I didn't know which to use."

The proliferation of team emblems also irked then-Athletic Director Jeremy Foley.

"We just had too many of them," he said. "The women had their own; every sport seemed to have their own."

Lady Gators

Until 1994, that is. The toothy, snarling Gator has become synonymous with the program the last three decades, thanks to an edict from Foley, who recalled walking through airports and

F



F



GATORS



ABOVE Some of the logo prototypes submitted to UF in 1994.

RIGHT The final product in 1994 (left) eventually was tweaked a bit to arrive at the current version (right).

seeing folks representing their schools, from the block “M” for Michigan or Longhorn “T” for Texas.

Foley thought Florida needed its own universal identity, so he organized a committee with representatives from the UAA’s administration, marketing, licensing and communication departments, even the head of the Gator Gift Shop. The timing was perfect, as a worldwide sports branding explosion — led by Nike — was underway.

The first several prototypes from a design firm were rejected.

“Hated ‘em,” Foley said.

Then came the Gator head, which he loved. It sealed



the deal when one coach, in particular, liked it as well.

Said Steve Spurrier at the time: “It’s got some bite to it, doesn’t it?”

Vintage Gator logos live on, of course, but Gator Nation as a whole has embraced the Gator head. In the collegiate logo soup of Tigers, Cats and Dogs, there is only one Gator. 🐊

OBJECT LESSONS



PHOTO BY BRIANNE LEHAN

A BRUSH WITH GENIUS

BY CINDY SPENCE (BS '82, MA '17)

In 1951, **Kenneth Treister** (BA '53) was studying architecture when he and his classmates decided to host a campus lecture. They were young and ambitious and set their sights on the most notable architect in the world: Frank Lloyd Wright.

To their surprise, he said yes.

"We sold tickets, and the auditorium was full, standing room only," Treister said.

As the only student with a car, Treister was Wright's chauffeur and took him on a tour of campus, including an undeveloped street newly designated as Fraternity Row. Treister and his Zeta Beta Tau brothers had a vacant lot on the row and had been pondering how to put a roof over their heads. An idea took hold.

It was cheeky, perhaps, but Treister couldn't let opportunity pass him by.

"I asked him if he would design my frat house," Treister, now 95, recalled.

Wright agreed. He designed the fraternity house and sent the blueprints to Treister, who guesses he is one of the few people still living to work directly with Wright.

The design was innovative. Wright divided the space into a ground level with a giant room for receptions, dining and entertainment, and it opened onto a circular terrace that overlooked a forest of trees and included a fireplace and an outdoor barbecue area.

Wright solved the eternal dorm conflict between

studying and sleeping by creating a series of small bedrooms on the second floor, and on the third floor small compartments with desks and chairs and lighting. On top was another terrace, so students could take study breaks among the treetops. The site was hilly, but Wright's design incorporated the slope.

Treister shepherded the plan through a campus building committee for two years, serving as an intermediary between the antagonistic bureaucrats and the ascerbic genius. But before he knew it, graduation loomed. He joined the Navy and returned from the Korean War four years later to find the plans shelved.

In 2012, the blueprints were pulled out, this time by architecture professor Martha Kohen's students, who built a model. UF President Bernie Machen liked it so much that for a number of years it had a home in the President's Office. Today, it resides in the archives.

Treister says the house is "one of Frank Lloyd Wright's most beautiful designs." Even today, he hopes a future visionary will see what he sees: A life for the building as a university welcome center, a statement-making multipurpose space for grand social occasions and offices for each college and the alumni association.

"It's a pity not to build it. UF could have had a showplace by one of the great architects of the world," said Treister, who estimates it would take about \$4 million to build today.

"It was a golden opportunity," Treister said. "It's still not too late."

the [big] idea

Think weather forecasts on Earth are tricky? Try Space.

Powerful solar storms create light shows on Earth in the form of breathtaking auroras, but they also disrupt satellite communications, scramble GPS signals and strain the power grid.

That makes the weather in space a growing national security risk, says UF space physicist Alicia Petersen, who leads the Space Weather Impacts, Forecasting and Transit, or SWIFT, Lab.

"As our society becomes increasingly dependent on space-based technologies — from agriculture and aviation to defense and disaster response — understanding space weather isn't optional. It's essential," said Petersen, an associate professor in UF's Department of Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering and a core member of the UF Astraeus Space Institute.

Severe geomagnetic storms triggered by coronal mass ejections from the sun can send waves of charged particles racing toward Earth.

"We model how these particles move and how spacecraft systems can respond in orbit," Petersen said. "By doing that, we can better prepare for disruptions, or even design operations and systems that are more resilient to these events."

Petersen's team focuses on modeling the inner heliosphere — the vast space between the Earth and the sun — to understand how solar energetic particles propagate through it and interact with spacecraft. They're also collaborating with engineers of autonomous control systems to develop the future capability for spacecraft to autonomously respond to space weather threats in real-time.

Solar flares and coronal mass ejections, often described as storms on the sun, can unleash energy equivalent to billions of nuclear bombs. Flares travel at the speed of light and coronal mass ejections travel hundreds of miles per second. While they can produce stunning auroras, they also pose a serious risk to defense systems, civilian infrastructure and the global economy.

"The 2003 'Halloween Storms' impacted over half of all satellites in orbit at the time. And we know the sun is capable of even more extreme events," Petersen said.

The Department of Defense collaborates with agencies like NASA, NOAA, and the National Science Foundation to support research that improves space weather prediction, including work at universities such as UF.

"We're not just looking at academic questions. We're helping to build the systems that protect power grids, enable safe air travel, and keep satellites online — all the things modern life depends on," Petersen said.

— EMILY HINDS

Where palm and

The Alma Mater turned 100 this year. Milton Yeats, right with the UF Quartet, penned the words in 1925, recognizing a need — unmet for the first 19 years — for an ode to UF.





pine are blowing...

All Gators know the
first verse of the Alma Mater.

*Florida, our Alma Mater
Thy glorious name we praise
All thy loyal sons and daughters
A joyous song shall raise
Where palm and pine are blowing
Where southern seas are flowing
Shine forth thy noble gothic walls
Thy lovely vine-clad halls
'Neath the Orange and Blue victorious
Our love shall never fail
There's no other name so glorious
All hail, Florida, hail!*

Do you know the second?

*In the name of Alma Mater
We take each comrade's hand
True to thee and to each other
Throughout our Eden land
Old school we love so dearly
May God be ever near Thee
To guard and keep us every one
To thee a loyal son
List to Alma Mater's calling
Let courage never fail
For before her all are falling
All hail, Florida, hail!*

PHOTO COURTESY OF UF DIGITAL COLLECTIONS

“It MAY TAKE A HUNDRED YEARS FOR THE COMPLETION OF THESE PLANS, BUT AS THE STATE GROWS ... THE UNIVERSITY WILL FINALLY GROW INTO A SPLENDID AND HARMONIOUS WHOLE...”

THE UNIVERSITY RECORD OF 1906



LEFT, Dauer Hall was built in 1936 as a student union and multipurpose facility. The chapel, shown here, had a stained glass window, a special touch during the Great Depression.

ABOVE, an art deco relief on a Bryan Hall addition. Bryan was the first home of UF's law classes.

PHOTOS BY BRIANNE LEHAN/PHOTO OF ROY HUNT COURTESY OF THE CITY OF GAINESVILLE

UF'S HISTORIC HEART

SAVING THE LOVELY VINE-CLAD HALLS

BY CINDY SPENCE (BS '82, MA '17)

Imagine for a moment, a wrecking ball poised to demolish Griffin-Floyd Hall, a bulldozer standing by to scoop up bricks mortared in place since 1912, elegant carvings above the doors crushed into rubble.

Today, it's heresy. In the 1970s, it nearly happened.

A push to modernize at all costs was under way. The mantra: out-with-the-old, in-with-the-new. The first four buildings on the hit list were Floyd Hall, Peabody Hall, Anderson Hall and Flint Hall.

Were those noble Gothic walls dilapidated? Absolutely. But to a committed group of history lovers, the call for demolition was a call to arms. The activists went to work, not only saving the buildings but creating UF's campus historic district, a jewel in the heart of campus. It was a battle that, if not won, could have erased UF history and changed the face of campus forever.

One of those activists, law professor Roy Hunt,

says administrators of the era were angling for the Legislature to fund new buildings, so they put together a report called “The Space Story at the University of Florida” to make the case for demolishing almost all the older buildings.

“Things were going very badly in terms of saving the older historic buildings,” Hunt says. “There was not just a lack of interest, there was hostility to the older buildings. They were old-fashioned. We needed to replace them with new, modern buildings. And that’s the point at which [architecture professor] **Blair Reeves** (MA ’53) and [historian] **Samuel Proctor** (BA ’41, PHD ’58) became activists.

“I might be the only one left alive who can tell you the whole story.”

A New Kind of Protest

As the ‘70s progressed and the Vietnam War ended, campus protest culture quieted a bit. Until, that is, administrators began messing with much-loved Collegiate Gothic buildings, riling alumni, faculty, staff and students. There were no marches, but the preservationists had at hand a critical mass of expertise – architecture, history and law professors – and used it to create an

ardent and well-informed opposition. The thorn in administrators’ sides was not going away.

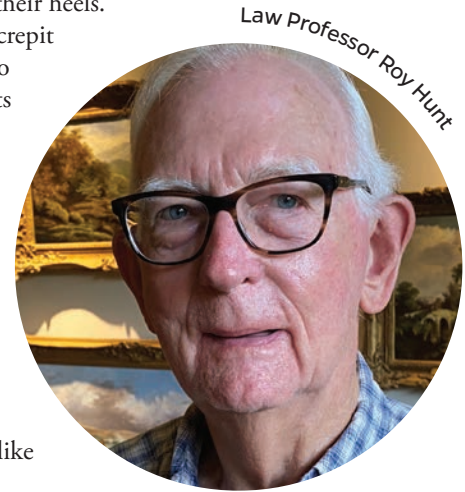
As luck would have it, the preservationists got a huge boost when construction on General Purpose Building A, or GPA, took shape. The façade was brick, but super modern, and Hunt says the disdain for the building (now Turlington Hall) swelled the ranks of the activists.

“GPA was such a shock to everybody; the scale, the design, everything about it,” Hunt says. “At least it was done with red brick.”

Administrators, however, dug in their heels. They turned their attention to a decrepit Floyd Hall and used photographs to make the case for demolition: plants growing in the mortar, broken windows.

“It was demolition by neglect. They were letting it just rot,” Hunt says. “Blair and Sam cried foul.”

For his part, Hunt began teaching Preservation Law and played a key role in drafting a state statute requiring the protection of historic resources at state facilities, like



Law Professor Roy Hunt



Alligator Crossing?

In the fever to modernize, buildings were not the only campus fixtures in jeopardy. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, with enrollment on the rise and roads becoming more crowded, people-moving solutions were all the rage. One, in particular, sounds loony today, but was actually taken seriously: a four-lane campus bypass loop around Lake Alice, approved by the Florida Department of Transportation. Spokes were planned to

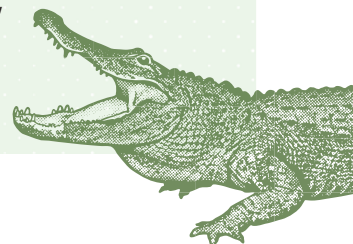
direct traffic north, south, east and west from the loop, along with a 2,000-car parking lot on the shore of Lake Alice, parts of which would have been drained, Hunt says.

“It was just horrendous, and it was not announced until everybody left for the summer. But I happened to be here, and 10 of us on the faculty formed an ad hoc committee chaired by law professor Joe Little to stop the Cross-Campus Highway.

Martha Barnett (JD ’73), then a student, led the student part of our effort. It was just stunning,” Hunt says.

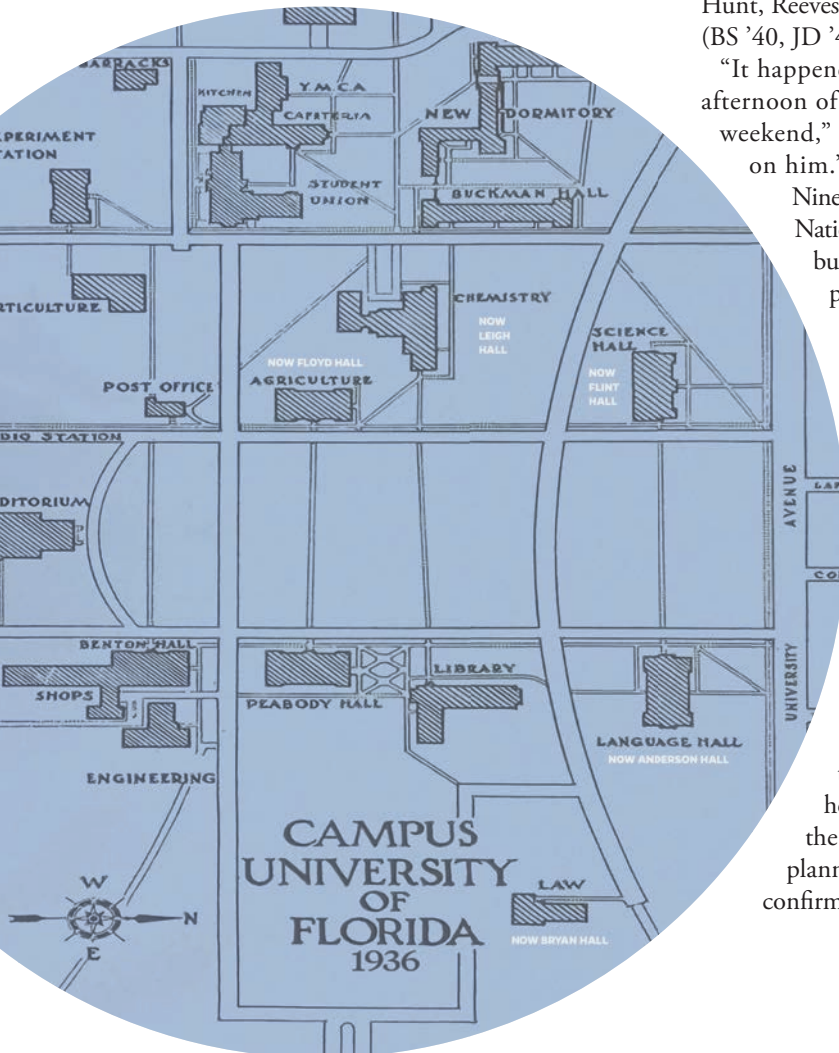
“Can you imagine what campus would look like today if we had done that?”

Students, faculty and alumni could live with the crowded roads; leave Lake Alice alone.





William A. Edwards, UF's first architect, designed Peabody Hall, above, which opened in 1913 as the Teachers College.



**"YOU TELL THEM IF THEY DARE
DESTROY THAT BUILDING, I'LL TAKE
ALL MY MONEY TO GEORGIA."**

BEN HILL GRIFFIN

UF. As the Legislature dragged its feet on appropriating money to demolish the old buildings, the buildings and the activists got a reprieve, and the tide began to turn. By 1979, they had succeeded in getting nine buildings listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

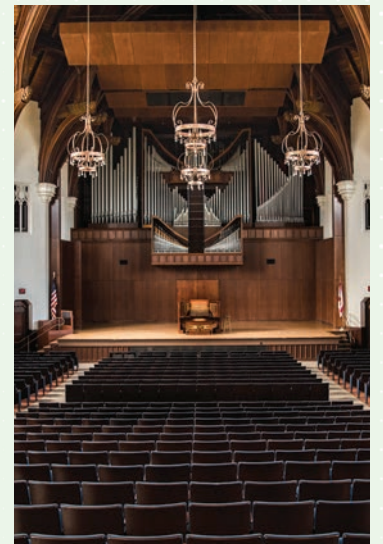
The buildings, however, continued to deteriorate, and the push to replace them with modern buildings did not go away. The preservationists didn't, either.

When Marshall Criser, an alumnus himself, became president in 1984, Hunt, Reeves, Proctor and **Bill Goza** (BS '40, JD '41) asked for a meeting.

"It happened to be late Thursday afternoon of his first Homecoming weekend," Hunt says. "We laid it on him."

Nine buildings on the National Register was great, but it was just a start. The preservationists wanted more. They wanted to save all the old buildings.

Mark Barrow (BS '56, PHD '60, MD '68) a member of the College of Medicine's first graduating class, was present at the meeting. He said Criser turned to an aide: "Are these buildings really on the demolition list?" he asked. The aide left the office to call a campus planner and returned to confirm the buildings were,



Stand-in for Harvard

"Just Cause," starring Sean Connery and Laurence Fishburne, was filmed in part at University Auditorium and two historic dormitories, serving as stand-ins for Harvard University. "Our buildings looked historic enough that we became Harvard," Hunt says. "The ceiling was so high that for years, they left the Harvard red and black pennants hanging from the ceiling of University Auditorium," Hunt says. They finally removed them, figuring "red and black was a poor choice for us."

indeed, doomed.

Barrow recalls Criser's reply: "Tell him I said take them off the demolition list, now!"

Heartened, the group pushed further. "We asked Marshall if we could move toward getting a National Register Historic District, and he said yes," says Hunt. "I give him a huge amount of credit for turning things around."

Murray Laurie (MA '86), then a graduate student in history who had been volunteering with the Florida Trust for Historic Preservation, agreed to help with the nomination for the historic district. In 1989, the National Register included 21 UF buildings and designated the northeast corner of campus a historic district.

An Appetite for Preservation

National Register listing was only the first step. The second was money for restoration, and one of the buildings in dire need was Floyd Hall. It was originally the agriculture school, and as luck would have it, citrus baron Ben Hill Griffin had fond memories

of attending class there. One day, chatting at a party with Reeves and Goza, he heard that Floyd had been so badly neglected that it might be in jeopardy, despite its historic status.

Barrow says Griffin's response was colorful: "You tell them if they dare destroy that building, I'll take all my money to Georgia."

Griffin, already an athletics benefactor, gave \$1.5 million for restoration of Floyd, and the state matched it. Griffin-Floyd Hall became a model for restoration, even as renovators learned from the challenges. For example, the stairs no longer met code, so renovators kept the original and built a second set.

"It was a huge success. Faculty loved it; students loved it," Hunt says. "It set



Ancient History

Hunt had been at the law school since 1962, and by the 1970s was very active in historic preservation. One day, at a meeting of preservationists, he half-jokingly asked if there were any sites to preserve that predated 1906. Anthropologist Barbara Purdy piped up, "There's the law school burial mound." No one at the law school knew about it at the time, but archaeologists did. The group proposed a marker, and it stands today on the lawn of the law school, marking the burial site of aboriginal peoples who once lived nearby, likely on the shores of Lake Alice. "It's really the first historic structure on campus," Hunt says.



PHOTO BY UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA



PHOTO COURTESY OF UF DIGITAL COLLECTIONS



PHOTO COURTESY OF UF DIGITAL COLLECTIONS



the tone for the work that came after.”

Many of the older buildings were used by the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, and Hunt says Dean Willard Harrison and Associate Dean Charles Frazier played key roles in preserving the buildings and raising money for their restoration.

Peabody (1912-13) was renovated with an alteration approved by the Division of Historical Resources to connect it with Criser Hall, giving students seamless access to services like the Bursar and the Registrar. Flint (1910) and Anderson (1913) were also restored, and suddenly, all four historic gems on the original hit list were saved.

“People began to notice at that point,” Hunt says. “The attitude changed from wanting to tear them all down. Especially for older alumni, that’s the university they knew, and as younger people graduate, they become older alumni, too.”

Some older buildings did not survive. The original Benton Hall, built in 1911, was demolished in 1966 to make way for Grinter Hall, built in 1971. Johnson Hall, built in 1912, was destroyed by fire in 1987, taking UF’s

iconic pub, the Rathskeller, with it but not Dauer, with which it shared a wall. Grove Hall came down in 1977, but no one objected. The two-story wooden building had been relocated to UF from Camp Blanding to accommodate the post-World War II enrollment. It was a dormitory and then architecture classrooms, until it was demolished to make way for the Architecture Building (see story, page 32).

Like Grove, the repurposed barracks that made up Flavel Village didn’t make it, either. The only sign of their presence is the name (shortened from Florida Veterans) of Flavel Field.

“They were never intended to be permanent. I would imagine they were recorded, and that’s important to do, as a matter of history. But there was no reason to save them,” Hunt says.

Hunt notes that buildings outside the historic district, old or not, are not necessarily protected. For example, Graham, Trusler and Simpson Halls (1962) are on the list for demolition.

“It’s kind of miraculous that we have what we have,” Hunt says.

Hunt traveled throughout his career and stopped at other campuses to see how they treated their architectural past. Back home, he found satisfaction in any stroll across UF.



NEAR RIGHT, The Hub is the best example of mid-century modern architecture on campus and once housed the bookstore. Today, it’s a great place to find a study abroad opportunity or grab a caffeine fix.

MIDDLE, Dauer Hall houses the Keene Faculty Center, a quiet place to read or talk.

FAR RIGHT, the Infirmary, built in 1931, is being renovated to provide a home for the Hamilton School.





FAR LEFT, before there was Flavet Field, there was Flavet Villages, a collection of barracks sent to UF to house soldiers returning to school after World War II with their wives and children.

MIDDLE, Newell Hall, along a dirt Stadium Road.

NEAR LEFT, Newell Hall was renovated, and on the outside looks almost as it did in 1909. On the inside, it's a learning commons, with space for students to study and collaborate.



Modern Becomes Old

Hunt says the view that the older buildings had outlived their usefulness was itself outdated. As they were restored, the older buildings were brought up to code and fashioned into spaces to meet modern needs. Dauer Hall was turned into faculty offices and home to the elegant Keene Faculty Center, Peabody Hall houses the Dean of Students Office and the Center for New Student & Family Programs. Newell Hall became a learning commons with study rooms for group projects, a café and cozy nooks for individuals. The Infirmary, built in 1931, is being renovated for the Hamilton School (see page 34).

“We can cherish the historic buildings and still find innovative ways to use them,” Hunt says.

The Hub, for instance, was new in 1950. Older alums will remember searching for textbooks when it was the bookstore. Younger alums will remember scoping out study-abroad options at the International Center. Today, it is the most significant mid-century modern building

on campus (and a prime coffee break spot).

It became eligible for the National Register in 2000, and in 2008, it was protected and added to the Campus Historic District.

The Mallory-Yulee-Reid dormitory complex was listed as well. It opened in 1950 after UF became co-educational in 1947, leading to an influx of women students.

With the passing of time, the crop of buildings built in the 1970s are now becoming eligible for historic preservation, such as the architecture building, now Antevy Hall, (1979) and Newins-Zeigler (1976-77). Even the infamous General Purpose Building A, now Turlington Hall, the building that started a movement, will itself be 50 years old and eligible for preservation in 2027.

Has enough time passed for it to be loved, and preserved? 🐾





GARGOYLE

An ornament, usually a fantastic creature, or a decorated water spout projecting from a building.

ARCHES

Curved constructions, many highly decorated, which span an opening such as an entrance, door or window.

collegiate gothic

PHOTOS BY BRIANNE LEHAN

In 1905, William Augustus Edwards faced a daunting task: How to make a world-class university out of a field of sand and pine.

To make something out of nothing, he turned to the gravitas of architecture in the Collegiate Gothic style: dignity in the brick, whimsy in the cast stone flourishes, elegance in the arches.

Edwards' tenure ended in 1925, but his influence lived on. Rudolph Weaver, both university architect and dean of the School of Architecture, adopted Collegiate Gothic style, and the Weaver era was marked by artistic elements like the Mucozo Tower at Sledd Hall and the fanciful names of famous chemists in the stonework on Leigh Hall, home to chemistry and pharmacy classes.

Guy Fulton took his turn as UF architect in 1944 and inherited a tsunami: a flood of WWII veterans returning to school on the GI Bill and a campus soon to add women students. The wartime enrollment of about 600 students exploded to more than 10,000. Fulton's modern approach to Collegiate Gothic style was still compatible with the two eras that came before him and helped create the "harmonious whole" predicted in the 1906 University Record.



DORMER

A dormer is a roofed structure, often containing a window, that projects vertically beyond the plane of a pitched roof.

CRENELLATION

A low wall or railing in which an upright section (a merlon) alternates with a space (a crenelle).

BALLUSTRADE

A low railing made of stone, metal, glass and designed to prevent falls.

FENESTRATION

The arrangement, design, and installation of windows, doors and skylights are elaborate and highly decorated.

RELIEF SCULPTURE

Figurines or sculptural elements atop arches and windows

The Collaboratory

By Spring 2026, the Bruno E. and Maritza F. Ramos Collaboratory will be fully operational — giving UF one of its most technologically advanced buildings.

College of Design, Construction and Planning Dean Chimay Anumba noticed right away after taking the helm in 2016 that student collaboration was hindered by cramped classrooms and labs. The Collaboratory, a 50,000-square-foot, \$49 million facility packed with thoughtful design elements and the latest technology, is a game-changer for the college.

The Collaboratory makes room for the wood shop and the Fab Lab, formerly housed off site. A robotics lab will take a spot on the ground floor.

Anumba calls the building a living-learning lab. The new Jon and Jodi Kurtis Research Hub will house centers and institutes, allowing faculty and graduate students to work together. Stellar Creative Commons, a flexible, multi-function space, will serve as the “living room” of the college. In the Kornblau Family Virtual Design and Construction Lab, students will use immersive, large-scale visualizations to better model and study building systems.

Anumba is also proud of what the Ramos Collaboratory is not — a traditional academic building. Faculty offices were intentionally left out of the design.

“The intent of the Collaboratory is that it’s available 100% for every discipline in the college,” Anumba said. “There’s no sense of proprietary ownership of any space. It’s a highly student-centered building.”

— Doug Bennett



THEN: THE 1960S Architecture classes were scattered, but student offices and labs were in Grove Hall, a two-story, wooden building with rooms stretching down 400-foot hallways. The temporary structure was one of many military buildings relocated from Camp Blanding in Starke to accommodate the post-World War II enrollment boom in the late 1940s and was handed down to architecture in the 1960s. Professor emeritus **Pete Prugh** (BA '71) recalled power outages and finishing projects by candlelight. Today's college, now Antevy Hall, opened in 1980.





NOW: A DIGITAL TWIN The Ramos Collaboratory will have a digital twin — a real-time, virtual replica. Using an array of internet-connected sensors, the twin can monitor and optimize heating and air conditioning operations, lighting, room occupancy and energy use. A robotic dog will occasionally roam the building to collect pictures, video and data on lighting, air quality and other environmental conditions.



NOW: DESIGNING FOR LIGHT

The building's curved exterior allows for windows that maximize natural light while reducing heat gain. Open spaces are designed to encourage interaction among students. The massive windows that cap the end of the Ramos Collaboratory give visitors sweeping views of Century Tower and nearby historic buildings. A new multipurpose hall will accommodate lecture audiences of up to 200 people.

 To read more about the Collaboratory in Explore, UF's research magazine, scan this QR code:





NOW: A HUB FOR HEALTH The 46,000-square-foot Student Health Care Center is the focal point for student health and wellness, and includes primary and urgent care and a pharmacy, along with specialties like sports medicine, radiology, nutrition, gynecology and psychiatry.



THEN: HELPING STUDENTS FOR ALMOST A CENTURY

The Infirmary was built in 1931 to serve a student population that numbered less than 2,500. The student enrollment, growing by leaps and bounds, outgrew the Collegiate Gothic beauty.

NOW: A STATELY RENOVATION

A \$55 million renovation project will address deferred maintenance and add spaces to gather, study and read. The design will invite students to linger and engage with one another. Reconfigured outdoor space will lead up to a new grand entry.



A Home for the Hamilton School

Since its founding in 2022, the Hamilton School for Classical and Civic Education has grown to 53 faculty members and 1,500 students — and counting.

The school's home in the infirmary, which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places, will undergo a \$55 million renovation to house its burgeoning faculty and students. The space is being designed in keeping with the residential colleges at Oxford and Cambridge and will offer spaces where people want to be — reading rooms, seminar halls, lounges and quiet corners, as well as offices and classrooms.

The Hamilton School offers courses in political science, history, literature, economics, international relations and

philosophy. As of Fall, the school offered two majors: Philosophy, Politics, Economics and Law and Great Books and Ideas. Two additional majors, History, Statecraft and Strategy and American Studies, are planned in 2026.

The newest faculty hires help the Hamilton School cement “its standing as one of the best places in the world to study the principles, ideals and institutions of Western and American civilization,” said Robert G. Ingram, the Hamilton School's interim director.





It Takes a Village

In her senior year, **Beth Blair** (BS '24) finally got a room of her own and, as one of the first residents of building 1 in the Honors Village, she marked the occasion with a video.

Knowing other students would be curious about UF's newest residence hall, she took YouTube viewers through

the building and up to her room, decorated with pink accents including a "dorm sweet dorm" wall hanging.

"It was small," Blair said, "but it was all mine."

Blair did the video as a public service. She found other students' videos helpful herself prior to arriving at UF.

"When Honors first opened, the only way to see inside was a video, so I knew it was something people needed," said Blair, who became an early, accidental honors ambassador.

The response was huge. When she helped with check-ins at the area desk, students recognized her.

"People would say, 'oh my gosh, you're the girl from the video; you're why I wanted to live here.'"

The Honors Village was her best dorm, she said, because "the amenities were targeted to my generation." The plentiful study rooms included flexible seating, lots of outlets for laptops and phones, and microwaves everywhere for warming up pizza or bagels.

"I always had my study groups over to my place," Blair said.

Even better, the communal bathrooms were divided into private stalls with a sink, shower and toilet, unlike in the former honors halls, Hume East and Hume West.

The fifth building — a learning commons with spaces for studying and meditation, music practice rooms, teaching kitchens, maker labs and a library — opened fall semester.

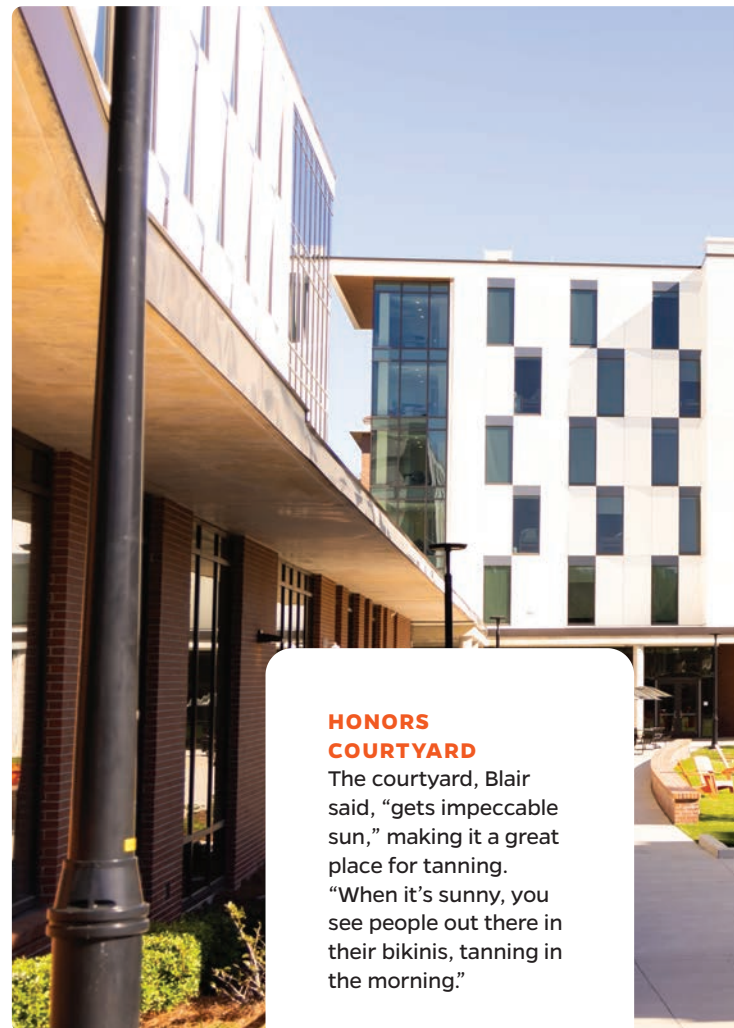
Cindy Spence (BS '82, MA '17)



A LIVING, LEARNING COMMUNITY

The quad design of the \$200 million Honors Village includes openings for pedestrians to enter the community from any side. The ground floors of the buildings are open and transparent, showcasing the activities within.

To watch Blair's video scan this QR code:



HONORS COURTYARD

The courtyard, Blair said, "gets impeccable sun," making it a great place for tanning. "When it's sunny, you see people out there in their bikinis, tanning in the morning."

Broward Dining

Adjacent to Honors Village but open to anyone on campus is Broward Dining, a hub for campus cuisine that just got a \$25 million renovation and addition. The reviews are in: The Brick and Basil pizza station got the most visits out of the 305,000 meals served in the opening semester in fall 2024. The dining center averages over 3,000 meals a day (600 more than prior to renovation). Themed dining is a big hit, with students enjoying dishes for Black History Month, Lunar New Year and Delightful & Thankful Thanksgiving.





Condron Family Ballpark

Horticulture fields once stood where Gators baseball fans now gather at the Condron Family Ballpark.

The \$65 million project was an upgrade for both fans and players.

For fans strolling around the stands, the 360-degree concourse allows for continuous viewing of the game. Picnickers can bring a blanket and stretch out on the berm or ease into an Adirondack chair. In the stands, the seats all have seat backs, and some are shaded.

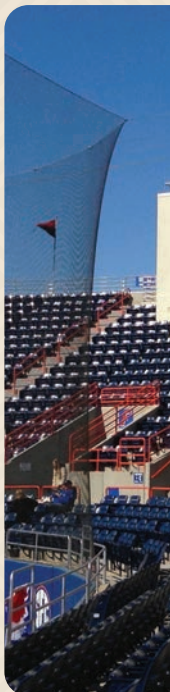
For players, the park has multiple indoor hitting and pitching cages, a hydrotherapy area and an expanded training and rehabilitation

area. A players' lounge includes a nutrition station.

McKethan Stadium, right, was built around Perry Field, the Gators' home ballpark since 1949. The field was named for Carl E. "Tootie" Perry, an athlete from 1916-21, and the stadium was named for Alfred A. McKethan, a longtime booster who funded renovations. His name remains on the field at Condron ballpark.

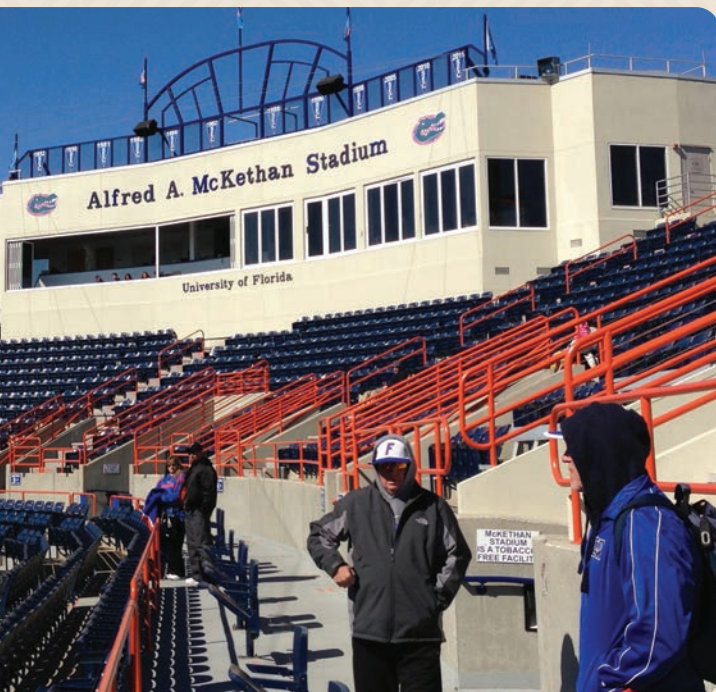
Incidentally, Gary Condron was a walk-on for the Gators basketball team in the 1970s.

"I'm really excited for my my kids when they bring their kids to that stadium," Condron said in 2022, when the park was named.



“I’M REALLY EXCITED FOR MY KIDS WHEN THEY
BRING THEIR KIDS TO THAT STADIUM.”

GARY CONDRON, AT THE PARK’S NAMING IN APRIL 2022



JAMES W. “BILL” HEAVENER FOOTBALL TRAINING COMPLEX When the doors opened on the complex in August 2022, excited football players rushed in with wide eyes and big smiles. And no wonder. The facility includes expanded strength and conditioning space and hydrotherapy, as well as locker rooms with personal pods and meeting areas adjacent to the indoor practice facility. All athletes, however, can fuel up — for free — at the dining hall and swim in the adjacent pool.

Today AND Tomorrow

Perhaps the only thing more precious on a university campus than parking is a place for researchers and students to make sense of our data-driven world.

So UF traded 362 parking spaces along Museum Road for a bustling data science hub, the Malachowsky Hall for Data Science and Information Technology, in a can't-miss spot across from the Reitz Union.

The \$150 million hall immediately brought together artificial intelligence expertise from across campus. The 263,000-square-foot, seven-story structure provides space for medicine, pharmacy, engineering, computing and cyber technologies to collaborate.

At the building's opening in 2023, namesake and NVIDIA co-founder **Chris Malachowsky** (BSEE '80) said, "The fields

of AI and data science are of central importance in building a better world."

The NVIDIA-manufactured HiPerGator supercomputer, the most powerful university computer in the U.S., made it possible for UF to offer any student access to AI research and curriculum. Malachowsky Hall makes it possible to bring together many disciplines and institutes under one roof. The hall will house the Warren B. Nelms Institute for the Connected World, the Florida Semiconductor Institute and the Florida Institute for Cybersecurity, among others.

To fuel all that brainpower, the ground floor includes a coffee shop, Beans & Bytes, where Provost Joe Glover records his Cup o' Joe podcast on all things AI.

DENTAL SCIENCE The UF College of Dentistry is launching a three-phase renovation and expansion project of its building on the UF campus. First, the exterior of the existing dental tower will get a new façade that will provide better protection for the building's interior. The second phase, a three-story addition, is in the final stage of planning with site preparation and construction expected to begin in fall 2026. Once completed, phase three includes renovation of areas of the dental tower. The \$200 million project will add about 100,000 square feet of space.



FLAVET RECREATIONAL AREA To meet the growing demand for on-campus recreational facilities, the \$6.5 million Flavet Recreational Area will include tennis, pickleball, volleyball, ADA accessible trails, a pavilion, hammock posts and lawn sports. The plan calls for preservation of heritage trees and Florida-friendly landscaping.



BEE LAB The Honey Bee Research and Extension Lab is a few years old now, but it shows the power of collaboration. UF enlisted help from the Florida State Beekeepers Association, the Florida Legislature and many corporate sponsors. The result is a leading center for honey bee research and education and a home for the annual Bee College. Beekeeping is an \$80 million-a-year industry for Florida and supports more than 2,300 jobs. As director Jamie Ellis likes to say, 20-25% of everything we eat is thanks to honey bees.



COMING SOON

- Center for Applied Artificial Intelligence: \$30 million, UF/IFAS Gulf Coast Research and Education Center in Balm (rendering pictured above)
- Chemical Engineering, renovation & remodeling: \$44 million
- Music Building: \$65 million
- New, four-building housing complex, incorporating the Disability Resource Center: \$400 million
- Thompson Center for Earth Systems/addition to Powell Hall: \$30 million
- Harn American Art Wing renovation: \$5,396,000

A photograph of a modern car museum. Two Ferrari sports cars are displayed on a polished floor. The car on the left is red, and the car on the right is silver with red and yellow racing stripes. The background features concrete pillars and large, glowing oval light fixtures on the ceiling.

YAHN BERNIER'S S QUESTS TO MVP OF

By Paige Fry (BS '19)



IDE VALVE

Bernier leveled up from chemistry undergrad to UF law school to a leader in video game development

Yahn Bernier (JD '93), at 12 years old, worked an unpaid job, tinkering with broken computers in the back of an Indian Harbour Beach RadioShack. Inside that now-defunct store, he laid the groundwork for a long career at a company that profoundly shaped modern gaming.

Bernier's journey goes through the University of Florida and then the Pacific Northwest, where he played a key role in Valve Corporation's growth into a multibillion-dollar powerhouse. While he's now regarded as one of the most accomplished video game developers, his start can be traced back to Brevard County.

Coding was always a constant in Bernier's life, but he never viewed it as a viable career path until the founders of a start-up video game company directly reached out to him and asked him to quit being an attorney to work for them. "I don't know why I didn't figure it out until it hit me over the head through Valve reaching out to me and saying, 'You should be doing this as your career,'" Bernier said. "It wasn't what it is now,

PHOTO BY TARA BROWN



Bernier, in the blue-striped shirt, at the Summer Science Training Program for high schoolers at UF in the summer of 1989.

where software is the destination and a lot of kids study computer science formally and find their way to Silicon Valley.”

That’s why Bernier may be the only person whose résumé includes a bachelor’s in chemistry from Harvard University, a law degree from the University of Florida and experience as a patent attorney in Atlanta before starting at Valve.

As a child, Bernier was obsessed with the Atari game system and arcades. Some of the games he played were Donkey Kong, Defender and Tempest. He tried to make his own version of Donkey Kong,

effectively programming a game for the first time.

His name is now in the credits of top games, including Valve’s first product: Half-Life, a sci-fi first-person shooter, released in November 1998. It went on to be named “Game of the Year” in over 50 publications. He was also part of the creation of Steam, an online platform that sells PC games.

Some of his favorite titles that he worked on are Team Fortress 2, a multiplayer first-person shooter, and Half-Life 2.

“I CREDIT MY ECLECTIC BACKGROUND FOR GETTING ME FROM WHERE I WAS TO WHERE I AM NOW.”

Bernier said he pinches himself all the time when thinking about the company’s success.

“I’ve gotten to work on projects that I know millions of people enjoy,” he said. “I credit my eclectic background for getting me from where I was to where I am now.”

For undergrad, Bernier didn’t major in computer science, but he picked up jobs writing software for different departments. When he decided not to pursue a doctorate in chemistry, one of his teaching assistants told him that her father was a patent attorney, a career that Bernier could do well in



Yahn Bernier in April after winning the Saturday Ferrari Challenge race at the Daytona International Speedway. When not coding, Bernier’s hobbies include racing and owning sports cars, especially Ferraris.



Bernier in 1998 at Valve's first offices in the Emerald Building in Kirkland, Wash. The company had about 20 employees at the time.

with his chemistry background.

He returned to Florida for law school because his brother was already pursuing a graduate degree at UF.

Bernier and his friends rented a house from a man who owned the convenience store Wilbert's on the same street as the law school. He could stumble out of bed and be in class within five minutes or walk to the stadium for football games.

That UF law degree, in practice, became a business degree because Valve works with many elements that pertain to IP. Now

the company has in-house counsel, but in its early years, Bernier acted as the litmus test on whether they needed to retain attorneys — especially when Valve had a legal standoff with Valve's original publisher about where to distribute their games.

He found his job as an attorney after meeting a representative from an Atlanta law firm who visited UF and saw potential in his chemistry background. He moved there after graduating.

Bernier initially connected with Valve because he was moonlighting as a hobby developer, writing code that Valve's staff used. They occasionally asked him for features that they couldn't deliver, so Bernier would work on them overnight, sending the updates before his day job.

When one of Valve's programmers left, the company told Bernier that he should divert his path of becoming a partner at the firm and visit them across the country.

Bernier underwent a Microsoft-style technical interview, where he annoyed the main engineer because he answered a question in a minute that was intended to take half an hour. He told Bernier, "I don't know why you're practicing law, but we need to hire you to be a programmer."

The timing was right for Bernier, who was turning 30, to take a big swing despite his law school teachings to be wary of risks. He decided to give it five years and go back to law if needed, but he had a feeling that the people at this company were doing something interesting.

"That Spidey sense was very accurate," Bernier said. "In hindsight, we ended up doing some pretty amazing software all along the way. We continue to do that to this day." 🍄



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Student gaming opens

A NEW space for students to embrace their passion for video games and mingle with others opened this Fall semester on the ground floor of UF's Reitz Union.

The Gator Esports Center is a 1,900-square-foot space designed and developed in collaboration with GameLab, a gaming facility company.

The center — lined with televisions and LED decorations — can hold about 70 people gaming with extra room for observers. It includes an arena with 12 PCs fitted with top-of-the-line specs for esports competitions, 24 game pods equipped with PCs and Xboxes, six couch co-op gaming stations with Switch 2s and Xboxes, two streaming stations and two classic stand-up arcade game machines.

The goal of the center is to create a space for students who may not have otherwise had a reason to visit the Reitz Union, said Dwayne Isaacs, senior director of the Reitz Union.

"This community of gamers existed long before the space, and now, we've given them a place where they can find themselves in the union," he said.

Isaacs hopes the space will encourage students who want to seek out a career path in video games or esports: from professional gaming to esports announcers to game developers.

The idea of the center was initially brought by students soon

after Isaacs started in his role at the Union in 2022. One of the Gator Esports club co-founders, **Kelli Snellman** (BSBA '22, MS '23), delivered a pitch for a gaming space, including a PowerPoint presentation.

"It's so awesome that this has finally come to fruition," she said. "It's a testament to how much this was needed, and how much our students are going to enjoy this."

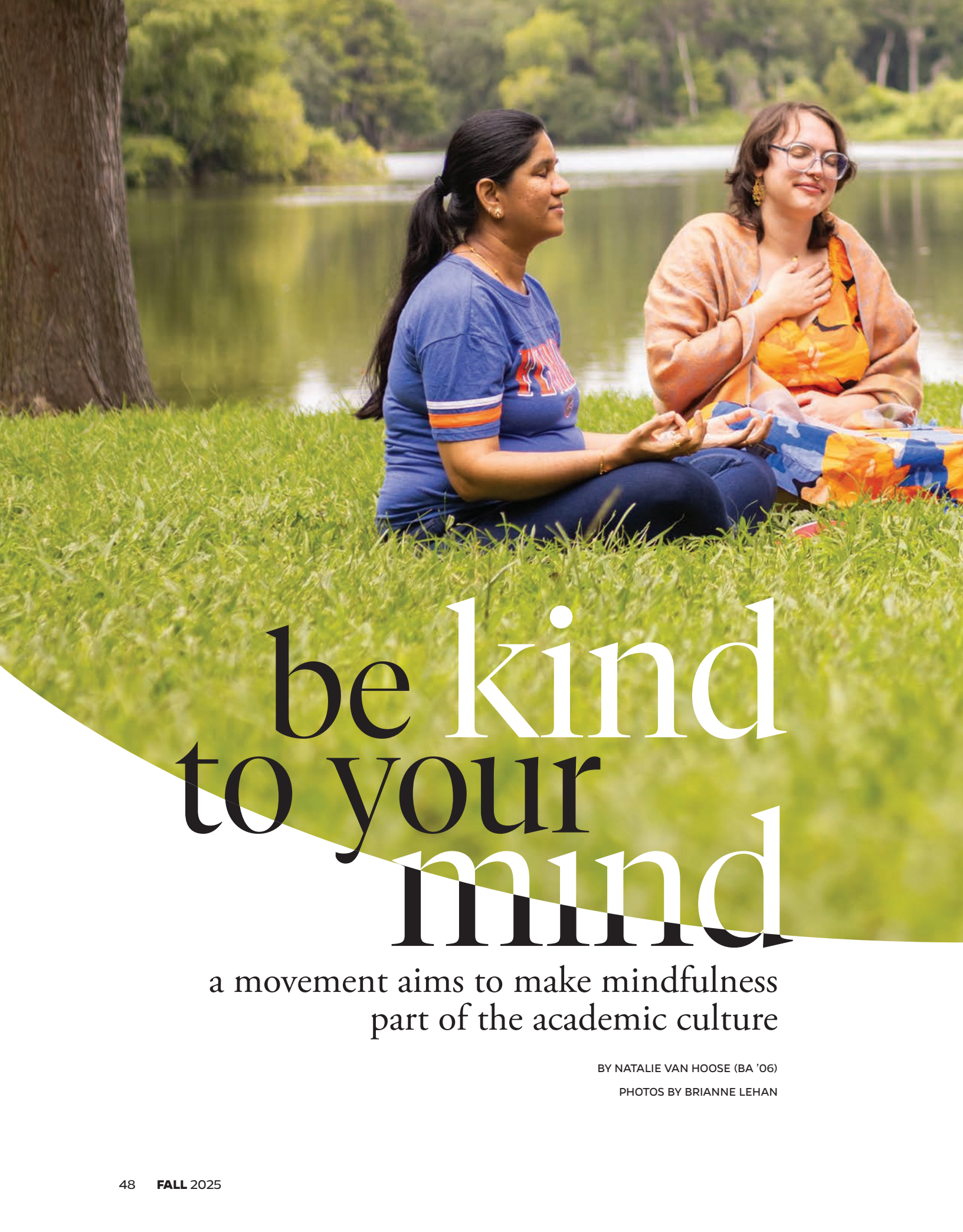


UF Alumni in Video Games



- **Jesse Rapczak** (BSDA '03), Co-Founder of Studio Wildcard, which develops the ARK Franchise, Exec. Producer for ARK: The Animated Series (2022)
- **Joshua Javaheri** (BSDA '09), Director of Production at Raven Software, worked on Call of Duty IP
- **Johnathan Wolverton** (BSDA '08), Director of Development at Undead Labs — a game studio that created the State of Decay game series. Formerly worked at Electronic Arts (EA)
- **Juan DeBiedma "Hungrybox"** (BS '15), Co-Owner of Team Liquid, an esports team. Professional Gamer, ranked as a top player for Super Smash Bros. Melee



A photograph of two women sitting cross-legged on a lush green grassy bank next to a calm lake. The woman on the left has long dark hair in a ponytail and is wearing a blue t-shirt with orange and white stripes on the sleeves. The woman on the right has short brown hair, wears glasses, and is dressed in an orange and yellow patterned top with a light orange shawl. Both women have their eyes closed and hands resting on their knees in a meditative pose. The background shows a serene lake reflecting the surrounding green trees under soft, natural light.

be kind to your mind

a movement aims to make mindfulness
part of the academic culture

BY NATALIE VAN HOOSE (BA '06)

PHOTOS BY BRIANNE LEHAN



Last September, Nayanathara Jayathilaka pushed open the door to the Harn Museum of Art feeling weary and homesick for her native Sri Lanka. Two months into her fellowship as a trauma therapist, the stresses of work, culture shock, a recent home break-in and her first hurricane had amassed into a crushing weight she carried on her back and shoulders.

Jayathilaka came to the Harn to try Nia — a practice that blends dance, martial arts and mindfulness — in a session organized by the University of Florida’s Mindfulness Program. She slipped off her shoes and stepped into the outermost ring of participants. Sunshine poured through the rotunda skylight as Sarit Sela, a first-degree black-belt Nia instructor, guided some 60 people to lift their arms skyward and pull air deep into their lungs. The sounds of wind and chimes piped through a speaker. Jayathilaka’s muscles warmed

with each stretch, and tears rose in her eyes as she felt the tension in her body begin to dissipate.

Helping people like Jayathilaka restore inner balance is one of the goals of the UF Mindfulness Program. Founded in 2015 by a small interdisciplinary team of UF faculty and staff, the program has grown into a robust movement, incorporating mindfulness into UF’s academic culture, advancing research into its benefits and serving the campus and community, including first-time practitioners like Jayathilaka.

A lively cha-cha beat sliced through the room, and Sela called out “Something different!” before intensifying the group’s movements. Jayathilaka drummed the air with her palms and rolled her hips. “Make it your own,” Sela said. “Beautiful!” An elderly woman abandoned her cane to strike a warrior’s pose. Cha-cha gave way to pulsing techno, and the dancers shook out their shoulders

*“It is more than just a breathing technique.
and health and transform people — give them meaning.”*

and spine. A young man in a backward baseball cap wore a look of delight as his body carved bold shapes in the air.

Sela concluded the session by leading the group through the adjacent gallery, urging them to keep their movements intentional as they examined artwork. A silver-haired woman slowly pirouetted.

Afterward, Jayathilaka laced her shoes, planning her next Nia session. “I’ve been carrying a lot, but now I feel like I’m so very relaxed, and all things have gone away,” Jayathilaka said.

Sela, who regularly partners with the UF Mindfulness Program, said Nia shows how moving the body also moves the emotions. “You get to kick and yell, laugh and cry,” she said.

This mind-body connection is a linchpin of the UF Mindfulness Program, which offers workshops, undergraduate and graduate courses and retreats. The program is the brainchild of Sabine Grunwald, a lifelong mindfulness practitioner and a UF/IFAS professor who studies AI and environmental science. A decade ago, Grunwald, observing a growing public interest in yoga and meditation, saw an opportunity to introduce these practices into UF’s campus culture.

“Mindfulness is more just than a breathing technique,” said Grunwald, the program’s director. “It has a psychological component that can be used in therapy, counseling, coaching and in building up life skills. Mindfulness can benefit wellbeing and health and transform people — give them meaning and purpose.”

UF’s program, a self-funded effort, draws its definition of mindfulness from physician Jon Kabat Zinn, who popularized meditation techniques in the 1970s after noting their effectiveness at reducing patients’ chronic pain

and stress: “The process of being present in the moment, on purpose, without judgment.”

Grunwald sees the program as offering a contrast to the “do more, work faster” attitude in academia. Sessions provide a space where people can slow down, open up, connect to their inner life and grow together. UF Mindfulness collaborates with GatorWell Health Promotion Services, which sees high demand from students seeking mental health resources. Stress affects faculty and staff as well, and the program is open to all, Grunwald said.

Studies have shown mindfulness practices move the body away from a state of hyper-awareness, reducing heart rate and blood pressure, said **Ana Puig** (Ph.D. ’04), a clinical professor and research director in the College of Education and UF Mindfulness’s associate director of research.

“It resets your internal body mechanisms to bring a sense of calm and peace,” Puig said. “Emotionally, it allows you to practice non-attachment, which is a source of a lot of stress for people. The harder you hold on to things, especially things you cannot control, the more difficult it is to be peaceful inside.”

Puig said the UF medical education program now offers mindfulness resources after the core team documented the beneficial effects of Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction therapy on medical students’ stress levels and relationships at work and home.

While the benefits of meditation have gained increasing recognition in medicine, psychology and neuroscience, the UF Mindfulness core team fields skeptics regularly,

In the garden of the Baughman Meditation Center, **Sae Subramanian (MA ’26)**, **Corrine Buchanan (BA ’11, PHD ’25)**, UF Mindfulness director **Sabine Grunwald** and associate director **Ana Puig**, take a moment for mindfulness. Buchanan teaches MHS 3930, Mindful Living, spirituality for everyday life.

*Mindfulness can benefit wellbeing
ing and purpose.”*



 To find classes or learn more, please scan this QR code:



especially among colleagues in the sciences. Grunwald holds a Ph.D. in environmental sciences and a Ph.D. in transpersonal psychology and sees herself as a liaison between disciplines that have been compartmentalized. Her favorite moments are witnessing first-time practitioners experience the difference mindfulness brings: “You’re seeing this smile in attendees, this gratitude, this opening up that says, ‘Aha! I get it now. This is what it means to relax deeply.’ Life-changing.”

The program partners with the UF Center for Spirituality and Health, and many of the core members are practicing Buddhists and Hindus, reflecting the ancient roots of meditation and mindfulness, but its offerings are secular and open to all.

Ying-Chen Chen, a Ph.D. student in tourism and hospitality, said she discovered mindfulness during a course taught by Grunwald, which she took as part of her research on wellbeing. Now, she regularly practices meditation. “Doing the practice,” Chen said, “I feel more peaceful and forget the stress from my research.”

UF Mindfulness has also evolved to help people cope with emerging problems. The team adapted to a virtual format during the COVID-19 pandemic, drawing participants from all over the world. “A lot of folks felt drawn to what

we were offering because they felt lonely and isolated, and that was one way of making connection,” Puig said.

When the murder of George Floyd sent shock waves through the nation, the program’s instructors used practices such as guided meditation to help participants explore uneasiness, rather than avoid it, and recognize and turn toward feelings of fear, instead of hardening against them.

“We thought to offer something that would allow people to broach difficult conversations around race and racism, to bring people together in an intentional, mindful and loving way,” Puig said. “That was a very special kind of time where we were able to take something really negative and try to make a positive contribution.”

Findings from the sessions comprise a chapter in a forthcoming book co-edited by Grunwald, Puig and core team member Yao-Chin Wang, an assistant professor in the department of tourism, hospitality and event management. The book, slated to publish with Cambridge University Press, features chapters written by authors globally on the integration of mindfulness into higher education, drawing from neuroscience, psychology and students’ experiences.

To the beginner, Grunwald offers simple advice: “Come to one of the mindfulness sessions. Try it out.” 

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A vision of hope

Jeffrey Levenson (MD '84) illuminates the world for patients

BY DANIELLE IVANOV (BS '21)

When a young **Jeffrey Levenson** (MD '84) followed his heart to the UF College of Medicine in 1979, he had no idea pursuing the love of his life, **Ilene Levenson** (MD '82) would kick-start a monumental career curing blindness for over 40,000 people worldwide.

The couple had been friends since junior high school, and after growing up together in the suburbs of New York City, they fell in love as college students on a backpacking trip through Europe. After returning to the U.S., Levenson moved across the country from New York to Gainesville to share a life — and medical school — with his other half.

“Ilene was two years ahead of me in medical school, and she decided to specialize in internal medicine,” Levenson said. “My decision to be an ophthalmologist was in part guided by her decision to become an internist. It’s funny,

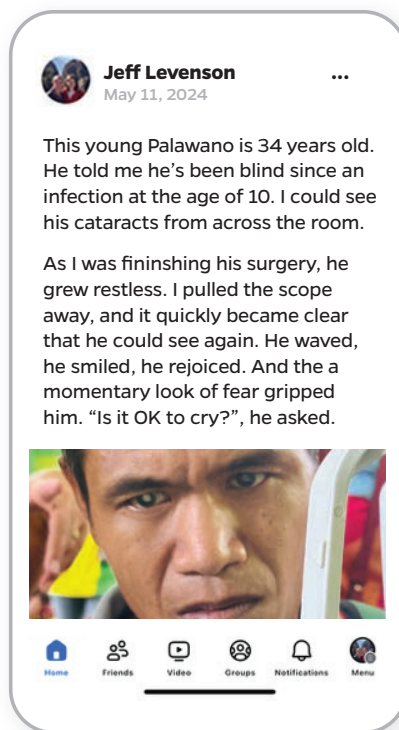


Drs. Ilene and Jeffrey Levenson shared their journey through school at the UF College of Medicine.

Drand it's ironic, but once she made her decision, my choice of ophthalmology — the thing I now understand as the reason I was put here on Earth — was predicated in part on the idea that somebody needed to be home in time to cook dinner for the kids."

After Levenson completed residency training, he settled in Jacksonville and started his private practice downtown Jacksonville. Soon after, he was confronted by the reality that scores of the city's residents, blinded by cataracts and uninsured, were unable to afford curative surgery. It led him to found the Gift of Sight program, administered by the nonprofit Vision is Priceless, which has provided free cataract surgery to thousands of blind and medically indigent First Coast patients for over 30 years.

Levenson has been on a mission to cure cataract blindness ever since his own experience with cataracts 15 years ago. At first, reading became more difficult and took longer to complete. Then, headlights from oncoming cars started to be bothersome. He

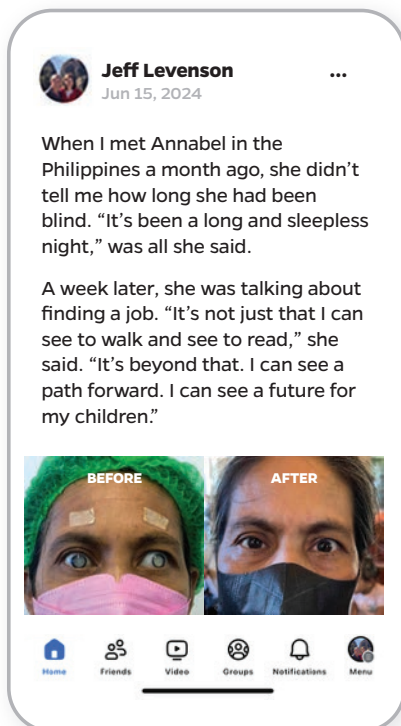


gradually found himself relating to the same complaints shared by his patients during clinic hours. One day, he looked up at his wife across the kitchen table and couldn't see the details of her face — only a silhouette.

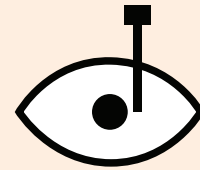
"I thought, 'Oh my gosh, I'm going blind, I need to have cataract surgery,'" Levenson said. "But it never occurred to me that my life and my career and the things I love might be over. In the weeks after my surgery, as I was celebrating this restoration of sight, it occurred to me that there are people all around the world for whom that's not the case."

Motivated by this realization, Levenson made a few calls offering to volunteer his time and skills for cataract surgery. But he quickly discovered that the high-tech surgery he routinely performed for patients and received himself wasn't feasible in areas with limited resources.

In the U.S., cataract surgery costs about \$2,000, and around 4 million people undergo the procedure each year. It's one of the safest, most successful and most common



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This story first appeared in **Florida Physician**. For more stories, scan this QR code:





FOUR DECADES after Levenson's College of Medicine graduation, he and his wife returned to UF during the 2024 Alumni Weekend in October to celebrate his induction into the college's Wall of Fame, an honor recognizing his decades of philanthropic work advocating for and providing free cataract surgery to patients through his home practice in Jacksonville and around the globe as chief medical officer with the nonprofit SEE International.

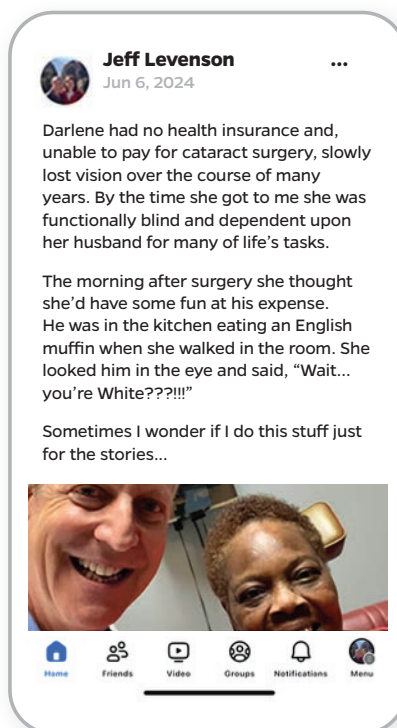
"I was thrilled to be recognized," he said. "It was a wonderful surprise and reintroduction to medical school at UF and the memories I share from it, and it was another opportunity to share the message of how we might end needless blindness in the world."

procedures available. But for the billions of people worldwide who live off less than \$5 a day, saving \$2,000 is an unfathomable dream.

To make the surgery more accessible, ophthalmologists working in developing countries created a low-tech variant of cataract surgery called manual small-incision cataract surgery. It's an inexpensive but highly effective variant of the procedure, especially suited to advanced cataracts in low-resource settings, that can be used to cure blindness in just 10 minutes at a material cost of roughly \$25.

After learning the procedure from a doctor in San Pedro Sula, Honduras, Levenson has volunteered on two to four medical mission trips around the world each year and helped raise awareness and funds for hundreds more.

"There are times in one's life where you get this idea that you are exactly



where you're supposed to be, doing exactly what you're supposed to be doing," Levenson said. "And I get that feeling when I'm doing this work. It fills me up. It makes me feel whole, like I am paying forward the gift that was given to me by the University of Florida, Emory, my parents.

"It's a gratifying feeling. And then the stories the patients tell bring it home. You can talk about millions of people, you can talk about hundreds of thousands of surgeries, but nothing impacts you like one person's story about what it's like to see again."

"Every day in Bicol, Philippines, we did cataract surgery on roughly 200 patients, many of whom had been blind for years. The next morning they would gather and wait, often prayerful and frightened, as we walked through the crowd removing patches and witnessing, over and over again, the miracle that is modern medicine." 🇵🇭

Why I Give

Paul Ackerman (BS '69) Charity Ackerman (BS '70)

BY CINDY SPENCE (BS '82, MA '17)

THEN

Paul Ackerman was a student in the UF College of Pharmacy when he met Charity one summer in anatomy class. The assignment was to dissect a rat. "She wouldn't touch it," Paul said. "So, I took the notes," Charity added.

NOW

As pharmacy alums, the Ackermans stay active in the Dean's Leadership Council and as mentors. Paul helps out with a pharmacy law course, and when they travel to campus, they both notice one thing: "Parking's much worse than when we were in school."

THEN

Paul competed on the Gators swim team. After Gatorade inventor Dr. Robert Cade finished testing his concoction on the football team, he turned to swimmers, who tried to mask the taste. "We got the idea that if you mixed it with alcohol it would get into your system faster," Paul says, "but that's not true." Privately, they called themselves guinea pigs. Officially they were part of "Dr. C's hydration study."

NOW

Paul is active in the swim team's support organization, the Splash Club. "I keep time for the swim meets. I enjoy the camaraderie, and the coaches are really good to me."

THEN

Paul and Charity had begun dating, but not exclusively, when one night Paul woke Charity up with a call for help. He had been walking a date back to her dorm "when I decided I would hurdle a bicycle rack. I didn't quite make it." Says

Charity, "He called me at 3 o'clock in the morning to take him to the infirmary." The infirmary sent him to the hospital, where pioneering UF orthopedist William Enneking treated his torn ligament. Charity was tasked with calling Paul's parents. She told them he was playing touch football and ran into a bike rack when he went out for a pass.

NOW

"We can laugh about it today," Charity says. Eventually, Paul's mom learned the truth.

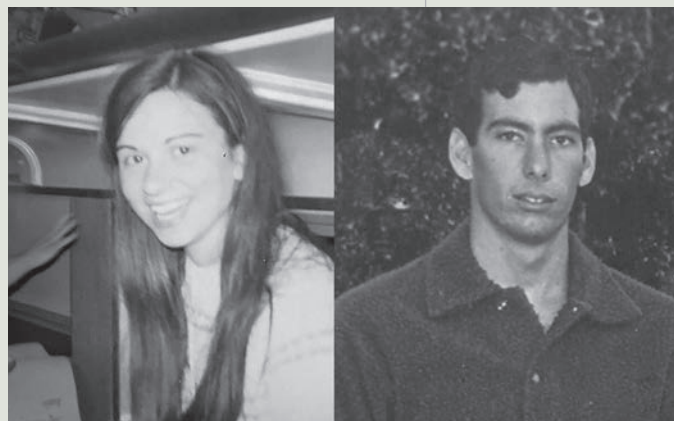
THEN

The pharmacy college was in Leigh Hall, and Charity remembers having to wear dresses to class and even dressing up for football games: "I can't believe we did that." Says Paul, "Those were the funnest years of my life."

NOW

"Our education," Paul says, "gave us the ability to make a life for ourselves. We're not millionaires, but we're comfortable, all the bills are paid. Without my education, I wouldn't be here today, so I owe the university quite a bit." The couple has always given their time, mentoring pharmacy students and participating in alumni activities. Recently they joined the Legacy Society by setting up a charitable remainder trust, from which they draw interest income. "When we're both no longer here, it will go to the University of Florida, to the College of Pharmacy and the UF swim team."

"Our education gave us the ability to make a life for ourselves."



THEN&NOW

Pioneer reflects on first women's basketball team

When Cassandra “Cassie” Macias (BSPE ’75) started at UF in 1971 in what is now the College of Health & Human Performance, she was surprised to find there was no women’s basketball team.

She didn’t set out to be a pioneer, but she had played throughout junior high and high school and was determined to play in college. She approached professors and administrators, first succeeding in getting a women’s team as a club sport, with the women supplying their own uniforms, equipment and transportation to games. Finally, in her senior year, UF’s first varsity women’s basketball team took to the court.

“Everybody who wanted to participate and play just wanted to have fun, play basketball and represent UF,” said Macias, who became the first team captain. “So, we just did whatever we needed to have that opportunity. We went through a lot of adversity, that’s for sure.”

The varsity women had to compete with the men for practice time in the Florida Gym and even resorted to turning off the lights to get the guys to leave.

“Yes, we were competitive. We wanted to win. But more than anything, we just wanted to enjoy the experience that we had, and I think we did,” Macias said.

Macias returned to Gainesville in 2010 and became such a big supporter of the women’s team that former women’s basketball coach Amanda Butler selected Macias to



Cassie Macias, seated third from left, and UF’s first women’s varsity basketball team celebrated 50 years of women’s basketball at UF recently. Macias was the team captain and has remained active in supporting the women’s basketball team.

represent UF as an SEC Great, a prestigious program that showcases extraordinary women who have played in the Southeastern Conference.

Macias and her teammates recently gathered for their 50th-year reunion and reflected on how far the sport has come.

“It was a different era back then. Girls didn’t have a lot of opportunities, and you had to make your own opportunities and just enjoy what you had,” Macias said. “It was a blast.”

— SHELBY HODEL

A first for AEPHI

UF alum tapped for national office at summer convention

Jennifer Werger Feldman (BA '03) was installed as the national president of Alpha Epsilon Phi this summer at the sorority's national convention.

Feldman is the first UF alumna to be installed as the sorority's national president.

She and several members of UF's Alpha Tau chapter were on hand for the installation and to see **Jamie Silverstein Zinn** (BS '08) awarded the Leslie Brown Shiffman Outstanding Advisor of the Year award. In addition, **Diane Lipson Schilit** (BA '78) was recognized with the Outstanding Community Service Award.

Zinn works at UF Hillel, and Schilit serves on the UF Hillel board. The UF chapter was represented at the convention by six undergraduates and 12 alumni members.



Ashley Haber (BS '14) left, and **Jennifer Werger Feldman** (BS '03) right, congratulate **Jamie Silverstein Zinn** (BS '08) on her adviser of the year award.



UF's Alpha Tau chapter of Alpha Epsilon Phi was well represented at the national convention.

 To hear Bihorac's speech, scan this QR code:



ADVICE TO GRADS:

Become gloriously human

Dr. Azra Bihorac, a UF pioneer in using artificial intelligence to improve patient safety, spoke to graduates at summer commencement, telling them about the “sheer improbability” of her own life journey. Born 5,236 miles away in Bosnia, she anticipated she would become the ninth generation to live in her small town until her country descended into civil war in 1992.

“My improbable story includes many unexpected turns and unfortunate events:

- Becoming a single mother on my 20th birthday.
- Leaving my 1-year-old son 200 miles away with my parents to finish medical school.
- Fleeing war at 27 with one suitcase and a few hundred dollars sewn into my coat.
- Teaching myself Turkish backwards from English textbooks.
- Arriving in Gainesville in 1999, with two suitcases and a 4-year-old daughter, starting over, again.”

Today, Bihorac is the senior associate dean of research for the UF College of Medicine and internationally recognized in the field of medical AI.

“Class of 2025: At the threshold of a future shaped by uncertainty, artificial intelligence, and a changing world, your generation carries an extraordinary responsibility. You will define what it means to be human in an era dominated by the promise of machines. In a world where machines think faster than you and algorithms outperform, your humanity is not the flaw. It is the feature,” Bihorac said. “The work ahead is not to become more like machines, but to become more deeply, courageously, gloriously human.”



Welcome to the Newest Gators

Clubs give Class of 2029 a send-off

For the 22nd year, the Manatee Gator Club® in Bradenton held its Beach Bash, a send-off to congratulate and welcome new UF students and their families into Gator Nation. Out of 99 freshmen from Manatee County, 30 attended, along with seven of the eight students who received \$1,000

scholarships from the club. A highlight of the event was a Gator trivia contest. All good Gators likely know this one: If you do this move with your left arm over your right, everyone will know you're a freshman. What is it called? (Too easy? The chomp).

In Stuart, the Martin County

Gator Club® welcomed 21 seniors from area high schools into the UF Class of 2029. The event at Charlie's Neighborhood Bar and Grill included parents and friends as well as four freshmen who received scholarships from the club.

WANT TO JOIN?

With 78 Gator Clubs and 10 affiliate groups, Gator Nation fellowship is easy to find. Scan this QR code to find a Gator Club near you:



Calling all Gator Clubs®

Send us your news! News or photographs for Florida Gator magazine should be sent to floridagator@ufalumni.org. Photographs should be high resolution and at least 1MB in size.



Pet Portraits

Our furry members of the Gator Nation®

BY SOPHIA BAILLY (BS '25)

1 Zoey wore her Gator T-shirt during the Florida Gator men's basketball team's victorious Final Four match in the spring. She lives in Boca Raton with **Scott Notowitz** (BA '79).

2 Luna, 9, loves belly rubs, guarding the backyard from critters and cheering on the Gators during her naptime on the couch. Luna lives with **Uyen Harris** (BS '13) in Broomfield, Colorado.

3 Sampson celebrated his first Gator National Championship with his family. He lives with **Scott Leslie** (BS '85) and **Dara Workman Leslie** (MS '86) in Tampa. The English Cream Golden Retriever was born on New Year's Day.





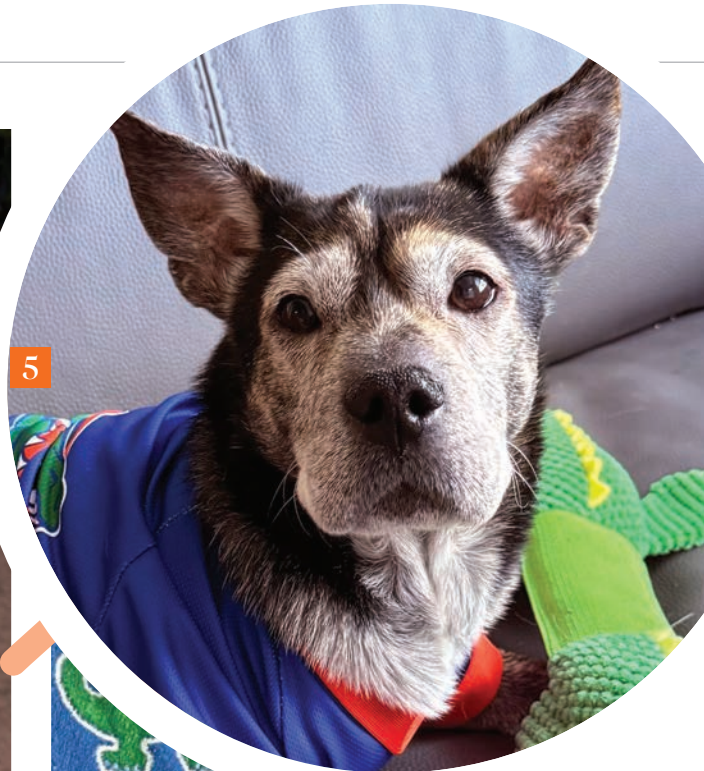
4

4 Emmitt, an avid Gator fan, enjoys playing softball and football at his Palm Beach Gardens home with **Meryl Shapiro** (BS '79). His favorite Gator is Emmitt Smith, No. 22.

5 SuperMonkey is always ready for football season. A Gainesville native, SuperMonkey is always in the loop with all things Gator Nation, alongside his owner, **Alexis Dunham** (BS '04, MS '07).

6 Bambi, 2, loves watching all Gator sports. The black Labrador Retriever is happiest when she sees the Florida score touchdowns or home runs — and she gets especially excited when **Wesley Bracy II** (BS '21) gives her treats at their home in Tampa.

5



6



GATOR PETS PRIDE

To have your pet featured, send photos of your furry, feathery and scaly friends (pet portraits only please, no humans) to:

FloridaGator@ufalumni.ufl.edu

Include your name, occupation, town and your pet's name, along with a sentence or two about your pet.

Or share online

[@ufalumni](https://twitter.com/ufalumni)
[#gatorpets](https://twitter.com/gatorpets)



Gators Going Global



Reader-submitted photos from around the world

BY SOPHIA BAILLY (BS '25)



1

1 Mount Everest

On a weeklong trek through Nepal, **Richard Slinkman** (BA '92) of Tequesta, Florida, reached Mount Everest's southern base camp, 17,598 feet in the sky.



2



3

2 Bahamas

The Gator basketball team's national championship coincided with a birthday in the Bahamas, leading to a double celebration for these Gators. Back, left to right: **Britton Swank** (BS '94, JD '02), **Butch Swank** (BA '96), **Jason Green** (BS '95), and **Spencer Green** (BS '98). Front, left to right: **Tyler Goodlad** (BS '97), **Jami Goodlad** (BA '97), **Kristin Green** (BA '96, Med '97) and **Kate Green** (BS '00).

3 Tasmania

Nichole Bishop (PhD '21) and **Krishna Achath** (MS '04) pulled out Gator gear while visiting Bay of Fires in Tasmania, Australia.



4



5

4 Queenstown

During a recent trip down under, **Rhonda Victor Sibilia** (TEL '77) shared her Gator spirit while sightseeing in Queenstown, New Zealand, near the Remarkables mountain range.

5 Budapest

Seven Gators traveled to Europe to celebrate 50th anniversaries for weddings and graduations. Back, left to right: **Bobby Harrell** (BA '74, MA '75), **Tamara Harrell** (BS '75). Front, left to right: **Stephanie Ferrell** (BA '72), **Jane Toombs** (BA '77), **Judy Stefan** (BA '76, MA '78), **James Stefan** (BA '74, MA '77) and **Barbara Close**, Gator mom and grandma.



6



7



8



9



10



11

6 Netherlands

Lisa Milch Goddard (BS '78) made a stop at the Netherlands' Keukenhof Gardens, where the tulips were in full bloom, during a Rhine River cruise with her husband, Andrew. On the ship, the AmaSiena, they learned the Gator Nation is truly everywhere as eight other cruise travelers were also Gators.

7 Rome

Rick Chaves (BA '94, JD '97), **Misty (Taylor) Chaves** (BA '90, JD '95) and **Melissa (Glantz) Protigal** (BS '90, MD '94) packed one piece of essential gear for their trip to Rome: their Gator flag.

8 Argentina

Mark Kaiser (BD '94) represented Gator Nation at his girlfriend's family cattle ranch in the Corrientes Province of Argentina. Pictured left to right: gaucho Arturo Insaurralde, Mark and Katherine Hall.

9 Monaco

Anne Warner Fernandez (BS '81) bought her basketball national championship T-shirt in time to wear it in Monaco for the Formula 1 Grand Prix.

10 The Alps

Juliet Linzmayer (BA '94, MEd '95) and daughter **Allison Welch** (BS '20) recently completed the Tour du Mont Blanc, trekking 100 miles through the Alps of France, Italy, and Switzerland.

11 Morocco

Ira Rosenberg (BA '75) of Coconut Creek, spent three weeks in Morocco, including "staying hot" while camel riding in the Sahara Desert.



THE GATOR NATION IS EVERYWHERE

Please send your high-resolution photos and captions to

FloridaGator@ufalumni.ufl.edu.

Include names left to right, degree and year, hometown and something interesting that happened on your travels.

Or, share online

[@ufalumni](https://twitter.com/ufalumni)
[#gatortravels](https://www.instagram.com/gatortravels)



In Memoriam

 To read more,
scan this QR code:



Wayne Charles McCall

Wayne Charles McCall (BA '68, JD '72), a member of the Silver Sixties football players coached by Ray Graves in the 1960s, died June 23. He was 78.

Following his graduation, McCall served as a first lieutenant in the U.S. Army and earned a Joint Service Commendation Medal. His time as a military courier in Belgium included a harrowing experience in September 1970. McCall was aboard Pan American Flight 93 en route from Amsterdam to New York when terrorists hijacked the plane. Shortly after landing in Cairo, McCall and more than 150 passengers evacuated down chutes moments before the plane exploded on the runway.

When McCall left the Army, he enrolled in law school at UF. He is a past president of the UF Alumni Association Board of Directors.

 To read more,
scan this QR code:



Stanley F. Dermott

Professor Emeritus Stanley F. Dermott, a brilliant scientist and visionary leader of the UF Department of Astronomy, died May 20. He was 82.

Dermott joined UF in 1989 and served as chair of the department from 1993 to 2009. Under his leadership, the department significantly expanded its national and international presence. He was instrumental in UF's involvement with the Gran Telescopio Canarias (GTC), the world's largest optical and infrared telescope. The university's partnership in the GTC project played a pivotal role in placing the UF astronomy program on the global stage. Dermott's pioneering work in solar system dynamics led to the formation of what became known as Dermott's Law. His research on the zodiacal dust cloud and the asteroid belt laid foundational insights into planet formation. In recognition of his scientific contributions, asteroid 3647 was named Dermott in his honor.

"Stan promised us the moon and stars, and he delivered," said Charles Telesco, professor of astronomy and former department chair.



Joe Sabatella

Joseph “Joe” J. Sabatella, founding dean of the UF College of the Arts, passed away Sept. 8, 2025.

Sabatella came to UF in 1959 to teach drawing and design in the Department of Architecture. In 1966, he was appointed assistant dean of the College of Architecture and Fine Arts, and in 1974, he was named acting dean. In 1975, the university divided the college into two, and President Robert Q. Marston appointed Sabatella the inaugural dean of the newly created College of Fine Arts (renamed College of the Arts in 2014). He served as dean from 1975-90.

 To read more,
scan this QR code:



Marion Alderman Thomas

One of UF’s earliest majorettes, **Marion Alderman Thomas** (BS ’53, MS ’60), passed away at her home in Ocala on Aug. 31. She was 93.

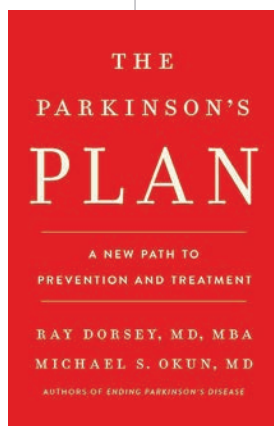
Thomas, the head majorette, was known for her baton skills and athleticism. Her image graced magazine covers, and UF even used a life-size poster of her distributed in movie theater lobbies in the north to promote the school. Family and friends held a final “tailgate” party for Thomas, complete with Gator memorabilia, listening on the radio as the Gators won their home opener on Aug. 30.

 To read more,
scan this QR code:



Great Gator Reads

Four recent reads by Gator authors



The Parkinson's Plan: A New Path to Prevention and Treatment

In “The Parkinson’s Plan,” two doctors on the cutting edge of Parkinson’s research detail the steps necessary to prevent, slow, and treat this debilitating condition. The New York Times bestseller by doctors **Ray Dorsey** and **Michael Okun** shows readers how to prevent the disease through the food we eat, the water we drink, the air we breathe, and the lifestyles we live. They introduce the “Parkinson’s 25,” the most detailed checklist ever created to allow anyone to lower their risk of Parkinson’s. They interview the world’s top scientists, clinicians, and thought leaders in the Parkinson’s field to offer a detailed plan for treatment that includes cutting-edge methods and recent technological and medical advances.

“The Parkinson’s Plan” takes the next step in winning the battle against Parkinson’s, presenting a clear road map with the strategies and tactics necessary to create a world where the disease is increasingly rare and the treatments are more successful.

Both authors are leaders in Parkinson’s Disease research. Okun is the Adelaide Lackner Distinguished Professor of Neurology at the University of Florida and Director of the Norman Fixel Institute for Neurological Diseases. Dorsey is the director of the Center for the Brain & the Environment at the Atria Health and Research Institute. In 2015, the White House recognized Dorsey as a “Champion for Change” for Parkinson’s disease.

First Comes Marriage ... Then Comes Murder



Levy City, Florida, 1956. Vivien Sheffield, renowned owner and bridal gown designer at Wynton’s

DepartmentStore, is enjoying a record year as brides and orders pour into her salon.

She’s determined to prove wrong the critics claiming a woman her age should focus on being a grandmother rather than a successful businesswoman. But her good fortune wilts faster than a wedding bouquet when someone murders four of her beloved brides. The local police

can’t make sense of the strange clues the killer leaves behind, and all of them point back to Vivien.

She teams up with fellow Wynton’s employees Audrey, Mary Jo, Gigi and her longtime assistant, Mirette, to stop this local menace. Further complications arise when Vivien must protect her newest employee, Immogene, a black seamstress with a great talent for fashion design, from the prejudices and racism of the time.

The book is **Donna Mumma’s** (BA ’88, MEd ’89) second in The Women of Wynton’s series, which mixes history, mystery, murder and a bit of fun amidst the glamorous and complicated society of a Florida department store in the 1950s.

This Eye Is for Seeing Stars



This poetry collection by **Christine Poreba** (MFA ’05) was selected as the winner of The Orison Poetry Prize

by Pádraig Ó Tuama.

“The body... keeps being brought further into time, must reconfigure here with there.”

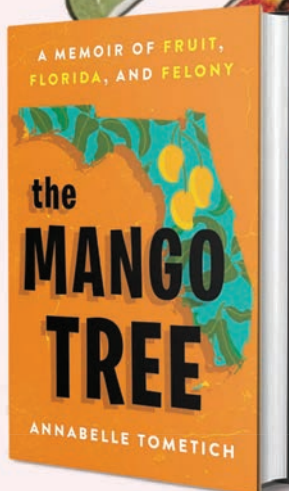
So states the poem “This Eye” in a collection that puts time and one’s relationship to it under a microscope.

The poems depict a world in which nothing holds still and

the everyday moments of our lives serve as a testament to our common humanity.

“Christine Poreba trains her gaze on birds, family, city, self and change, and by this practice — looking at, looking to, looking through — she shows us what poetry can do. ... Poreba’s lyric voice, style, and point of view—as well as her capacity to sustain attention through poems of varying length — kept me returning to these powerful poems,” said Ó Tuama, judge of the 2023 Orison Poetry Prize.

Poreba’s first poetry collection won The Philip Levine Prize, and her poems have appeared in several anthologies and numerous journals.



Of Mangoes and Mom

Alum's debut book wins Southern Book Prize for nonfiction

BY DAVID WHITLEY (BS '82)



Annabelle Tometich (BS '02) went to UF to become a doctor. Instead, she became a cook, then a sportswriter, then a food critic.

Now she's an author, having accomplished in one try what most writers spend their careers only dreaming of. Her debut book, "The Mango Tree: A Memoir of Fruit, Florida, and Felony," got glowing reviews and won the 2025 Southern Book Prize for nonfiction.

It's a story about growing up in a mixed-race household run by a domineering matriarch. Tometich's mother, Josefina, moved from the slums of Manila to Fort Myers to become a nurse, but she never really left the Philippines behind.

That crystalized in 2015 when she spotted a man picking up a mango that had fallen from a tree in her yard. Josefina, all of 64 years old, grabbed her BB gun and shot out the back window of the man's truck.

Mangoes. Mom. Shootout. Pickup truck.

It sounds like the setup for a Carl

Hiaasen novel about the quirkiness of life in Florida. But the incident triggered a soul-searching memoir.

"Once I started," Tometich said, "the words just came pouring out."

Considering she set out to write a cookbook, you could almost call it an accidental book written by an accidental author. Unlike other famed UF alumni authors like Hiaasen and Michael Connelly, Tometich had no interest in writing when she showed

"Once I started, the words just came pouring out."



up on campus.

She'd never even been to Gainesville before moving into Beaty Towers. Tometich grew up in Fort Myers and wanted to attend a school far away from her irascible mother. But she had a Bright Futures scholarship. Her mother told Annabelle to stay in state.

"It's universally agreed upon that

it's the best university in the state of Florida," Tometich reasoned. "If I'm stuck in Florida, let's go to the best."

She graduated with a psychology degree in 2002, took the MCAT (Medical College Admission Test) then headed to Europe for a vacation. Her reading material included a book by celebrity chef Anthony Bourdain.

"That changed everything," Tometich said.

She ditched the doctor idea, much to her mother's chagrin, and became a line cook at a Fort Myers restaurant. That led to a catering business, which led to a stack of unpaid bills.

Desperate for a steady paycheck, Tometich went to a career counseling agency looking for a job. There were



Tometich's mother, Josefina, at left at Tometich's UF graduation in 2002. Josefina and her mango trees, right, were the inspiration for Tometich's memoir of fruit, Florida and felony.

two openings – one at Walmart and one at the Fort Myers News-Press.

It was for a sports agate clerk, a thankless task compiling fine-print statistics, standings and schedules. Tometich, who barely knew the NHL from an RBI, took the job.

She quickly acclimated to the sports scene and started covering high-school athletics. It was a long way from med school.

"I never would have picked 'sportswriter' on my bingo card," Tometich said.

She discovered she had a way with words and eventually became the newspaper's food critic, writing under the pseudonym Jean Le Boeuf. After almost two decades of restaurant reviews, Tometich had a midlife career crisis.

She decided to write a cookbook, sprinkling it with essays about her upbringing. One was "The Mango Missile Crisis," which is what the family called her mother's brush with the law.

A colleague looked over the material and realized the essays were far more compelling than the recipes. The unorthodox process served a purpose.

Instead of initially sitting down in front of a blank screen hoping to write the Great Filipino-American Novel, Tometich just wanted to tell people

"I never would have picked 'sportswriter' on my bingo card," Tometich said.

how to make BBQ pork skewers.

"It was the sideways entry point I needed to tackle something I'd never sit down to tackle on my own," she said.

Buried memories bubbled up. Like her white grandmother calling her a "monkey" and her immigrant mother a "Mongoloid." Her uncle's suicide. Her father's mysterious death when she was 9. Her mother's hot temper.

That wasn't just a mango tree

Josefina had planted in her yard in the 1970s. It was a symbol of her homeland.

Moving from an island in Southeast Asia to an American county named after Gen. Robert E. Lee set up decades of cultural stress. When Josefina suspected someone was stealing her beloved fruit, something snapped.

She served five years of probation and never showed a day of remorse.

The rings of that mango tree became a literary avenue for Tometich. Her story is unique, but it reflects a struggle everyone can relate to.

"There's just something about family. Nobody's family is 'normal.' Everyone has things they don't want to talk about," Tometich said. "There's something very freeing about laying these things bare and saying, 'I'm going to own it and face it and deal with it.'" 🍌

FOOTNOTE FROM THE EDITOR

UP NEXT IN FLORIDA GATOR

We didn't forget the landscape

In our readership survey, you've told us you want glimpses of the campus of the past, and views of the campus of today, so that's what we set out to do in this issue.

What a tall order.

We've barely scratched the surface, so we'll reprise our "Then and Now" feature in the spring. Next up, we'll explore how campus green space has changed over the years, so stay tuned for our next issue.

If you have favorite memories of a spot where you strung up a hammock or curled up with a book under a tree, let us know at floridagator@ufalumni.ufl.edu.



Sledd Hall was built in 1929 to accommodate students arriving to campus via train, with trunks containing their belongings for the school year. As more students traveled to campus by car, trunk delivery became less common.

Speaking of then

I first met university archivist Sarah Coates at a Grand Guard Breakfast of Memories a few years back, and I laughed when she told the alums who were celebrating the 50th anniversary of their graduation about all her "stuff."

Coates, pictured at right, collects UF records, both paper and digital, along with books, photos, memorabilia, scrapbooks, newspapers and more.

"I have lots of stuff y'all, lots of stuff," she told the graduates from 1970-73. But she noted that the 1970s mark the beginning of an era with fewer items in the archives. "Please help me preserve UF history," she said, "and send me stuff."

If you don't have "stuff," you can still support the archives through the History of the University of Florida Fund.

We couldn't bring you the glimpses of the past you've told us you want without our partners at the UF Archives.

PHOTOS BY BRIANNE LEHAN



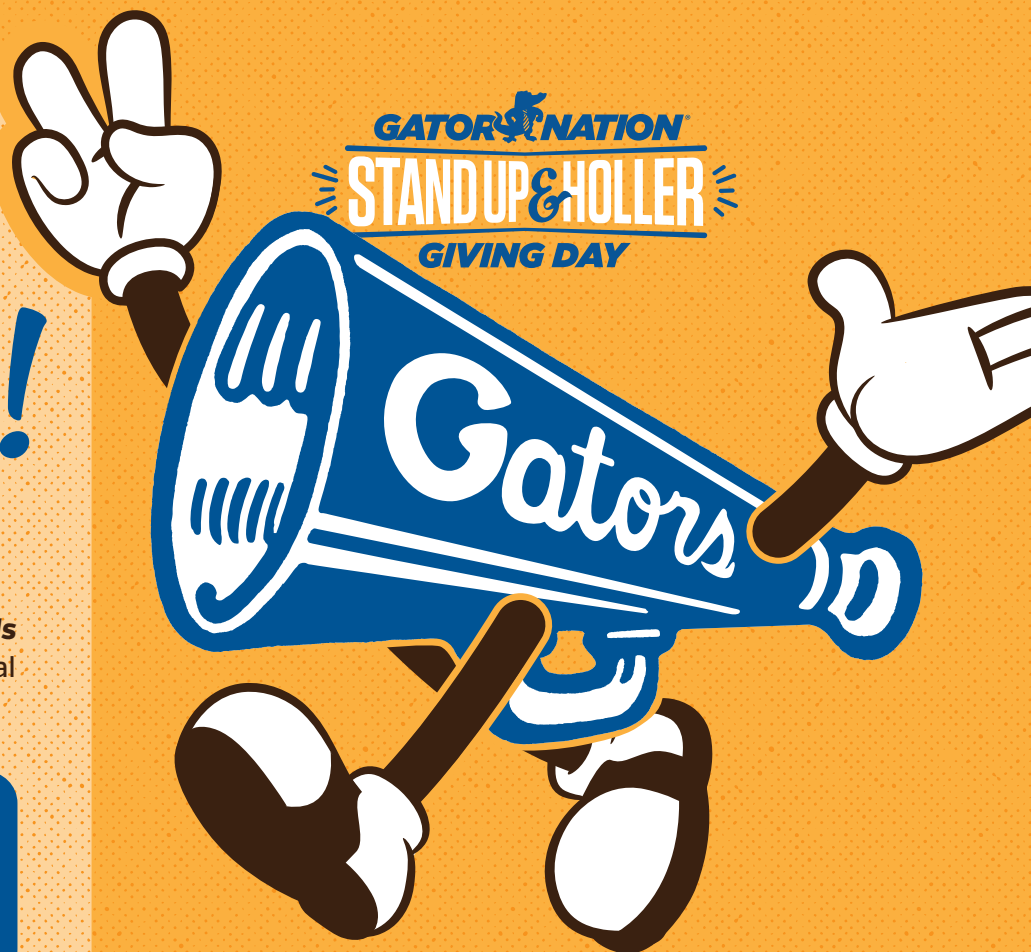
To support the archives through the History of the University of Florida Fund, scan this QR code:



Save
the
Date!

Give a cheer for the Orange
and Blue on Giving Day when
***your support fuels discovery,
drives innovation and expands
opportunities*** across our global
UF community.

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