

GATOR

FLORIDA

SPRING 2022

From **Branford** *to* **Oxford**

UF's newest Rhodes Scholar is ready to take on Oxford. Aimee Clesi reflects on UF's role in her academic journey in a Q&A with fellow Gator Andrew Banks, who won the award in the 1970s.

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HEAD COACH BILLY NAPIER

2022 SPRING SPEAKING TOUR

HOSTED BY



APRIL
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TAMPA
ARMATURE
WORKS
GATOR
BOOSTERS

APRIL
21

JACKSONVILLE
TIAA BANK
FIELD
GATOR
BOOSTERS

APRIL
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ORLANDO
FULL SAIL
UNIVERSITY
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BOOSTERS

APRIL
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LAKELAND
POLK
THEATRE
POLK CO.
GATOR CLUB

MAY
12

PENSACOLA
SANDERS BEACH/
CORRINE JONES
CTR.
NW FLORIDA
GATOR CLUB

MAY
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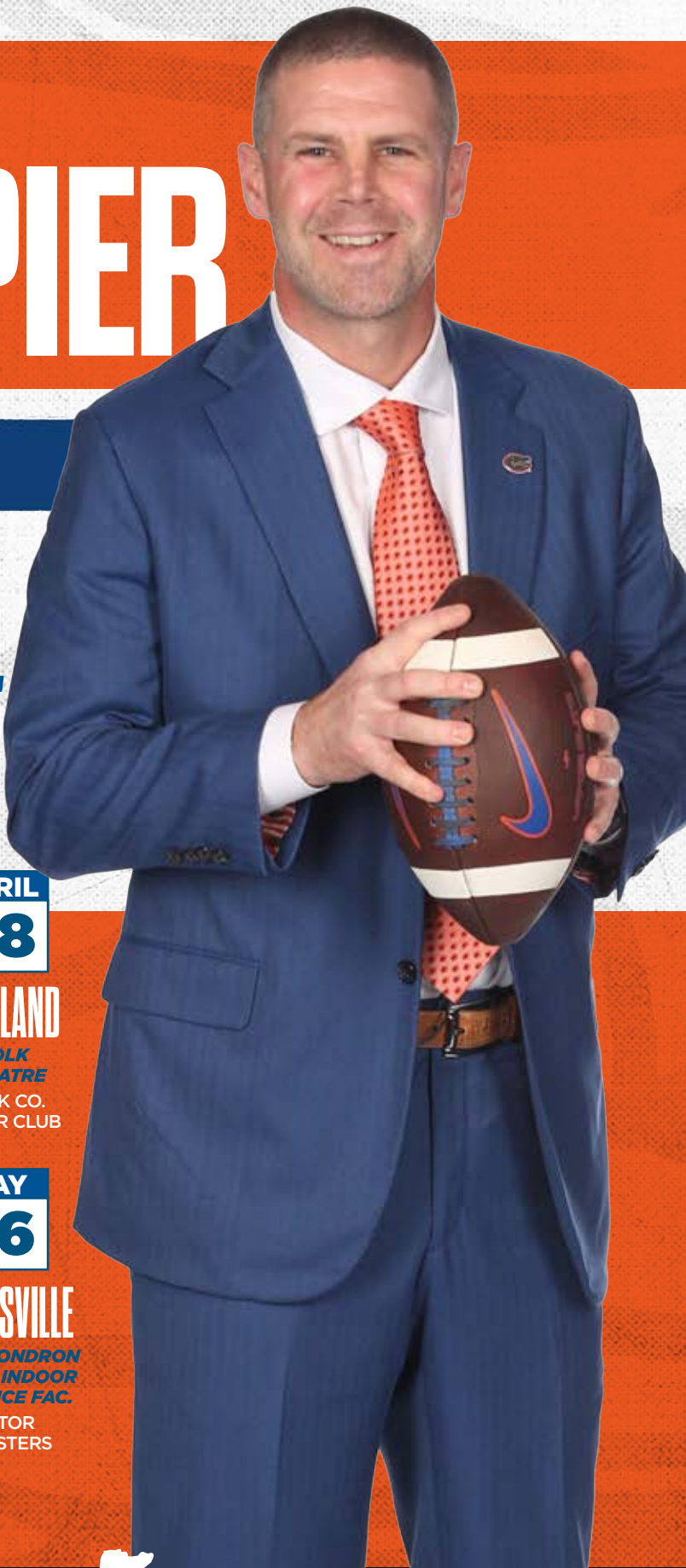
ATLANTA
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GAINESVILLE
GARY CONDRON
FAMILY INDOOR
PRACTICE FAC.
GATOR
BOOSTERS



UF's CHAMPIONS

GATOR GAME-CHANGERS

Meet a teacher, a guidance counselor, a museum director, who are among the most recent investors in UF's ability to improve lives. On behalf of The Gator Nation, thank you for fueling progress and supporting the potential of future students.



ADA ROSENSON DORFELD

Retired South Miami teacher **Ada Rosenson Dorfeld** (BSEd '52, MEd '55) who now resides in Pembroke Pines, has seen firsthand how a quality education can change students' paths and lives. Now 90 years old, she's made a plan to ensure more students in the future have access to degree programs at UF, and that the UF College of Education can continue to grow its teacher training programs.

Ada's committed to \$1 million over the next several years to support her endowed **Machen Florida Opportunity Scholarship** for the

College of Education and the dean's strategic fund. Machen scholars are high-achieving academic stars who are the first in their families to attend college, and whose families' income averages below \$20,000 annually. The College of Education fund helps its dean tackle the most pressing needs of the college to support key priorities and initiatives.

"I've seen it. Without a doubt, education changes lives," Dorfeld said. "Scholarships open the door for people to go farther and achieve what they never thought possible."



MARIANNE BECK

Retired high school guidance counselor **Marianne Beck** (EDS '96, MEd '96) of Tampa says her UF experiences prepared her for a rewarding career and provided lifelong friendships and meaningful milestones. For those reasons and more, Beck made a plan in her will to continue her support of UF education students and the football program long after she is gone.

"UF is an extension of my family," she said. "I want to ensure future students and student-athletes have marvelous experiences at UF, as well."

Beck's gift will fund scholarships for College of Education students and the growth of UF's football program. Beck is pictured with Gator football alumnus **Brandon Spikes** (2006-09), whom she met on the sidelines this season. Spikes is retired from the NFL. He was a linebacker for the New England Patriots.



REBECCA AND PAUL NAGY

Rebecca Nagy watched over UF's Harn Museum of Art for 16 years as its director. She is now retired and living in Tampa, where her husband, **Paul Nagy**, is a vice president at Hillsborough Community College. However, they continue to look after the museum where Rebecca spent much of her career.

In October, the Nagys were the first to pledge support for a planned museum expansion project. Their \$1 million commitment will help build a 20,000-square-foot multipurpose wing that will permanently display selections from the 1,200 Florida-themed works of art donated to UF by Jacksonville couple **Samuel and Roberta Vickers**.

Rebecca Nagy is widely credited for the Harn's continued rise as a nationally respected museum. Under her leadership, works of art in UF's collections grew 236% and visitations climbed to 100,000 patrons each year. Likewise, endowments supporting acquisitions and programs jumped to \$19.2 million.



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Much as she loved her home in the Appalachians, Stephanie Yarnell-Mac Grory had to leave. Her dreams and ambitions were bigger than the tallest mountains.

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ON THE COVER



PHOTO BY AARON DAYE

Aimee Clesi is the 13th Gator to be named a Rhodes Scholar. She says a key factor in her journey from Branford, on the banks of the Suwannee River, to the University of Florida – and now Oxford – was learning to work well with others in her neighborhood grocery store.

See story, page 23

ORANGE
& BLUE

SPRING
GAME

APRIL 14
AT 7:30 PM



Conversation with UF President **Kent Fuchs**

LIBERAL ARTS & MORE, OVER LUNCH

THE PRESIDENT'S LUNCHEON SPEAKER SERIES WELCOMES STUDENTS TO THE DASBURG HOUSE TO HEAR FACULTY EXPERTS FROM ALL ACROSS CAMPUS

Students gather to listen to lectures, have discussions and explore ideas in all kinds of different places on the UF campus: Classrooms, libraries, and laboratories, under live oaks on the Union Lawn, by the shores of Lake Alice -- even The Dasburg House, where Linda and I live.

That's thanks to monthly faculty talks that we host for students called the President's Luncheon Speaker Series.

Through this series, now in its third academic year, Linda and I welcome up to 60 students to the president's home for a lunch and talk by an exceptional UF professor. The luncheons are free and open to currently registered students at all levels in all 16 colleges, with students RSVPing on a first-come, first-serve basis.

One of our goals is to give students the opportunity to be exposed to, and learn from, great faculty from across our very comprehensive university who, because of the students' focus, they might otherwise never encounter.

We initially hosted faculty in the arts and humanities, expanding in the second year to those in the social sciences and broadening this year to all faculty.

Our inaugural lunch in September 2019 featured UF History Professor Jack E. Davis, who not long before had won the Pulitzer Prize in history for "The Gulf: The Making of An American Sea." We have since welcomed professors with specialties in dance, classics, creative writing, music, journalism, anthropology and more.

Our speaker for the January 2022 luncheon was Mike Walsh, a veterinary medicine professor who gave a fascinating presentation about his work caring for manatees, dolphins and orcas. Our two other spring speakers are Iman Zawahry, a journalism and communications professor, filmmaker and director of the

groundbreaking movie "Americanish," and David Blackburn, curator of herpetology at the Florida Museum of Natural History.

We create beautiful posters to advertise each speaker on social media. I am proud that those posters hang in the hallway of the President's Office, highlighting for all visitors our diverse faculty talent.

A second goal is to bring a broad group of students together for a shared learning experience.

We have hosted freshmen to PhD candidates majoring in ecotourism, marine science, musicology, biology, computer engineering, agricultural communications and dozens of other majors. Linda, the students and I enjoy a boxed lunch while listening to the professor's talk and participating in a Q&A.

I love listening to professors discuss their research and insights. I am always surprised by what I learn and often find myself telling colleagues about it.

I love that students flock to the luncheons even though they're busy with classes and projects and there is no formal academic benefit to them. I love that, when the talks finish, the students are so

eager to ask questions that the Q&A would go on for hours if time allowed. I also enjoy giving the students a tour of The Dasburg House, where they find a painting of Mr. Two Bits by former Gator linebacker, broadcaster and painter James Bates, among other surprises.

But what I love most about these luncheon talks is the sense of joining with others with all kinds of backgrounds simply to listen, talk and learn.

To me, that experience of open listening and love of learning is the essence of education, and I am grateful to be part of it at UF.



UF UNIVERSITY of
FLORIDA

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THE UNIVERSITY OF
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HEY, WE HAVE SEASONS!

Sure, the seasons at UF are: “This is Fine,” “Sweaty-Smotheringly-Humid-Hot,” “OMG!!!” and “Christmas in Flip-Flops” — but there are those days where the weather flirts with freezing. In honor of those few, brief days, here are some scenes of Gators enduring the cold. Brrrrrrr!

Photo essay by Aaron Daye



UF RANKED NO. 1
FOR ONLINE DEGREES

UF Online, the University of Florida’s online bachelor’s degree program, is No. 1 in the nation, according to the latest rankings by U.S. News & World Report. The announcement, which comes at the heels of UF being named the No. 5 public university in the country, marks the first time UF has earned the top spot for online bachelor’s degree programs. Several of UF’s online master’s programs also ranked among the top in the country, including **Education** (No. 2), **Master of Business Administration** (No. 5), **Engineering** (No. 12) and UF’s **non-MBA Business programs** (No. 21). Additionally, U.S. News recognized UF’s online programs as among the top in the country for veterans, with the MBA program earning the No. 1 spot nationally. UF also ranked No. 2 in the list of best online bachelor’s degree programs for veterans.

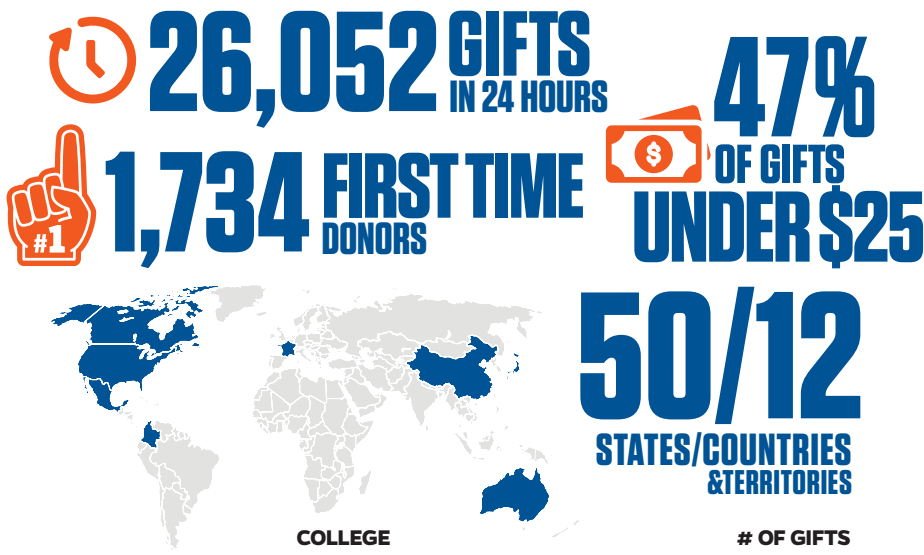


PREDICTING DEMENTIA
Artificial intelligence combined with MRI scans of the brain has the potential to predict whether people with a specific type of early memory loss will go on to develop Alzheimer’s disease or other form of dementia, UF scientists discovered.

The researchers studied 55 participants who had been diagnosed with amnesic mild cognitive impairment, a condition in which a person has more memory problems than expected for their age. The findings were published in the journal “Frontiers in Aging Neuroscience.” By applying a computer algorithm known as a support vector machine model to a 45-minute MRI brain scan, the researchers reported that the algorithm could predict progression from amnesic mild cognitive impairment to dementia with over 94% accuracy.

GATOR NATION SETS
ANOTHER RECORD

Although it’s a new Gator tradition, only four years old, alumni and friends far and wide pulled together to break the goal of 23,000 gifts in 24 hours for **Stand Up and Holler Gator Nation Giving Day** on Feb. 17. Colleges held friendly competitions and across campus Mr. Two Bits’ yellow shirts and orange and blue ties were out in force. No doubt, George Edmondson would have approved. Gator generosity, by the numbers:



COLLEGE	# OF GIFTS
1 College of Journalism and Communications	4,177
2 College of Design, Construction and Planning	1,555
3 Herbert Wertheim College of Engineering	891
4 UF/IFAS College of Agricultural and Life Sciences	652
5 Warrington College of Business	628

HOLLERING AROUND CAMPUS: Photos from Stand Up and Holler events around Campus, **PAGE 62**

TEBOW TO SPEAK AT UF COMMENCEMENT



Former University of Florida quarterback Tim Tebow is scheduled to serve as UF’s university-wide commencement speaker April 29 in Ben Hill Griffin Stadium. Tebow — a professional athlete, motivational speaker and philanthropist — graduated in 2009 with a bachelor’s degree in family, youth and community sciences. He led the Gators to two national championships and earned a Heisman Trophy. About 6,500 graduates and 45,000 additional guests are scheduled to attend.



JASON SMITH/UF/IFAS

A rare mature **Torrea** on a street in Madison, Florida appears to be unaffected by a fungal blight that has wiped out nearly the entire species.

99%
Approximate decrease in the endangered Florida evergreen tree *Torrea taxifolia* — more commonly known as stinking-cedar or gopher wood — since 1914. Now, **UF scientist Jason Smith** has identified the fungal pathogen killing the species, which mainly lives along the Apalachicola River. Smith suspects the fungus evolved in Asia and was introduced when non-native plants were imported for horticultural uses.

4,189
Degrees conferred last fall during December commencement ceremonies. The nearly 4,000 graduates ranged in age from 19 to 66, and were from 47 states and 67 countries. Two hundred and fifty-three were the first in their families to attend college.

\$65M
Allocated to help farmers in nine northwest Florida counties reboot operations to produce hemp. Hemp fiber can be used to make insulation, drywall, furniture and clothing. UF/IFAS scientists are supporting the project, dubbed “farm to trade.” Project funding comes from a U.S. Department of Commerce Build Back Better grant and the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021.

100



DEAN MOUHARPOULOS/GETTY IMAGES

Gold medalist Erin Jackson celebrates during the Women’s 500m medal ceremony on Feb. 14 in Beijing.

HISTORIC: GATOR GRADUATE ERIN JACKSON TAKES GOLD IN THE WINTER OLYMPICS
When speed skater **Erin Jackson** slipped in a qualifying round for the Winter Olympics in Beijing, she thought her shot at a medal was over. Then her friend and teammate, Brittany Bowe, who had qualified in other events, gave up her spot in the 500-meter speed skating competition so Jackson could compete. In Beijing, Jackson made the most of the second chance and crossed the finish line in a gold medal time of 37.04. Jackson, BSMSE ’15, who is from Ocala, became the first black woman to win a medal in speed skating and the first US speed skater to win gold since 1994. For more, go to uff.to/c09hyf



UF ATHLETICS ASSOCIATION

TAKE ME OUT TO THE BALL GAME
UF’s new baseball stadium is Ballpark Digest’s 2021 College Ballpark of the Year. The \$65 million stadium features a 360-degree open concourse, shade structures for fans and high-definition video and sound. It seats 7,000 fans now, but was built with space to add 3,000 more seats.



Years the UF/IFAS Tropical Aquaculture Lab has been helping fish farmers and aquarium enthusiasts. UF

scientists there are credited with saving tropical fish farmers millions of dollars annually. For instance, a vaccine developed for one species saved aquafarmers \$12 million in one year.

150

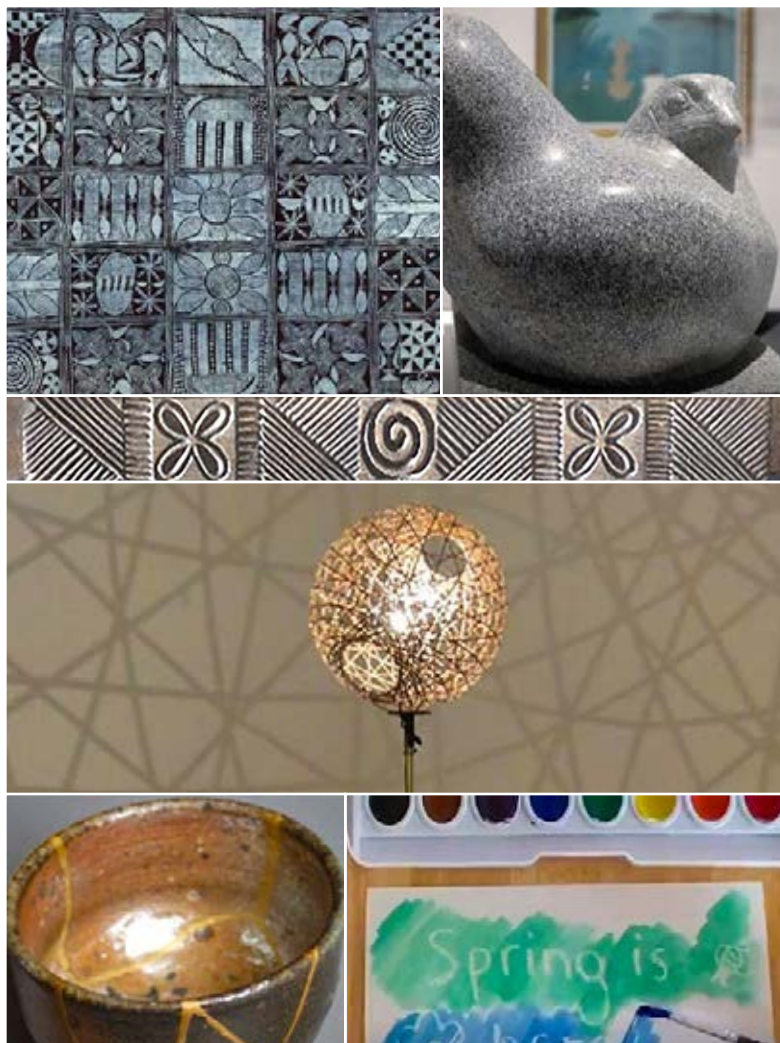
Miles between UF/IFAS turf grass scientist Kevin Kenworth and his former doctoral student Brian Schwartz (PhD '08), now a turf grass professor at the University of Georgia. The two have collaborated since 2010 on a series of federal grants to develop drought-tolerant grasses. Their partners include researchers at North Carolina State, Oklahoma State, Texas A&M and California-Riverside.

Age of the UF/IFAS North Florida Research and Education Center in Quincy. Tobacco was the region's main crop when the center was founded, but today scientists there concentrate on such things as cotton, carinata (used for biofuel), pine trees for the lumber industry, cattle, sod, peanuts, satsuma mandarins and a variety of other fruits, vegetables and ornamentals.

25



Carinata (Ethiopian mustard)



HARN MUSEUM OF ART

THE ARTIST **IN YOU**

How rolling pins, salt or masking tape can be used to make a masterpiece

Ever wonder if you've got what it takes to be a great artist? **UF's Harn Museum of Art can help you find out** — while also offering creative fun for children and adults alike. Harn at Home is a series of virtual and in-person programs to release your inner Picasso.

Programs include a long list of free online lessons ranging from how to teach toddlers their colors and shapes, to showing older children how to create nature-inspired sun prints, to instructions for teens and adults on how to make molds from everyday materials. Want to draw a comic strip? Check out the "Comical Hen" video and instructions. Build a projection lamp? Look no further than "Line and Light." Paint a secret message with watercolors? "Watercolor Resist Painting" will show you how.

To see all the programs and to learn how you too can tap into the artist inside you, visit the Harn at Home website at uff.to/k1j924

SEVEN WONDERS: Harn Director Lee Anne Chesterfield picks just some of the museum's must-see gems , **PAGE 14**



Roseann Vitassa and her daughter Kristin, New Port Richey

The heart. It's a symbol of caring and strength. It represents compassion and understanding. At UF Health, we put our hearts and expertise into everything we do. From developing new lifesaving procedures to providing routine health services, there is no heart condition too simple or complex for our dedicated doctors and staff. At UF Health, our team of caring professionals work together to provide personalized treatment plans in one world-class medical center. We care for your heart with all of ours.

Visit Heart.UFHealth.org to learn more about Roseann's story and how we are ranked among the best hospitals for adult cardiac care.



UFHealth
HEART AND VASCULAR CARE



ARE YOU A SLEEP PROCRASTINATOR?

A few simple changes might deliver sweet dreams

It's late, and although you know you'll pay the price tomorrow, you stream another episode, browse social media or answer emails. You know it's a bad idea — so why do you do it? That's what UF psychology doctoral student **Yijun Lin** hopes to discover.

Poor sleep can have a “huge impact on our health, both physically and mentally,” Lin says. “It can be a vicious cycle: If you have bad sleep, the second day you may have worse self-control and worse bedtime procrastination.”

Young adults 18-25 as a group have the worst bedtime habits, her study of 400 participants shows. But night owls and people with low self-control also tend to neglect their sleep, too.

Nonetheless, Lin's hunch is that while individual differences may contribute, subverting sleep goals may be best viewed as a societal problem.

“Many people say that they have bedtime procrastination because they don't have enough ‘me time,’” she explains.

HER TIPS FOR A BETTER NIGHT'S SLEEP:

- **Decide on a hard stop time for work tasks and other obligations** that might bleed into your off hours. Sign off of email, quit looking at IMs and defend pre-bedtime “me-time.”
- **Leverage technology to help you enforce that separation.** Lin has her notifications set to turn off several hours before bed. “If I work until bedtime, I feel like I need to spend an extra two hours on my phone. But when I engage in my own activities earlier, I feel more prepared for sleep,” she says.
- **Avoid activities like gaming that spark excitement** and resist the temptation to mull over negative things that happened during the day.

You might not always hit your bedtime goal, but try not to dwell on it when you don't. On those nights, “it may be helpful to accept this behavior instead of feeling guilty about not going to bed earlier,” Lin says. “Negative emotion is also not good for our health.”



ANOTHER SCORE FOR THE SOUTHEASTERN CONFERENCE

It's not just football where the SEC dominates.

The conference's 14 universities agreed in November to a broad collaboration centered on artificial intelligence and data science to train the next generation workforce. UF, the partnership's leader, will provide SEC members access to its HiPerGator supercomputer to grow opportunities in fast-changing fields that use AI and data science. SEC universities will share educational resources — such as curricular materials, degree program structures and online presentations of seminars and courses — and promote academic conferences. The universities will also share best practices on how to ensure students graduate with AI and data science skills. Last year, UF announced an “AI Across the Curriculum” initiative that aims to ensure all Florida students develop a basic competency in AI, regardless of their fields of study.



THIS UF TEAM'S BREAD IS OUT OF THIS WORLD

Plant molecular and cellular biology doctoral student Hope Hersh is leading a UF team that's developing a method to make bread in space. In December, their innovation won a \$25,000 prize from NASA and the Canadian Space Agency, while also earning one of 18 spots in the second phase of the Deep Space Food Challenge. Team Space Bread provides dry bread ingredients in a small plastic bag (the same type used for blood donations). Astronauts add water, massage to mix the ingredients, leave the dough to rise and bake — all within the bag.

UF

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10 Challenges for BillyBall

From off-season overhaul to on-field success

BY PAT DOOLEY (BSJ '76)

NEARLY EVERY DAY, THE GATOR Nation learns about the latest football hire, with each new coach methodically introduced through social media. Some new faces, some familiar.

Even though the fanbase isn't sure what all the new coaches will be doing, there is a buzz in the air thanks to the "army" that Billy Napier is putting together.

There's a GameChanger coordinator and a director of recruiting innovation and so many quality control coaches, graduate assistants and analysts that it will make you wonder where they are all going to park.

Is this the new Gator football, where the coach is given the same blank check as Nick Saban?

"Some people may think that's the case," said Scott Stricklin, athletic director. "But in the end, we are hiring only four or five more people than we had on staff before."

The difference, according to Stricklin, is his new head coach has a detailed plan.

Every person hired knows exactly what is expected from them every day.

"It's clear what everybody does," Stricklin said.

Yes, Florida will spend as much as \$2 million more than it did a year ago for new people and increased salaries, but keep in mind what is about to happen in the SEC. You better spend money because it's coming. Otherwise, it will pile up in the corner collecting dust.

Starting in 2024, the SEC contract with ESPN replaces the current CBS deal, increasing the league's rights fee from \$55 million a year to \$300 million a year. Add in the new playoff structure (likely starting in 2025), and the league where "it just means more" is going to "just get more."

So, let's forget about how much Florida is willing to pay to try to get back to where it once belonged. The

bigger question is whether Napier can do it. Florida football has spent the last decade hiring coaches who have had great success and then firing them because they couldn't maintain it.

The winning percentage for those three coaches – Will Muschamp, Jim McElwain and Dan Mullen – was .636 with three SEC East titles, four seasons with at least 10 wins and four major bowl games.

But none of those coaches could sustain success. As a result, UF is going to try it again.

"This is not a place where we should be on a roller coaster," Stricklin said.

Stricklin believes Napier is the guy to get Florida to the point where a down year would be 8-4, not 4-8.

"You get a feeling about coaches," he said, "and I have a feeling this guy is special."

He's also 0-0 as Florida's football coach. And the schedule he will face in his first season is brutal, with Utah and Kentucky to open the season and road trips to Tennessee and Texas A&M among the dozen games.

There is a part of every Gator fan out there that is excited about the recruiting chops that Napier brings, and the results have already been titillating.

And the bottom line is you must have players, as Georgia coach Kirby Smart reminded everybody after smacking Florida around last season. Getting enough elite players is a work in progress.

Because you must have both Jimmies and Joes and X's and O's. You can't win on a consistent basis without top recruiting classes, but your coaches have to put them in position to make great plays.

You can solve the parking problems and the housing problems and the food problems, and that will help attract players and – almost as importantly because of the transfer portal – keep them.

But there are other challenges that have to be solved on the field, or it's all going to be window dressing.

THINGS TO WORK ON:



Reducing penalties is a priority, especially the kind that make a coach pull his hair out. Florida was 120th in the nation out of 130 teams in penalty yards in 2021. It simply requires discipline.



Stop with the age before beauty thing. Mullen was notorious

for playing older, more experienced players over youngsters who clearly had more talent. That formula is tired. Play the best players.



When Florida was winning two national titles in three years under Urban Meyer, the

Gators were feared on special teams. They blocked kicks, faked punts and had, well, they had special, special teams. That has not been the case for a long time.



UF has been lacking in the turnover acquisition part of the game.

This past season was the first time since Florida started keeping track that the Gators had single digits in interceptions for two straight seasons. They were 120th (hmm, a pattern is developing) in turnover margin.



Quit celebrating things that shouldn't be celebrated. Like breaking up

a pass after you've allowed three TD passes to be thrown over your head.



Florida has to stop embarrassing itself. Not with the win-loss record, but with shoes being thrown and guys blocking each other instead of the opponent or not being able to stop the same play over and over and over again. The Gators have been a nice punching bag for the national commentators.



One thing that every one of these players must understand is that everybody wants to beat you. You're different in the SEC. You're Florida. They're playing against Tim Tebow and Ike Hilliard and Steve Spurrier every time you run onto that field. They don't like you. But that doesn't mean you have to play down to every opponent.



Look like you are organized. It would be a new concept instead of guys running on and off the field like they're changing hockey lines.

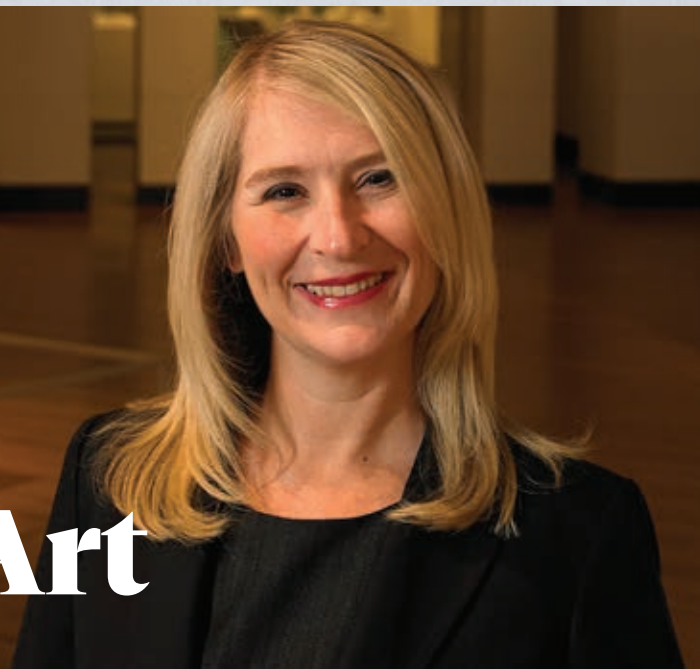


Find the guys who love football instead of the guys who want to be football players. There's a difference.



Stop losing games. It's pretty simple.

7 Must-See Works of Art



With so much beauty, creativity and thought-provoking art available to Harn Museum of Art visitors, it's easy to overlook gems. In recognition of the campus museum's new strategic plan focusing on reaching faculty, staff, students and alumni, Florida Gator asked Harn Director Lee Anne Chesterfield to pick a few works that still stop her in her tracks.

BY LEE ANNE CHESTERFIELD

UF alumni have been a large part of visitation to the Harn Museum of Art for more than 30 years, since we opened in 1990. Maybe you've visited previously for a class or Museum Nights. Or maybe you interned with one of our staff. Perhaps you haven't yet visited, and your first trip will be during a Homecoming weekend or virtual program. Whether you're near or far, we hope these selections from our collection will spark wonder and bring you joy:



Champ d'avoine (Oat Field)
Claude Monet, French, 1840-1926
 1890, Oil on canvas
 Gift of Michael A. Singer

Champ d'avoine (Oat Field) brings me a sense of peace when I look at it. I often sit in front of this work just taking in the beautiful landscape that Claude Monet captured.

Vessel Series I, No. 1
Magdalene Anyango N. Odundo
 British, born Kenya, 1950
 2004, Red clay, fired once
 Museum purchase, funds provided by friends of the Harn Museum

This exquisite clay vessel by contemporary ceramicist Magdalene Odundo is currently situated in the Harn's contemporary galleries right next to El Anatsui's *Old Man's Cloth*, and the two artists' works are stunning together. Born in Kenya, Odundo also lived in India before moving to the United Kingdom. Her trans-global identity is clearly seen in her references of the female form, from the cinched waists of Victorian women in England to the flaring headdresses of Mangbetu women in Africa.



Old Man's Cloth

El Anatsui, Ghanaian, b. 1944

2003, Aluminum and copper wire
Museum purchase, funds provided
from friends of the Harn Museum

Old Man's Cloth is a luminous metallic tapestry made from the discarded bottle tops of brand-name liquor bottles that have been flattened and pieced together into strips recalling "kente" cloth, the royal and ceremonial strip-woven cloth made by Asante and Ewe peoples of Ghana and Togo. I love that renowned African contemporary artist El Anatsui creates something new out of recycled materials while honoring the past.



Dogon Couple

Kehinde Wiley, American, b. 1977

2008, Oil on canvas, Museum purchase, thanks
to funds provided by the David A. Cofrin
Acquisition Endowment and Caroline Julier
and James G. Richardson Acquisition Fund

I've admired this exceptional painting by contemporary artist Kehinde Wiley for many years before I came to the Harn as its new director in 2018. *Dogon Couple* was borrowed from the Harn to be a part of a major exhibition of Wiley's work in 2014 at the Brooklyn Museum of Art. I was able to see this painting at the exhibition's first venue in Brooklyn and then a year later when it traveled to the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, where I worked at the time. I was able to meet Kehinde and talk to him about his work. He was later recorded in a video saying that the *Dogon Couple* is one of his favorite works.



Cubist Still Life

Suzy Frelinghuysen, American, 1911-1988

c. 1943, Oil and collage on board,
Museum purchase, funds provided by the
Caroline Julier and James G. Richardson
Acquisition Fund, with additional funds
provided by exchange, gift of Helen Sawyer
Farnsworth

Cubist Still Life by American artist Suzy Frelinghuysen reminds me of my undergraduate art history classes at James Madison University in Virginia. I've admired the cubist art movement since that time, and this oil and collage on board is a wonderful example of the style.



To learn more about the Harn's collection and exhibitions visit us online at harn.ufl.edu

Fort George Island

Thomas Moran, American, born England, 1837-1926

1880, Oil on linen mounted to board, The Florida Art Collection, Gift of Samuel H. and Roberta T. Vickers, Photography by Randy Batista



Tsuki Kage (Moonlight)

Fukumoto Fuku, Japanese, b. 1973

2009, Porcelain with blue glazes, Gift of Carol and Jeffrey Horvitz

The Harn's collection has great strength in contemporary Japanese ceramics, and this work by the second-generation female ceramist Fukumoto Fuku is a truly exceptional example. Fuku draws inspiration from the heavens — the moon, sun and stars — in this large porcelain piece. The beautiful blue glazes of this intricately nested bowl draw the viewer in and captivate. It is a work I cannot tear myself away from easily.

This painting is one of my favorites among the 1,200 gorgeous artworks that Sam and Robbie Vickers gave the Harn in 2020. I remember visiting their beautiful home on the St. John's River in Jacksonville one day when the collection still adorned every room of the house. Robbie told me that this view of Fort George Island is her favorite in the collection as well. Everyone who visits the Harn and sees this brilliantly captured Florida sunset painting by Thomas Moran can't help but agree.

Game-Changers & Historymakers

AN ENTREPRENEUR, A FORMER UNIVERSITY TRUSTEE, A BUSINESS DEVELOPER AND A FAMILY OF LEGAL PROFESSIONALS ARE THE LATEST INDUCTEES INTO THE UF'S PRESTIGIOUS ACADEMY OF GOLDEN GATORS.

The academy honors alumni and friends whose support and guidance drive the university's ascent as one of the nation's best institutions of higher learning.

The 2022 inductees are: NVIDIA Corp. co-founder **Chris Malachowsky**; Nelson Mullins Riley & Scarborough partner **David Brown**; Palm Beach County Business Development Board president **Kelly Smallridge**; and the family of UF College of Law namesake **Fred Levin**. This year's awardees were recognized during the academy's spring induction ceremony.



THE ENTREPRENEUR

Chris Malachowsky Transformational Leadership Award

Chris Malachowsky (BSEE '80) is a leading force behind the university's ambitious initiative to be "America's A.I. University." His guidance and investments in his alma mater are transforming courses across campus by incorporating artificial intelligence training in curricula to prepare students to use the cutting-edge technology in their chosen fields. Malachowsky established the California-based global technology giant NVIDIA in 1993. He and his company have made significant contributions to build a data science and information technology center on campus and to turn the university's supercomputer into one of the most powerful in all of higher education.

ON A.I.'S POTENTIAL: "What really got NVIDIA and me excited was partnering with UF to make A.I. available to K-12 students, state and community colleges, and businesses. This will help address underrepresented communities and sectors across the region where technology will have a profound positive effect."



THE JUDGES & LAWYERS

Fred Levin family Lifetime Philanthropy Award

UF Law's rise in national prestige is directly tied to Pensacola trial lawyer Fred Levin (BSBA '58, LLB '61) and his family. Levin, who died in January 2021, is the college's namesake and a longtime benefactor. Levin is best known for winning a \$13 billion settlement against Big Tobacco to recover medical costs for Floridians. Son Martin Levin (JD '88) is a shareholder at the firm Levin Papantonio Thomas Mitchell Rafferty & Proctor. UF Law's Martin H. Levin Advocacy Center is named in his honor. Retired Judicial Circuit Court Judge Marci Goodman (JD '85) is Fred Levin's daughter. Numerous other members of the Levin family also have ties to the university.

ON SUPPORTING UF: "I was glad to give it to a school that had played such a big part in shaping my life." — Fred Levin



THE TRUSTEE

David Brown Lifetime Volunteer Award

David Brown (BSBA '73, JD '78), former chairman of UF's Board of Trustees, has guided his alma mater through a presidential search that ended with the hiring of Kent Fuchs, an out-of-the-box scholarship program for first-generation scholars, and a strategic "Preeminence" plan that set UF on its path to the national spotlight. The Orlando attorney has also served on a number of other boards and committees for the university. To further move UF forward, he and his wife, Wanda (JD '74), created The Brown Center for Leadership and Service to encourage students to assume leadership, volunteer and service roles on campus and in their communities.

ON MACHEN FLORIDA OPPORTUNITY SCHOLARS: "I'm very proud of the fact that the University of Florida is now, truly, a preeminent university. ... I don't believe we could have achieved what we needed to achieve for the university without having instituted and achieved what we did with Machen Florida Opportunity Scholars."



THE BUSINESS DEVELOPER

Kelly Smallridge Annual Volunteer Award

Kelly Smallridge (BSPR '88) has spent more than 30 years convincing businesses to relocate to south Florida to spur the region's economy. Now she's working with officials in Palm Beach County and at the University of Florida to create a branch UF campus in downtown West Palm Beach. Once established, the campus will offer graduate courses in financial services, financial technology and artificial intelligence to as many as 1,000 students each semester. Classes could begin as soon as fall 2026. Smallridge's efforts to expand UF's urban footprint in south Florida have been instrumental in moving the project forward.

ON THE PLAN TO OPEN A BRANCH CAMPUS IN WEST PALM BEACH: "The need to offer innovative degrees from a leading national university is a very real one. It's a challenge for companies that are already here, who reportedly send their employees out-of-state for advanced degrees or import people with a higher skillset."

PAST ACADEMY INDUCTEES

2014

Annual Volunteer

Andrew Banks (BA '76)

Lifetime Volunteer

John (BSIE '66, MBA '70, JD '73) & Mary Lou (JD '80) Dasburg

Young Philanthropist

Dylan Siegel & Jonah Pournazarian

Lifetime Philanthropist

Al (BSBA '58) & Judy Warrington

2015

Annual Volunteer

Gale King (BSJ '83, MA '86)

Lifetime Volunteer

Kelley Bergstrom (MBA '68)

Young Philanthropist

Brandon White (BSBA '10, JD '13)

Transformational Leadership

Steve Scott

2016

Annual Volunteer

Jim (BBC '63) & Alexis Pugh

Lifetime Volunteer

Ken (BSBA '72, MBA '73, Ph.D. '81) & Linda (BSBA '73, JD '78) McGurn

Young Philanthropist

Dance Marathon

Lifetime Philanthropist

David & Mary Ann Cofrin

Transformational Leadership

Herbie & Nicole Wertheim



2020

Annual Volunteer

Chris (BSBA '88, MBA '88, JD '91) & Kristine (BA '88) Boyett

Lifetime Volunteer

Steve & Carol (BA '69) Shey

Transformational Leadership

Mori Hosseini

2017

Annual Volunteer

Anita Zucker (BAE '72)

Lifetime Volunteer

Earl (BACH '60) & Christy (BS '71) Powell

Young Philanthropist

Joe Hernandez (BS '96, MBA '98, MS '98)

Lifetime Philanthropist

Jon (BS '61, MS '62) & Beverly (MED '62) Thompson

International Philanthropist

Jane Sun (BSAC '92)

2018

Lifetime Volunteer

Chuck (BSA '61) & Margie Steinmetz

Young Philanthropist

Josh (BSBA '21) & Bryce Benbasat

Annual Philanthropist

Gary (BBC '76) & Nancy (MBA '86, JD '86) Condron

Lifetime Philanthropist

Bill Heavener (BSBA '70)

International Philanthropist

Sachio Semmoto (MSEE '68, Ph.D. '71)

2019

Annual Volunteer

Rahul Patel (BA '94, JD '97)

Lifetime Volunteer

Keith Koenig (BSBA '73, MBA '75)

Young Philanthropist

James (BSBA '91) & Elizabeth (BSA '92) Gadsby

Lifetime Philanthropist

Don & Irene Dizney

Annual Philanthropist

Lee & Lauren (BSJ '07) Fixel

Lifetime Philanthropist

Hyatt (BSBA '59) & Cici Brown

Postcards
FROM OXFORD

From Branford to Gainesville to England, Aimee Clesi will soon pack her bags for the next stop on an academic journey that's led her to becoming a Rhodes Scholar

STORY BY DAVID FINNERTY

UP IN NORTH FLORIDA, NESTLED ON THE BANKS OF THE SUWANNEE RIVER, IS THE TOWN OF BRANFORD: POPULATION 711 AT LAST COUNT. It's the region's "big town" — home to one of the county's two high schools, a catfish festival and some of Mother Nature's clearest springs.

Just over 4,200 miles and an ocean away is Oxford, England. It's an old city — the place of epic battles, castles and medieval colleges, pubs and cricket and marmalade.

Branford and Oxford might seem as dissimilar as a linebacker and a ballerina, but there is a common denominator: Aimee Clesi.

Aimee Clesi in front of the Rhodes House in Oxford, England.

PHOTO BY ERIKA CLESI





PHOTOS BY AARON DAYE

Clesi hugs Karen Koon, media specialist and her mentor at Branford High School.

Clesi (BA '22) — the homegrown Florida girl who was an academic star at Branford High and stocked produce at Harvey's Supermarket and Winn-Dixie to save for college — is moving to England in a few months to attend Oxford University as a Rhodes Scholar. She's UF's first since 2000, the first UF woman and the 13th Gator overall selected for the prestigious scholarship.

It also puts her in the company of "people standing up for the world," says Andrew Banks (BA '76), himself a Rhodes Scholar in the 1970s. Recipients include Nobel and Pulitzer prizewinners, a U.S. president, prime ministers, Supreme Court justices, academicians, authors and artists, leaders of organizations like Greenpeace and Amnesty International and Oxfam International, and some of the greatest scientists who've ever lived — thinkers and doers like Bill Clinton, astronomer Edwin Hubble, penicillin discoverer Howard Florey, United Nations ambassador Susan Rice and U.S. Secretary of Transportation Pete Buttigieg.

It's a tough club to get into. In America alone, a couple thousand of academia's best and brightest students apply to be selected Rhodes Scholars each year. Less than 1% make the cut. For Clesi — as the first in her family to earn a college degree — the odds, at times, seemed even more daunting.

"Being awarded the Rhodes and having the opportunity to live in Oxford has been such a life surprise," she says. "When I applied, I poured my heart and soul into my application and interview, but I don't think it crossed my mind too much what

would happen if I was successful. I was more concerned about Plan B."

Fate ... not to mention Clesi's fortitude ... weren't about to let the chance to be a Rhodes Scholar slip through her fingers. Not when she was that close. Not when the journey had been so long and so difficult. Not when just getting to UF for classes from her home in rural Suwannee County meant spending an hour in the car every day, and another hour back. Not when keeping student debt at arm's length meant working weekends at grocery stores.

Besides all that, Clesi's time at UF shined. A double-major in philosophy and history, she was a Bob Graham Center fellow to the Supreme Court of Florida, a Reubin Askew Scholar, a Haskell Faculty and Student Fellowship Award winner, holder of several scholarships and so much more. For those accomplishments, she points directly to her part-time jobs at Winn-Dixie and Harvey's.

"I worked in every department in the grocery store — including meat, frozen and produce — and this taught me how to work well with others, lead a team and be a team member, provide exceptional customer service, and most importantly, balance my work with going to school," she explains.

Clesi's UF Honors thesis focuses on racial disparities in death penalty sentencing. She plans on earning a doctorate in law at Oxford, with the eventual goal of helping wrongfully convicted people and ending the death penalty. The Rhodes Scholarship — which provides all expenses for two or three years at Oxford — began in 1903 and is the oldest and most prominent graduate scholarship program in the world.



PHOTO COURTESY OF AIMEE CLESI

In addition to working at Harvey's and Winn-Dixie in Lake City to help pay her way through college, Clesi also worked at Ichetucknee Springs State Park as a "tube handler" patching tubes, distributing tubes, and handling kayaks and canoes.

"Being awarded the Rhodes and having the opportunity to live in Oxford has been such a life surprise. When I applied, I poured my heart and soul into my application and interview, but I don't think it crossed my mind too much what would happen if I was successful. I was more concerned about Plan B."

— AIMEE CLESI



Clesi with Branford High School principal Terry Huddleston.

INTERVIEW WITH A FELLOW GATOR & RHODES SCHOLAR

Andrew Banks, former chairman and co-founder of the equity investment firm ABRY Partners and one of UF’s most generous philanthropists, caught up with Clesi this winter.

BANKS: *You’re one of only 13 Gators to receive a Rhodes scholarship, and the first since 2000. What’s that mean to you?*

CLESI: It means a lot to me. I think the scholarship is a gift, and it carries a lot of weight since there has not been a scholar in a long time from our university. I hope that this win shows other students that they can do it too, and I want to encourage them to seek out opportunities like this and continue to work hard.

BANKS: *You’re the first woman from UF to be a Rhodes Scholar. Does it put extra pressure on you to be that pioneer?*

CLESI: When I visited Oxford for the first time, Rhodes House was under construction, but there were these panels that surrounded the building to obscure the dust, construction equipment and people working. [Rhodes Trust CEO] Dr. Elizabeth Kiss was featured on one of the panels, which display facts and figures about current and past Rhodes Scholars. Dr. Kiss has overseen the expansion of the scholarship to new countries and wants to distill in scholars values like commitment, inclusion and innovation. She is leading the Rhodes Trust and is the current warden of Rhodes House, the first woman to ever hold that position. I feel a kind of pressure, like I imagine Dr. Kiss does, to lead well and to lead by example.

I feel very fortunate to have been blessed with this opportunity, and will make UF proud because my university has prepared me for this.

— AIMEE CLESI

BANKS: *You’re a first-generation scholar from a small Florida town. Does it seem surreal that next year you’ll be studying in Oxford, England?*

CLESI: Absolutely. Oxford is an overwhelming place and coming home to Branford, Florida, is something I looked forward to after studying abroad recently at Royal Holloway, University of London (UF Beyond 120 exchange program). The idea of going back to the UK, to Oxford, this fall 2022 after I graduate from UF over the summer is an extraordinary — but also terrifying — reality. I feel very fortunate to have been blessed with this opportunity, and will make UF proud because my university has prepared me for this.

BANKS: *In high school and in college you worked at Harvey’s Supermarket and Winn-Dixie. How did those experiences shape you?*

CLESI: My mother wanted me to graduate from UF debt free, and I cannot stress how important her advice has been to me. For future UF students, I want for them the same, because graduating debt free means they can go straight away into their career and doing the work that will make a difference. Working at Harvey’s and Winn-Dixie allowed me to plan for and reach this goal.

BANKS: *What’s the first thing you plan to do when you get back to Oxford?*

CLESI: I cannot wait to meet other scholars from around the world and see how construction has progressed on Rhodes House, which is one of the first places I plan to visit.

BANKS: *You’ve made criminal justice reform a central piece of your UF studies and plan to do the same at Oxford. Why is that important to you?*

CLESI: I had my first exposure to how the law handles wrongful conviction when I interned with State Attorney Melissa Nelson and met Shelley Thibodeau, who leads the Conviction Integrity Review unit at the State Attorney’s Office in Jacksonville. These women are two of my role models. Seeing their response to injustice so early in my legal career is what set me on the path I’m on now. Remedying wrongful convictions is important because it means holding our laws to the standards our U.S. Constitution demands. It means standing up for others, especially those who are indigent, cannot represent themselves, and face insurmountable difficulty in our legal system.

BANKS: *Even Rhodes Scholars need a break from studying on occasion. How do you spend your free time?*

CLESI: I enjoy exploring new places and adventuring with my identical twin sister, Erika — especially abroad. We recently completed a UF study abroad program in London, and every free moment we had we were off

to somewhere. We enjoyed visiting the National Gallery and the British Library, where we had the chance to meet Virginia Woolf and Ian Fleming through their writings, which were on display. We also read an original copy of the “Magna Carta.” Our next adventure [was] to see the band Pink Martini perform in Jacksonville, at the historic Florida Theatre. Their lead singer, China Forbes, can sing in 15 different languages, and the band is known for playing many types of music. I agree with Forbes in thinking that the band represents America well, especially in terms of its diverse population, and that listening to the band makes you feel like one moment you’re in the middle of a samba in Rio de Janeiro and in the next standing in a 1930s French music hall or a palazzo in Napoli. It’s great fun for us because there are all these places around the world that we want to see but haven’t been to yet.

BANKS: *Time seems to speed up when you’re in college. Looking back at your UF years, are there special memories that stand out?*

CLESI: Being a Humanities Engagement Scholar is something that really stands out to me. That program is run by the Center for the Humanities and the Public Sphere (CHPS), which drew Erika and me to UF when we were 16 and participated in the CHPS Humanities and the Sunshine State program in high school. We learned about Florida history, explored Florida’s waterways, and heard from UF professors and alumni about history, philosophy, sociology and water resource management. The program is what encouraged us to become Humanities Engagement Scholars when we matriculated to UF, and as humanities scholars we have participated in and led ethics cafés, heard from visiting professors and volunteered for humanities events around UF campus.

BANKS: *Last question, if ever there’s a movie made about your life, which actress plays you and what’s the movie’s title?*

CLESI: Erika and I have been told we look like Julia Roberts; but if there’s ever a movie made about my life I’d love for Angelina Jolie to play me. Her performance in “Gia” is one of the best I’ve ever seen, and I greatly admire Jolie’s ability to act and her humanitarian work. She was also married to Billy Bob Thornton, who is also cool. I think the movie’s title should just be “Aimee.”

The Radcliffe Camera at Oxford.



Clesi shares a laugh with Branford High school faculty members Julie Dees, left, and Lawanna Gaylard.

PHOTOS BY AARON DAYE



PHOTO COURTESY OF AIMEE CLESI



ABOVE: Clesi at the Harveys Supermarket in Lake City where she worked to help pay for college. LEFT: Clesi with her twin sister, Erika. Both were dancers and majorettes at Patrice's School of Dance in Mayo.

IN RARE AIR

13 Gators Who
Became Rhodes Scholars

Roy Helm (1911)

Lincoln Laffitte (1913)

Thomas Palmer (1918)

Herbert Ford (BSCHE 1921)

Edmund McGill ('26)

Albert Murphree (MA '29)

George Miller ('30)

William McRae (BA '33, JD '33)

William Smith (JD '49)

Andrew Banks (BA '76)

William Kynes (BA '77)

Newman Nahas (BA '00)

Aimee Clesi (BA '22)

Detour to Oxford

*A Gator great reflects on
being a Rhodes Scholar and
how it forever changed his life*

A TIME MACHINE. That's what long-ago Rhodes Scholar Andrew Banks calls stately Oxford University.

"You live in the midst of antiquity while they give you the time to reflect on what future path might be best to pursue," he explains. "The Rhodes gave me an enduring sense of how deeply obligated I am to others."

It was the era of bell bottoms, bicentennial quarters and Mars exploration when Banks entered that "time machine." Back then, in 1976, just nine other Gators had been selected Rhodes Scholars — the last one 27 winters earlier. It would take another four-plus decades — a timespan covering the evolution of the personal computer, the end of the Cold War and the election of

America's first Black president — for UF to reach a baker's dozen: 13 Rhodes Scholars.

It's rare company: the best of the best from over a century of student overachievers and academic stars. That's not lost on Banks (BA '76).

"I am a very fortunate man — truly blessed," he says. "My folks always emphasized the importance of getting a good education ... but when I was

awarded the Rhodes, my dad's only comment was, 'Well, a blind pig finds an acorn every now and then.'"

Even now — a lifetime of achievements later — Banks' road to Oxford seems almost happenstance, an unplanned detour taken on a whim.

"Truthfully, I was not entirely familiar with the scholarship," he says. "My roommate from freshman year, Russell Cohen, went and got the application form, put it in front of me and said, 'You should apply.' I'm grateful to him, and we have remained close friends through the years."

Life after Oxford University has been good. Banks, who lives in Bermuda now, went on to earn a Juris Doctorate at Harvard Law and later co-founded the private equity investment firm ABRYS Partners. He produced the 2013 award-winning music app "John Lennon: The Bermuda Tapes," financed studios that created films like "The Dark Knight," "42" and "Inception," established a philanthropic foundation to boost children's health and education, married Bermuda's first woman premier, helped raise daughters, and in 2017 was named a UF distinguished alumnus.

Through it all, however, Banks has stayed true to his roots. He and his wife, Dame Pamela Gordon Banks, have invested more than \$35 million in UF to support students and professors. The couple also served as co-chairs of the university's Go Greater campaign in 2019, and over the years have been on a number of other UF boards and committees.

"The generations who preceded me created the university that educated me," Banks says of his commitment to UF. "It's our turn now to create opportunities for others. As my grandfather often said, 'First you learn, then you earn, then you return.' You have to give back."

Andrew
Banks

Orange, Blue & Green

Just a few of the ways the Gator Nation is shoring up Florida and beyond against forces that imperil the planet.

BY DAVID FINNERTY



A COUPLE YEARS AGO WHILE STUDYING PLANKTON in Florida’s lagoons, UF scientists uncovered “widespread” plastic crumbs — countless bits of Styrofoam cups and food containers.

The discovery was troubling. Big fish eat little fish that eat plankton. Too much plastic in the ocean’s food chain, and the whole thing could collapse.

“Our changing environment is one of humankind’s most urgent issues.”

— W. KENT FUCHS, UF PRESIDENT

That nightmare news was another blaring alarm bell keeping scientists tossing late into the night. It’s also one more example why the environment is a major focus of the university’s eight-year, \$3 billion Go Greater campaign.

“Never in the history of civilization have changes and opportunities been as abrupt or globally consequential,” UF trustee Anita Zucker (BAE ’72) said when the campaign was announced. “Go Greater will enable us to meet those challenges — whatever they might be — head-on, with resolve and strength.”

Big problems, she insisted, need Gator-inspired solutions.

In the months following Zucker’s call to action, UF unflinchingly waded into the

world’s most serious environmental quagmires: mass extinctions, rising global temperatures, enough food for a swelling global population, clean energies, and on and on.

Among those many projects:

University scientists are working with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration to restore coral reefs;

A UF team is partnering with the National Science Foundation to develop technologies that let farmers grow crops using less water and energy;

To protect the Suwannee River Basin — a sprawling tapestry of waterways stitched across southern Georgia and northern Florida — researchers and educators are helping communities make smart land- and water-use decisions;

In Rwanda’s Nyungwe National Park and in other wildlife refuges where poachers are a threat to endangered animals, rangers are using UF-generated maps to strategically patrol large regions;

UF’s new Center for Coastal Solutions is tapping data and technology to predict — and ease — environmental hazards; and,

Researchers at the Whitney Lab for Marine Bioscience are studying marine animals to learn how to improve human health and to care for the environment.

UF’s Ordway-Swisher Biological Station is part of a Smithsonian-led global network trying to preserve Earth’s forests.

The UF web connecting those undertakings and others like them is almost as intricate as an Everglades ecosystem. Deans and vice presidents offer overarching visions. Alumni and friends invest in the plans that turn ideas into initiatives. Professors, scientists and students deliver hands-on solutions.

“It’s essential that our university step forward to continue research on problems such as biodiversity and environmental conservation,” said Jon Thompson (BS ’61, MS ’62), one of the alumni behind UF’s push to address such issues.

Thompson and his wife, Beverly (MED ’62), contributed \$10 million in 2018 to establish an institute that explores the consequences that people’s actions — bad and good — can have on the planet.

The Thompsons’ investment is among several notable gifts made during the Go Greater campaign, making the university an international leader in environment-focused discoveries and stewardship. **Here is a look at the impact of that gift and three others:**



A Reckoning With Planet Earth

“Climate change,” Barack Obama said when he was president, “is no longer some far-off problem. It is happening here. It is happening now.”

And it’s happening fast and furious. The pace is so worrisome, the United Nations calls it “one of the major challenges of our time.”

No place on Earth is untouched. In Antarctica, the “doomsday glacier” — a shelf of ice the size of Florida — will soon tumble into the sea. Unseasonably warm weather late in 2021 fueled a rare December storm so strong and so big it shredded towns in five U.S. states and spawned tornadoes that killed almost 100 people in Kentucky alone. Five of the worst years ever for Atlantic hurricanes have been since 2003, and nine of the 10 most extreme seasons on record are since 1995. Last fall in America’s West, drought conditions got so bad more than half the farmlands there dried up.

Kelly Deuerling (BS ’08, Ph.D. ’16) collects samples of water melting from the Greenland Ice Sheet near Kangerlussuaq, Greenland, to study the effect of glacial melting on the carbon cycle.



One of the Thompson Earth Systems Institute’s primary goals is to introduce children and teenagers to the global environment through its Scientist in Every Florida School program.

The Thompsons’ interdisciplinary Earth Systems Institute in UF’s Florida Museum of Natural History was created in 2018 to tame that havoc. Their investment was the cornerstone of a \$35.7 million initiative to better understand and adapt to worldwide environmental changes, and to share that knowledge with schoolchildren, policymakers and citizen scientists. To that end, the institute’s Scientist in Every Florida School program has already hosted 1,700 scientist visits in 400 schools and reached some 55,000 K-12 students.

“Beverly and I have been interested in the geologic history of our planet for a long time,” Jon Thompson explained. “The natural systems that have operated since Earth formed are interrelated and very complex. Understanding these systems becomes even more complicated when we add human interactions.”

Scientists predict that it’s those interactions that will make or break the planet’s ecosystems.

“Our changing environment is one of humankind’s most urgent issues,” UF President Kent Fuchs said when discussing the university’s new institute. “We need to figure out how to adjust and flourish in a new reality.”

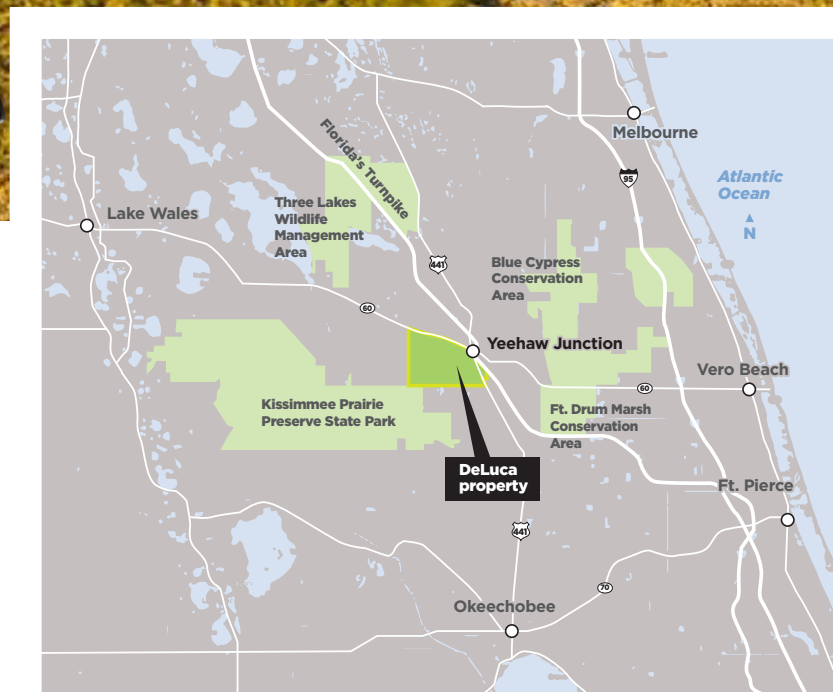


This Land Is Your Land

Southern Osceola County’s forests and wetlands are some of the Sunshine State’s last frontiers — home to the disappearing grasshopper sparrow, Florida panther, gopher tortoise and red-cockaded woodpecker.

And now, thanks to Pompano Beach philanthropist Elisabeth DeLuca, 27,000 acres of it will remain forever wild. DeLuca gave the land outside Yeehaw Junction to the university in fall 2020 for safekeeping and to use as a living classroom.

“Few things in this world are as precious — and threatened — as our untamed lands and the wild animals that live there,” DeLuca said at the time. “We need to preserve what we can for the benefit of all of us. These acres are in good hands with the University of Florida, and it pleases me to know that UF will use them to learn more about our natural world and to train new generations of scientists and environmentalists.”



One of the largest gifts of real estate ever to any university in the nation, the land — which includes a cattle ranch and citrus groves — is a nature corridor between the Kissimmee Prairie Preserve State Park and the Three Lakes Wildlife Management Area. It’s also a conservation focal area for the Everglades Headwaters National Wildlife Refuge and Conservation Area.

In addition to protecting wildlife, UF will use the property to, among other

things, measure hunting’s impact on the ecosystem to control wild boars; determine how cattle grazing affects plants, insects and animals; teach land and forest management; study water storage and conservation; and conduct student and researcher fieldwork. Classes ranging from plant and soil sciences to entomology and wildlife ecology will be conducted there.

The size and diversity of UF’s new outdoor classroom makes it especially ripe

for discoveries and teaching, said J. Scott Angle, UF’s vice president for agriculture and natural resources.

“This gift is a precious piece of Florida that will become the premier living laboratory for natural resource management research and study,” he said. “Researchers and students will have unprecedented access to a pristine area of diverse habitats to benefit conservation efforts.”

“Few things in this world are as precious — and threatened — as our untamed lands and the wild animals that live there.”

— ELISABETH DeLUCA



Whitney Lab sea turtle vet Brooke Burkhalter releases the Cisco Kid back into the Atlantic Ocean in 2016. Cisco Kid was treated at UF's Sea Turtle Hospital for a virus that causes turtles to develop tumors all over their bodies. AT RIGHT: UF's Whitney Laboratory for Marine Bioscience



To Save a Species

A hundred million or so years ago — back in the time of brontosauruses and tyrannosauruses — sea turtles swam the world's oceans. While the centuries passed and other animals came and went, nothing changed much for the turtles.

Until now.

Pollution, beach erosion, warming waters, vanishing seagrasses and other problems are shoving sea turtles dangerously close to following their ancient cousins into extinction. Nancy Condron (MBA '86, JD '86) and UF's Whitney Laboratory for Marine Bioscience are fighting to keep that from happening.

"As the sea turtle goes, the ocean goes. And as the ocean goes, the earth goes," she explained. "So if the ocean goes, we're dead."


So when UF needed seed money for the Whitney Lab's new sea turtle hospital, Condron handed over a check. With no other clinic in the area to treat turtles harmed in fishing nets, sick from discarded garbage, cold-stunned when temperatures chill or dealing with other ailments, it was the logical place for a hospital. Opened in 2015, it's now a safe harbor for sick and injured turtles, and a refuge for hatchlings too weak to make the journey from their nests to the sea and those washed back to shore in the waves. There's an emergency room, a nursery, community education programs and a focus on stopping a virus that causes bulbous tumors to grow on the creatures' flippers, carapaces, plastrons, necks and faces.

In all, Condron and her husband, Gary (BBC '76), have given more than \$6 million to support the campus on Florida's

northeast coast. The Whitney Lab's Nancy Condron Family Sea Turtle Research Center and Hospital is named in her honor.

"We have to have a purpose that's bigger than ourselves," Condron said of her work to protect sea turtles. "To go through life just buying or doing things for ourselves isn't enough."

Her investment in the Whitney Lab is a game-changer, said Mark Martindale, its director. It means more discoveries, a new incentive for world-class researchers to join the university and global visibility for the lab.

Said Martindale: "It's been a really exciting opportunity to merge the strengths of our local environment, sea turtle biology and the University of Florida's research prowess." 



UF's Florida Museum of Natural History engages people of all ages to teach them about the natural world.

A Refuge for "Fact-Based Research"

There's a photograph of Ken and Linda McGurn in Antarctica in 2005. Their red parka hoods are pulled over their heads. A small iceberg floats behind them. Penguins wobble near their feet.

There and in other patches around the globe, the McGurns have seen firsthand humankind's destructive footprint on the environment. UF, they believe, can do something to heal that damage.

"We want to leave the world a better place," Ken McGurn (BSBA '72, MA '73, Ph.D. '81) said a few years ago. "We're just trying to do the least amount of harm that we can and encourage other people to recognize the issues."

To do that, the McGurns — UF's Go Greater campaign co-chairs in 2019, the year the university was highlighting the environment in its fundraising — are investing in science-driven solutions through UF's Florida Museum of Natural History. Under their leadership, the university raised \$519 million that year, a good part of it to target climate change and other environmental worries.

"We hope UF can present fact-based research that will be persuasive to our leaders in the state so that we can survive climate change," Linda McGurn (BSBA '73, JD '78) said at the time.

Conservation efforts, however, go far beyond that for the McGurns. Together, the couple has contributed more than \$25 million to the university. Close to \$8 million of it has gone to


"We are one of the most at-risk states in the country. That's why it's important for Florida to be at the forefront of getting the word out about what we're facing and what we can do about it."

— LINDA MCGURN

the Florida Museum of Natural History to, as Ken McGurn puts it, "leave the world a better place." Their latest, and largest, gift is for the museum's \$32 million expansion. To honor them, the exhibition hall will bear their names.

"We are one of the most at-risk states in the country," Linda McGurn said. "That's why it's important for Florida to be at the forefront of getting the word out about what we're facing and what we can do about it."

Doug Jones, the museum's director, calls the McGurns' "deep commitment to environmental stewardship" inspiring.

"Whether conserving sensitive lands, providing funds for excellence, supporting biodiversity studies, or contributing to a capital project for disseminating critical information about Earth's natural systems," he said, "Ken and Linda set the standard for inspiring people to care about life on Earth." 



CHARACTER, SET IN STONE

DOUBLE GATOR BOB LLOYD COMES FROM A LONG LINE OF CIVIC-MINDED DAYTONA BEACH RESIDENTS. HIS NEWEST PROJECT BRINGS **THE FIRST STATE-COMMISSIONED STATUE OF AN AFRICAN AMERICAN** TO THE U.S. CAPITOL.

STORY BARBARA DRAKE (MFA '04)
PHOTO BY AARON DAYE

ONE MORNING IN THE LATE 1940s, NOT LONG AFTER THE END OF WORLD WAR II, Daytona Beach auto dealer J. Saxton Lloyd was standing at the local train station, waiting to catch the Champion to Washington, D.C. With him was his wife, Adelaide “Lady” Lloyd, and they were headed to the Capitol to lobby for the removal of wartime restrictions on rubber and steel, materials badly needed by the automotive industry.

As the couple looked around the platform, they spotted an old friend, Dr. Mary McLeod Bethune, the renowned Black educator, civil rights activist and founder of Bethune-Cookman College, Florida’s first institution of higher education for African Americans. Saxton Lloyd served on Bethune-Cookman’s board of trustees, and he and Lady crossed the platform to chat with the influential woman, who was an advisor to five U.S. presidents.

“They had a very cordial conversation,” says the couple’s grandson Bob Lloyd (BA ’87, JD ’90), recalling the story

his grandmother shared with him. “They chatted and learned she was headed to D.C. herself. And then there was a very poignant moment when [Lady] went to the front of the train, and she went to the back.”

It was a painful reminder of the twisted laws of segregation in the South, Lloyd recalls his grandmother explaining: “There they were on the Daytona Beach platform, hanging out together as locals, then on the train to D.C. — same destination, different parts of the train. It just was the way things were then, my grandmother would say.”

But it wasn’t right.

Nearly three quarters of a century later, Bethune is finally heading to the Capitol with the respect and honor she fully deserves. A larger-than-life marble statue of her will be installed in the National Statuary Hall this year, replacing one of a Confederate general. A driving force behind this state-sanctioned project is Bob Lloyd himself, vice president and board treasurer of the Dr. Mary McLeod Bethune Statuary Fund, Inc.

“I’m so proud of our state for doing this,” says Lloyd, a double Gator and general counsel for Brown & Brown, Inc. “What a great symbol for Florida and our country.”

The Bethune statue is just one expression of the Lloyd family’s multigenerational dedication to civil rights and

A larger-than-life marble statue of civil rights pioneer Mary McLeod Bethune is replacing one of a Confederate general in the National Statuary Hall this year. The state-sanctioned project has been years in the making, with private fundraising led by UF alum Bob Lloyd. He is shown here in December 2021 when the statue was on view at the News-Journal Center in Daytona Beach prior to its transfer to the U.S. Capitol.

“I’m third-generation Daytona Beach, and one of the ideas that has been handed down ... is you give back to the community, you commit yourself and stay involved.”

— Bob Lloyd

THE LLOYD FAMILY



J. Saxton Lloyd Bob Lloyd’s grandfather, auto dealer **J. Saxton Lloyd** (1907-1991) opened Lloyd Buick Cadillac on North Beach Street in 1934 and spearheaded Daytona’s first advertising scheme, touting “the World’s Favorite Beach.” Among his proudest accomplishments were securing the financing to widen U.S. 1 to four lanes through four Florida counties and helping get Daytona International Speedway built in the 1950s. In the mid-1930s, the elder Lloyd gave NASCAR founder Bill France, Sr. his first job as a mechanic.

In 1935, his wife, Lady, gave birth to twin sons, Robert and William, who went on to attend Notre Dame and, starting in the 1960s, worked alongside their dad at Lloyd Buick Cadillac for more than three decades.

Just as important was Saxton Lloyd’s desire to improve conditions for Daytona’s Black population. His decades-long friendship with Dr. Bethune encompassed regular meetings at her campus office and steadfast support of Bethune-Cookman College (now University) where he also served as chairman of the Board of Trustees.



PHOTOS COURTESY BOB LLOYD

Carrying on their father’s tradition, Matthew and Delaney Lloyd are currently undergraduates at UF; this family portrait was taken in December 2021. Left to right, top row: Sherri and Bob; bottom row: Matthew and Delaney.

serving the Daytona community. That legacy has sustained Bob Lloyd throughout his life and his career as an attorney. “I’m third-generation Daytona Beach, and one of the ideas that has been handed down ... is you give back to the community, you commit yourself and stay involved,” says Lloyd.

“THREE GENERATIONS”

Speaking via Zoom from his sunlit office at Brown & Brown, Lloyd looks relaxed in a blue shirt, framed by a panoramic view of Daytona’s Intracoastal Waterway. The setting is fitting given that the city and its famed hard-sand beach were shaped by generations of Lloyds.

In fact, Brown & Brown’s new headquarters were built on the site of his grandfather’s original business.

J. Saxton Lloyd opened Lloyd Buick Cadillac on North Beach Street in 1934 and spearheaded Daytona’s first advertising scheme, touting “the World’s Favorite Beach.” Among his proudest accomplishments were securing the financing to widen U.S. 1 to four lanes through four Florida counties and helping get Daytona International Speedway built in the 1950s. Lake Lloyd, in the speedway’s infield, is named in his honor.

Just as important was Saxton Lloyd’s

desire to improve conditions for Daytona’s Black population. His decades-long friendship with Dr. Bethune encompassed regular meetings at her campus office and steadfast support of Bethune-Cookman College (now University), whose success would uplift the Black community and Volusia County at large.

In 1935, Lady gave birth to twin sons, Robert and William, who went on to attend Notre Dame and, starting in the 1960s, worked alongside their dad at Lloyd Buick Cadillac for more than three decades. A glance at the twins’ achievements reveals decades of civic involvement, including Robert serving as chairman of Bethune-Cookman’s board of counselors (an entity Saxton Lloyd founded).

Named for his father, Bob Lloyd was born in the mid-1960s, his mother, Sandra DeArmas Lloyd, an accomplished Florida landscape artist. He is one of six children, all of whom still live in Volusia County.

“Yeah, we’re a big Catholic family,” laughs Lloyd. “My sister is the oldest, and then there are five boys in a row, all about a year apart.”

In high school, Lloyd lettered in swimming, cross country running and soccer, and dreamed of becoming a lawyer. While Notre Dame beckoned, he felt a

stronger pull to Florida’s flagship university. “My grandfather never went to college, but if he had, it would have been the University of Florida,” Lloyd says. “He was a great Gator fan. Starting in the 1940s, he would go up to UF for football games with his cronies, continuing until a couple of years before he died in 1991.”

“When I had to pick a college, I knew it had to be UF,” he adds. “I think there’s only one kind of Gator fan, and that’s the people who go overboard in their fandom.”

“A TREMENDOUS TIME OF CHANGE”

A political science major, Lloyd says he instantly felt at home the moment he stepped on the Gainesville campus in 1983.

“It was a tremendous time of change for the university,” he says. “I came in under President Marston, and Charley Pell was our football coach. When I left, John Lombardi was our president, and Steve Spurrier was our football coach.”

Lloyd soaked up UF’s opportunities for involvement during those years. A member of Phi Delta Theta fraternity, he served as a member of Florida Blue Key and Savant, a Preview counselor, an Honor Court chancellor and a campus diplomat, among other roles. At the end of his senior year, he was inducted into UF’s Hall of Fame, which honors outstanding student leaders.

“Someone once told me, ‘You get out of it what you put into it,’ and that’s one of the best pieces of advice I received,” says Lloyd.

Lloyd is grateful for the friendships and relationships he built at UF, including those with his professors. One moment from his sophomore year is especially vivid.

“I remember being in Turlington Hall in Dr. Richard Scher’s class, which was called Southern Politics,” he says. “He was giving a lecture to an auditorium crowd of 200 to 250 students, and he started to talk about race relations in Florida. He focused on Daytona Beach and said it had a very progressive record in civil rights, and he credited a car dealer in Daytona Beach for helping make that possible.

“I sat there stunned because I was like, ‘I know who that is.’”

After class, Lloyd asked Scher if the car dealer was J. Saxton Lloyd.

“He kind of looked at me like, Oh, am I in trouble? and he said, ‘Yes, it is,’ to which I said, ‘Well, I’m his grandson,’” remembers Lloyd.

That exchange launched Lloyd’s tutelage under Scher and the late Dr. Jim Button, who encouraged Lloyd to “do his own homework” on his grandfather’s legacy, he says. That included interviewing Saxton Lloyd for the Samuel Proctor Oral History Program archives.

“My professors at UF helped me gain a long awareness of not only the past, but of the responsibility to carry it into the future and to make sure we preserve that great progressive legacy,” says Lloyd.

BUILDING CAREER & FAMILY

Lloyd graduated from Levin College of Law in 1991 and launched his career as an attorney at Cobb Cole, in Daytona Beach.

One his first clients was Brown & Brown, the insurance company of Gator Hyatt Brown (BSBA ’59). As an undergraduate, Lloyd had formed a close friendship with Hyatt’s son Powell Brown (BA ’89), and he welcomed the opportunity to serve as outside counsel to the nation’s sixth largest insurance brokerage. In 1999, Lloyd joined Brown & Brown’s team.

His first three years were spent as an insurance salesman, and he applied himself so doggedly he qualified for the firm’s elite Tangle B Club for top salespeople. (The name refers to the overlapping B’s in the Brown & Brown logo.)

“I was able to do that even though I was a lowly lawyer,” laughs Lloyd. “That was one of my proudest achievements. ... You have to know what it takes to make a business work. Now I always think, ‘I’m an insurance person first and a lawyer, second.’”

Lloyd moved up the Brown & Brown ladder, first to assistant general counsel, then vice president and chief litigation officer, and, now, executive vice president and general counsel.

That stability has proved terra firma for a burgeoning family and civic life.

In the 1990s, Lloyd attended an event in Daytona Beach for up-and-coming professionals. There he was introduced to Sherri, marketing manager for the city’s shopping mall.



As an undergraduate, Bob Lloyd studied political science before going on to earn his juris doctorate at Levin College of Law in 1990. The friendships and relationships he built are what he treasures most about his years at UF, he says. This photo from 1985 shows him seated at the entrance to the university at University Avenue and 13th Street.

“The only thing better than attending UF myself is seeing my kids thrive at the University of Florida and have their own experiences and friendships.”

— Bob Lloyd

En route to D.C., the marble statue made a historic pitstop Dec. 17, 2021, in Bethune's small hometown of Mayesville, South Carolina, where it was serenaded by a choir and honored by dignitaries.

Learn more about the Dr. Mary McLeod Bethune Statuary Project at uff.to/7zbrm6



PHOTO BY ERIC BREITENBACH

“We had dinner there that evening ... and we hit it off from there,” says Lloyd. “She fell in love with the University of Florida when we started dating, so she’s as much an honorary Gator as anyone.”

Marriage soon followed, and with arrival of children Delaney and Matthew, Sherri became “a fulltime Super Mom,” says Lloyd. The two young Lloyds are now both undergraduates at Dad’s alma mater.

“The only thing better than attending UF myself is seeing my kids thrive at the University of Florida and have their own experiences and friendships,” says Lloyd.

Delaney, a junior, is a Florida Cicerone and a sister at Alpha Delta Pi. First-year Matthew Lloyd recently joined Phi Delta Theta, his father’s fraternity, and Bob presented him with his brother pin this fall.

“It was really wonderful,” Lloyd says about the informal ceremony.

Matthew and Delaney are far from the only UF students to have benefitted from their parents’ nurturing touch. Over the years, the Lloyds have donated generously to the university, especially Student Affairs. Lloyd has also established internships at Brown & Brown for students in Beyond120, the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences’ professional development program.

“We feel it’s our obligation to give back to a university that has given so much to us,” says Lloyd, who sits on the UF Foundation Board of Directors.

“SHE WILL BELONG TO THE WORLD”

Bob Lloyd has used his many leadership positions over the years to advocate for diversity and inclusion, serving for two terms as chairman of Bethune-Cookman’s board of counselors.

Undoubtedly, his most passionate extracurricular activity is the Bethune statuary project. Since 2018, he has been a leading figure in the nonprofit fund that has raised about \$800,000 in private donations, enabling the project to expand to encompass a bronze statue for a new riverfront park in Daytona Beach, an exhibit, a forthcoming documentary film and a school curriculum module.

The project has been years in the making, says Lloyd, with support from governors Rick Scott and Ron DeSantis. The latter

requested in 2019 that the statue of Confederate general Edmund Kirby Smith in the Capitol’s Statuary Hall be replaced by Bethune.

“This [statuary project] isn’t a reaction to the recent protests over Confederate statues,” Lloyd explains. “It is being done to recognize what we aspire to be — as a state and as a nation.”

“This is a bipartisan effort supported by a Republican-led legislature and two Republican governors, and they’re making this happen for no other reason than it’s the right thing,” he adds.

Bethune’s statue was created by Puerto Rican-born sculptor Nilda Comas, who labored over it for two years, creating models in her Fort Lauderdale studio and sculpting the final work in Italy. To give the 11-foot-high work the grandeur it deserved, Comas secured the last and largest piece of statuary marble from the quarries where Michelangelo obtained his stone in the 15th century.

In July 2021, Bob and Sherrie Lloyd traveled with more than 50 Floridians to view the statue’s first public unveiling in Pietrasanta, Italy, where it was blessed prior to its voyage to Daytona Beach; there it was displayed at the News-Journal Center at Daytona State College for two months.

In December, the marble icon began its 800-mile journey to the U.S. Capitol. On the 17th, the 3-ton statue made a pitstop at Bethune’s small hometown of Mayesville, South Carolina, where residents and notables welcomed it with joy. Among those celebrating were Bethune descendant Jereleen Hollimon-Miller (the town’s mayor), actor Lou Gossett Jr. and U.S. House Majority Whip James Clyburn, who announced that he looked forward to welcoming the statue to the halls of Congress.

Later that month, the statue arrived in Washington, D.C., and was put in storage as the spot in Statuary Hall was made ready for it. The unveiling will take place in the first half of 2022, Bob Lloyd anticipates. And he and Sherri are sure to be there for the historic ceremony

It will mark a milestone in three generations’ efforts to support Bethune’s vision of a brighter future for Black Americans.

“This is a once-in-a-lifetime project to be involved in, and it’s so important for our community,” Lloyd says. “And when we deliver Bethune’s statue to Washington, D.C., she will belong to the world.”



THE ARCHITECT OF THE CAPITOL

NATIONAL STATUARY HALL

Located in the South wing of the U.S. Capitol Building, the collection consists of 100 statues contributed by all 50 states, two statues each. The statues represent deceased citizens for their historic renown or for distinguished civic or military service. You can view all the statues at uff.to/38fnj0

Who Was Dr. Mary McLeod Bethune?



The daughter of formerly enslaved people, Mary Jane McLeod Bethune became one of the foremost Black educators, women’s rights activists and civil rights leaders of the 20th century.

The first member of her family to be born free, Bethune came into the world on July 10, 1875, in Mayesville, South Carolina, the 15th of 17 children. Like the rest of her family, she picked cotton as a little girl, but the opening of a nearby missionary school gave her the unusual opportunity to receive an education as an African

American after the Civil War. After graduating from the Scotia Seminary for Girls (now Barber-Scotia College), in North Carolina, and attending Moody Bible Institute, in Chicago, she settled on a career as a teacher.

In 1904, Bethune moved to the east coast of Florida, where a large Black population had sprung up around the construction of Henry Flagler’s Florida East Coast Railway. That year, she opened the Daytona Literary and Industrial Training Institute for Negro Girls with “\$1.50, a faith in God and 5 little girls,” along with her 5-year-old son, Albert.

During Bethune’s lifetime, the school grew and expanded. In

1923, it merged with Cookman Institute of Jacksonville and eventually became known as Bethune-Cookman College. In 2007, it achieved university status.

Bethune’s work on behalf of improved race relations and education for minorities made her a national figure. In 1935, she founded the National Council of Negro Women and served as vice president of the NAACP from 1940 to 1955.

An advisor to five U.S. presidents, her most significant public service roles came from President Franklin D. Roosevelt, who appointed her director of the National Youth Administration’s Division of Negro Affairs in 1936. As a member of Roosevelt’s “Black Cabinet,” she worked to create more jobs for minorities and to promote anti-lynching legislation. Together with First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt, her close friend, she pushed to create the Women’s Army Corps (WAC), which was signed into law in 1943.

Bethune was the only Black woman, and one of just eight women, out of 850 delegates, at the San Francisco Conference, which drafted the charter for the United Nations in 1945.

The recipient of 11 honorary degrees, Bethune died of a heart attack on May 18, 1955. She lived long enough to see the U.S. Supreme Court end school segregation in Brown v. Board of Education.

Seven months after Bethune’s death, Rosa Parks, a Montgomery seamstress on her way home from work, refused to give up her seat on a bus for a white man and was arrested — an event that sparked the modern civil rights movement.

THE WORLD IS THEIR STAGE

Not all Fightin' Gators wear cleats and shoulder pads. Meet two UF alumni who outshine their competitors with heart, determination — and a fierce dose of sparkle.

STORY BARBARA DRAKE (MFA '04)
PHOTOS BY AARON DAYE

IF YOU'VE GOT THE SPOTLIGHT, use it to inspire others.

That is what alums **Pascale Belony** (BSHED '15, BSN '18) and **Leah Roddenberry** (BS '21) did in December 2021 when they competed in two of the world's top pageants for women. And, wow, did these polished Gators make an impact.

Double Gator Pascale Belony, 28, took to the stage as Miss Haiti for the 70th Miss Universe pageant, held in Eliat, Israel, and broadcast on Fox. A registered nurse, Belony eloquently advocated for health education while paying homage to Haiti's original inhabitants in a stunning national costume whose design she inspired.

Recent UF graduate Leah Roddenberry, 22, the current Miss Florida, placed in the Top 10 at the 100th Miss America competition, live-streamed from Connecticut. Roddenberry was a finalist for her social impact initiative, Be a LeadHER, and harnessed her Dazzler-honed skills to command the stage in the talent portion, dancing to Queen's 1979 anthem "Don't Stop Me Now."

Other competitors were awarded the crowns, but the two Gators walked away winners. Belony raised the profiles of MamaBaby Haiti and P4H Global, nonprofits she serves, and Roddenberry earned more than \$45,000 in scholarships for law school. Both women also became fan favorites on social media.

"It's much more than a crown and a sash," Roddenberry said about competitive pageants in a recent interview: "Determination, believing in yourself, speaking up diplomatically, getting involved with the community: you gain all these even if you don't win a title."

Pascale Belony says her concept of beauty evolved during her time as a student in the colleges of Health and Human Performance and Nursing.



Both Roddenberry and Belony overcame personal obstacles to represent Florida and Haiti — as well as the Gator Nation — in their respective contests.

A dancer since age 3, Roddenberry suffered from extreme scoliosis in adolescence and underwent spinal fusion surgery in her senior year of high school. With a coach's help, she safely trained to return to dancing and joined the Dazzlers dance team as a freshman, performing for four straight years at UF athletic events.

"That was an incredible feat for me," she said. "I remember in high school being so ashamed of sharing my condition with my peers since I had this big scar on my back. ... And then I got to perform onstage as part of the Top 10 for Miss America. It just goes to show that anything is possible if you don't let roadblocks stop you."

"Today, I serve as a national spokesperson for an organization titled Setting Scoliosis Straight that does a lot of scoliosis research and provides resources for patients and doctors around the world," she added proudly.

For Belony, a major challenge was overcoming a feeling — familiar to millions of women — that she could never measure up to the physical standards of a beauty queen.

"When I was a little girl, I dreamed of being on a Miss Universe stage," she said in a 2021 video. "Along the way, society convinced me that I wasn't good enough: I wasn't tall enough or skinny enough."

Born in 1993 in Cap-Haïtien, Haiti, to a family of nurses, Belony had no opportunities to compete in pageants in her native country, she said in a recent interview. In 2005, political unrest forced her family to flee to Florida. She learned English by consulting a dictionary while watching the Disney Channel and CNN. A competitive runner and top student at Northeast High School, in Oakland, she enrolled at UF's College of Health and Human Performance in 2011, becoming the first member of her family to attend college.

Belony grew in confidence and experience at UF, serving as a Cicerone and as a student Gator Nurse

Service and leadership were a big part of Leah Roddenberry's experience in the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences.



MENAHM KAHANA/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

Miss Haiti, Pascale Belony, during the national costume presentation of the Miss Universe beauty pageant in Israel on Dec. 10, 2021.

Ambassador for the College of Nursing. For inspiration, she looked to fellow Haitian immigrant and UF alum Bertrhude Albert (BA '12, MA '14, PhD '16), cofounder and CEO of P4H Global, which trains Haitian educators to be better teachers. Belony now serves on the organization's board of directors.

"Bertrhude exemplifies the idea that a single thoughtful citizen and her passionate dedication can change the world," said Belony in a recent interview. "Today P4H Global has trained over 7,000 Haitian teachers, and this project is something that Bertrhude started as an undergraduate at UF!"

After earning her bachelor's degree in nursing in 2018, Belony felt ready to tackle a long-deferred dream: representing her homeland in the Miss Universe pageant.

By then, at age 25, her concept of beauty had evolved.

"Beauty should never be defined by a woman's physical characteristics because we are more than that," she said. "Beauty can be defined by love, our capacity to serve others, our intelligence and our character."

"I'm so glad that, as Miss Haiti, I can represent body positivity and serve as a role model for other young women who look like

"Beauty should never be defined by a woman's physical characteristics because we are more than that. Beauty can be defined by love, our capacity to serve others, our intelligence and our character."

— registered nurse **Pascale Belony**, Miss Haiti 2021

me," she added.

In ways, Roddenberry's path to pageant success could not be more different than Belony's. A native of Bradenton, Roddenberry began participating at age 6 in the Sunshine Princess Program, a girls' mentorship initiative of the Miss Florida organization. Her success as a "princess" led to the titles of Miss Florida's

"I loved dancing to 'Don't Stop Me Now' by Queen in the talent portion of Miss America. It's a song of resilience and grit and never giving up on yourself."

— spinal-fusion survivor and dancer **Leah Roddenberry**, Miss Florida 2021



ANDREW KELLY/REUTERS

Miss Florida, Leah Roddenberry, performs during the talent section of the 100th Anniversary of the Miss America Pageant in Connecticut on Dec. 16, 2021.

Outstanding Teen 2013 and 2015, Miss University of Florida 2019, Miss Tampa 2020 and Miss Florida 2021.

But on her 16-year-long pageant journey, Roddenberry battled more than scoliosis: she was plagued by painful shyness as a young girl, especially in school.

"As the youngest of five kids, I felt like I always had someone speaking for me and was terrified to raise my hand in class," she said. "It really hindered me."

Like Belony, Roddenberry found the support she needed from a woman Gator.

In 2012, the then-reigning Miss Florida, Laura Rutledge — a former journalism major at UF, now reporter and host for ESPN and SEC Network — mentored young Roddenberry in the Sunshine Princess Program. Rutledge encouraged the shy 12-year-old to speak up and use her visibility to do good in the world. It was just the advice Roddenberry needed to boost her self-confidence and give direction to her life.

"When I was 12 years old, I really got to see through Laura what it means to be Miss Florida, to be incredibly down-to-earth, to see the service aspect of it," said Roddenberry. "She has been one of my biggest role models."

While Roddenberry worked toward her UF bachelor's degree

in family, youth and community sciences — "the Tim Tebow major!" she said — she served as a Florida student ambassador for Rock the Vote and founded the UF chapter of Ignite, which engages young women in civics and politics. In her senior year, Roddenberry was named an Outstanding Student Leader at UF, one of just six students honored. After graduation, her Gator connections followed her to the Miss America stage.

"Laura [Rutledge] actually came to Miss America one night to see me compete in Connecticut," she said, smiling.

After Roddenberry finishes serving her term as Miss Florida in June 2022, she will attend Belmont College of Law, in Nashville. Her eventual goal is to become a national press secretary.

Belony, too, has big dreams. Recently employed as a surgical nurse at Mount Sinai Medical Center in Miami Beach, she would like to work for the United Nations one day.

If these two young women are determined to aim high, it's due in no small part to their formative experiences at UF.

"Being a communicator, being a leader: I learned these traits at the University of Florida," said Belony. "I learned to be a woman who is confident, a woman who is not afraid to take on challenges. All the dreams I have — I know I'm capable and very much ready to pursue these opportunities because I am a Gator."

THIS DOCTOR'S Rx: Grab Bootstraps & Pull Up

A lauded Gator credits her upbringing in the Appalachians for the tenacity that put UF, Duke, Yale, Brown and Johns Hopkins within reach.

By David Finnerty

THERE ARE POCKETS IN THE APPALACHIAN MOUNTAINS — BITTY DOT-ON-A-MAP COMMUNITIES IN FOOTHILLS AND VALLEYS — that haven't changed much in a hundred years. Church services still fill pews. Neighbors are for life. Paychecks are earned with muscle and sweat. Children stay put, grow old and eventually end up with headstones next to their great grandparents.

Home, for Dr. Stephanie Yarnell-Mac Grory, was a place like that. Rural north Georgia. Heart of the Blue Ridge. Domain of the Cherokee National Forest, Chattahoochee River, Blood Mountain, Brasstown Bald, Neels Gap.

"It was a quiet, beautiful place with an abundance of wildlife and hiking," Yarnell-Mac Grory says of her one-stoplight hamlet.

But it wasn't for her. Her dreams were too big.

In her little town, restless schoolboys longed to join their fathers and brothers in the marble quarries or on factory assembly lines. Girls looked forward to moving from their parents' houses into homes of their own the next street over.

"My aspirations were quite different than most of my classmates," Yarnell-Mac Grory (Ph.D. '11, MD '13) says. "I wanted more from life than what I would have if I stayed there. While I wasn't certain at that time where my path would take me, I knew I needed to go."

And, oh, how she did.



FAR LEFT: As a child, Stephanie Yarnell-Mac Grory loved hiking and exploring the North Georgia mountains. Life, however, took her on a different breathtaking journey.

ABOVE: Being raised in a "solidly blue collar" family taught her to be "tenacious," Yarnell-MacGrory says.





The University of Georgia was first. Then UF, Yale and Brown, Johns Hopkins and Duke — worlds and galaxies from the Georgia mountains.

“Nothing about this journey was ever easy,” she admits. “At every stage I pulled myself up by my bootstraps and kept going. There were times when I had no one to lean on but myself. I learned to be my own support and when to just put my head down and push through.”

The Doctor Is In

The worst pandemic since World War I baptized Yarnell-Mac Grory. Not that she was new to medicine — she’d been practicing, doing research and teaching for some time prior to COVID-19’s arrival. Until then, however, she hadn’t had to help a hospital and its patients survive such a brutal onslaught.

She was a newish assistant chief of psychiatry and chief of forensic services for Rhode Island’s Department of Behavioral Health, Developmental Disabilities and Hospitals when the pandemic started sending people to emergency rooms. To deal with the virus, she leaned on her UF training in immunology and microbiology.

“Responsibility fell to me to write policies and set standards to keep our patients safe,” Yarnell-Mac Grory says. “The forensic hospital is in an old jail. The infrastructure made controlling an outbreak next to impossible if it were to get into the facility.”

So she did what she always does when it comes time to solve a problem: Yarnell-Mac Grory figured it out. Protocols were put in place to quarantine patients and slow infections among employees. Her strategies worked.

“At the time I left, we were the only hospital in Rhode Island without a patient outbreak,” she says.

LEFT: After earning her bachelor’s at the University of Georgia, Stephanie Yarnell-Mac Grory moved to Gainesville to earn her doctorate and medical degrees.

RIGHT: Last spring, Stephanie Yarnell-Mac Grory was recognized as one of UF’s “40 Under 40” alumni to watch.



Even so, there was more to do.

Addicts, patients with mental illnesses, prisoners, the LGBTQA community, the disabled, immigrants, veterans — people too often ignored or neglected — needed a voice during the pandemic, too. That voice turned out to be hers.

“I had to fight more than you could imagine to protect the lives of patients that most of the world forgot about,” says Yarnell-Mac Grory, who last spring was named one of UF’s “40 Under 40” alumni to watch.

It was an easy call.

“Medicine is a career of service,” she explains. “Whether it be fighting with the insurance companies on a patient’s behalf or taking on the legislative branch, we are taught that we are the voice for our patients. This is particularly true for the ones who cannot make the case for themselves ... You see how vulnerable these populations are and you understand how easily they are taken advantage of and harmed.”

Bulldog to Gator

The University of Georgia, for Yarnell-Mac Grory, was a ticket out of the Appalachian Mountains. The University of Florida was her ticket to all that followed.

It was UF’s Emerging Pathogens Institute that first caught her eye — the notion of becoming an epidemiologist at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. It seemed to her that EPI, along with the university’s medical school, would be the perfect opportunity to earn a doctorate and a degree in medicine. In time, her interest drifted toward psychiatry. Happiness in her decision to be a Gator, however, never changed.

“UF was a fantastic medical school. I cannot say that enough,” she says. “I have since worked with medical students, residents and fellows from other institutions, so I can say conclusively that UF trains you well. When you leave UF, you are knowledgeable and you are prepared.”

Yale’s School of Public Health, a business of medicine program at Johns Hopkins, Duke’s business school for an MBA, an assistant professorship at Brown University and Yale, Veterans Affairs physician — nothing seemed out of reach for Yarnell-Mac Grory after she left Gainesville.

She hasn’t gone unnoticed. In 2019, the organization 500 Women Scientists recognized Yarnell-Mac Grory for her leadership and advocacy. A few years earlier and not long out of UF’s medical school, the American Psychiatric Association gave her its Junior Investigator Award. She’s also won national and regional awards from the American Academy of Addiction Psychiatry and the American Academy for the Advancement of Sciences.

Through it all, she’s stayed true to her north Georgia roots.

“My family was solidly blue collar. Some say this negatively, but this was never a source of embarrassment to me ... I’m stronger for it,” she says.

“I wasn’t born into connections or opportunities, but I didn’t let that hold me back. From the hills of Appalachia, I pulled myself up by my bootstraps and made a better life. I am proud of my hard work and tenacious spirit. I am thankful that my humble origins gave me perseverance and drive, which are my biggest strengths. I can use all that energy to fight for patients and those without a voice — for taking on injustice in all its forms.”



Wolf & Clover

By day, **Matthew McCabe** (PhD Music '10) is the associate professor of audio technology at Columbus State University. But by night, he and his friends play in a Celtic roots music group, Wolf & Clover, that is releasing its second album soon. McCabe says they have a slightly different take on the Irish music many people know. However, their music can be considered an extension of the same tradition as the Chieftains and similar bands. Wolf & Clover's 2018 album received radio play in eight countries and is approaching 300,000 listens on Spotify. The band also holds the record for the highest-attended concert in the history of CSU's Schwob School at the RiverCenter in Columbus, Georgia. Pictured from left are: Julian Chalon, Chris Walton, Caroline Richards, Jessica French, Shellie Murphy DeBruyn and Matthew McCabe.

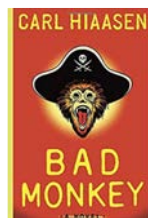
GATORS WITH GRE AT NEWS



REX/SHUTTERSTOCK

Actor Zach Braff, left, and producer Matt Tarses.

Alum produces TV you know



Matt Tarses (MFA '93) of Los Angeles, California works with the William Morris Endeavor talent agency in Beverly Hills, California. Tarses is also an executive producer alongside *Ted Lasso* co-creator, Bill Lawrence on the Apple TV+ series "Bad Monkey," based on Carl Hiaasen's 2013 novel.

Tarses also has helped write and produce a number of TV shows including "Men at Work," "Mad Love," "Scrubs," "Sports Night" and "The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air."



Accessible VR therapy

Andrea Piazza (BFA '17, BSPsy '17) of Casselberry is Discovery Behavioral Health's first director of virtual programming for all divisions. DBH is one of the country's largest behavioral health providers and has 130 treatment centers in 13 states. Piazza's work will make VR therapy and other healthcare accessible to more than 2,000 patients. Piazza is also the author of the children's book "Peter Pan in Everland."



Peaceful resolutions



Robert Merlin (BSBA '76, JD '78) is president of the Florida Academy of Collaborative Professionals, an organization of more than 500 lawyers, financial and mental health professionals who aim to help families peacefully resolve their differences. In addition, Merlin practices non-litigation of family matters, especially, collaborative family law, through his firm in Coral Gables.



Chemistry expert named professor emeritus at Virginia Tech

David Cox (MS '80, PhD '84) of Blacksburg, Virginia, is a chemical engineering professor at Virginia Tech who was recently named a professor emeritus. He is an international expert in the characterization and catalytic reactivity of well-defined metal oxide surfaces.



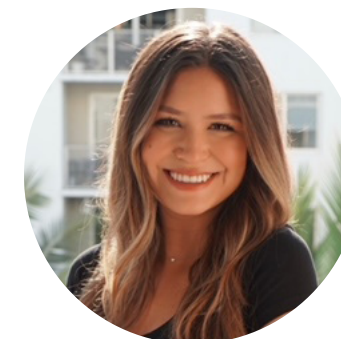
New chapters for magazine, editor

Liesl O'Dell (BSJ '92), editor of Florida Gator alumni magazine, retired in February after 25 years of producing communications for UF Advancement. She is grateful to hand off management of this publication to fellow Gator **Cindy Spence**

(BSJ '82, MAMC '17), the former science writer for UF's Explore research magazine.



Spence



Helping businesses connect with athletes

Zoe Haugen (BSTel '17) of Miami is director of marketing for MOGL, an NCAA-compliant name, image and likeness marketplace that democratizes access to collegiate athletes for businesses and brands looking to build awareness for their products and services. Haugen oversees marketing efforts across all channels, including social media marketing, digital performance marketing, public relations and communications.



Equitable economies

Michael Shifrin (BA '06) of Palm Beach Gardens is treasurer and secretary of Affordable Communities of Florida, a subsidiary of Opa-Locka Community Development, of which Shifrin is also a board member. The company's mission is to build a strong ecosystem that supports under-resourced communities in creating an equitable and sustainable economy. Shifrin is an attorney at Bressler, Amery & Ross in the firm's Miami office, where he is part of the insurance and cannabis practice groups.



Scene from “A Date, With History”

Miami film premier



Gaspar González (BA '90) of Biscayne Park premiered his short documentary, “A Date, With History,” at the 2021 Miami Film Festival GEMS. The film chronicles the arrest of a Black woman and a white man at a Miami motel

in 1955. The film was funded by a grant from Oolite Arts. Gonzalez is founder of Hammer and Nail Productions, a media company specializing in short-form and feature-length documentary content.

Spouse of the year

Virginia Chase Ralls (BSR '08) has been elected the 2020-21 Armed Forces Insurance Coast Guard District 8 Military Spouse of



the Year after a national vote in which more than 23,000 votes were cast. She is stationed in Pensacola with her husband, James. She is an attorney with the James L. Chase & Associates firm in Pensacola, where she helps military members and their families address family law issues unique to military life. She also helps military families start non-profits and businesses, and aids with estate planning. Along with other branch spouse-of-the-year winners, she helped launch the Million Mile Project to bring awareness to suicide prevention efforts for military families. She aims to reach a million members with this program. A native of Pensacola, Ralls uses her RV to bring family members along to Gator football home games.

GATOR CLUB NEWS

There are **77 active Gator Clubs®** around the world. Membership is open to all alumni, parents, friends and students of the University of Florida. Alumni Association members are automatically members! There are no additional dues to pay. Find a club near you uff.to/xxxxx



SoCAL GATORS GATHER FOR GAME

Southern California Gator Club president **Brian Habing** (BSME '18) shared these photos from the club's fall Florida-Missouri Young Alumni Event and Watch Party. From left, club members include: **Corinne Novell** (PhD '12), **Marissa Buck** (BSCE '18), **Grant Aiossa** (BSME '18), **Bhavik Patel** (JD '11), Habing, **Matt Wade** (BSBJ '83), **Madison Nagle** (BSBA '17), **Hasley Pitman** (BSTel '20), **Hope Pitman** (first-year), **Michael Schlein** (BSSBE '21) and **Vanessa Alvarez** (BSME '19, BSAE '19).



GATORS GIVE BACK ON MAY 14TH

On May 14th, Gator Clubs® and Affiliate Groups around the world unite to utilize the size and spirit of the Gator Nation® to positively impact local communities. Gators will join together to support projects and programs within their local communities, using their time and talents to serve others.

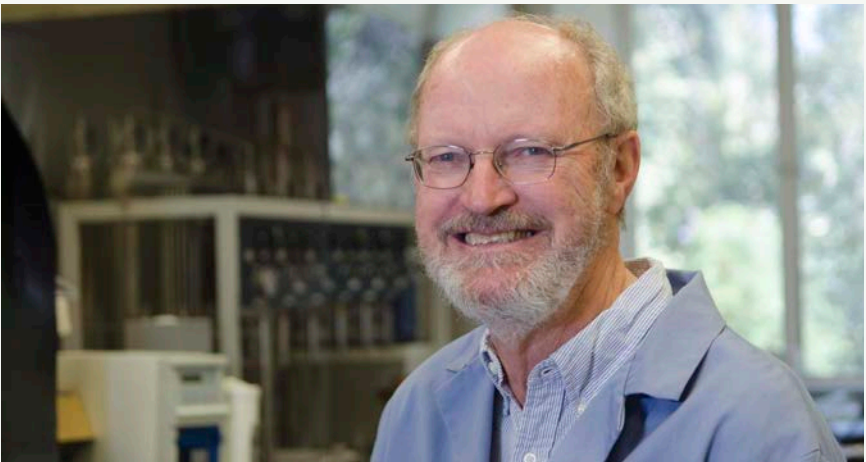


Scan the code or use the link.

BE A PART OF INTERNATIONAL GATOR DAY:

Find events hosted by your local Gator Club® or Affiliate Group and volunteer for their service project at go.ufl.edu/igd2022 Check back for updates as the day draws near.

IN MEMORIAM



UF CHEMISTRY GRAD WAS NOBEL LAUREATE

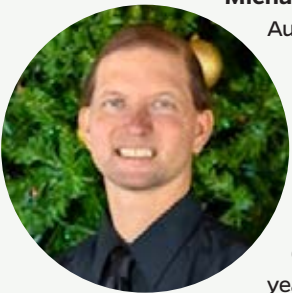
Robert “Bob” Grubbs (BS '63, MS '65), a chemist and Nobel laureate, died Dec. 19 at the age of 79. He had been a professor at Caltech since 1978.

Grubbs was among three co-winners of the Nobel Prize in Chemistry in 2005 for his groundbreaking work in metathesis, a chemical reaction involved in assembling and synthesizing organic substances. He discovered a class of stable catalysts for facilitating the reaction, allowing chemists to produce new, custom molecules that improve a wide range of products in industries such as pharmaceuticals and plastics.

A permanent installation honoring Grubbs is located on campus in the Chemistry/ Chemical Biology Building.

His many other honors include induction into the Florida Inventors Hall of Fame in 2015 and membership in both the National Academy of Sciences and the National Academy of Engineering.

FUND FOR BAND DIRECTOR



Michael Lee Wilson (MM '15) of Rossville, Tennessee, died Aug. 26 at the age of 44. He played the French horn for the Fightin' Gator Marching Band, as well as the Southwind Drum & Bugle Corps and the Phantom Regiment Drum & Bugle Corps. He was director of bands for the Milan Special School District in Milan, Tennessee, up until 2015. A fund was established for his family (wife, Jan, and two children) as his illness prevented him from working or qualifying for life insurance during the last five and a half years of his life. www.celebratingmichael.com

BOOSTER GAVE TO SPORTS

Wayne Wiles of Fort Myers died Dec. 23 at the age of 82. The owner of Wayne Wiles Floor Covering was a Bull Gator for 23 years, serving on the Gator Boosters board of directors for 20 years, and one year as its president. Wiles and his wife, Maria, helped fund numerous athletics building projects with their gifts over the years. They also established endowments to support student athletes.



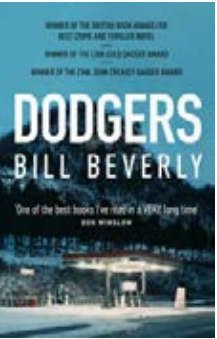
PROFESSOR EMERITUS

Samuel Hill, professor emeritus of religion, died June 1 at the age of 93. Hill arrived at UF as chair of the Department of Religion in 1972 and held the post until 1977, then continued as a professor until his retirement in 1994. His trailblazing book, “Southern Churches in Crisis,” first published in 1967, formed the foundation for scholarly study of southern religion. In the work, Hill contended that white southern Protestantism had compromised its integrity and influence by turning away from the moral imperatives of the civil rights movement and the fight against segregation. The book's endurance led Hill to issue an updated edition, “Southern Churches in Crisis Revisited,” in 1999.

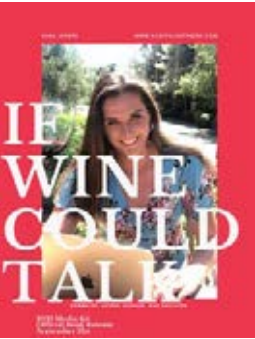
Hill's many awards and honors include the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences' Teacher of the Year in 1982-83. He was a finalist for the same recognition in 1988-89. Before entering academia, he was a pastor in Burlington, Kentucky. Toward the end of his career at UF, Hill focused on teaching ethics to undergraduates, counseling them not only in academics but life.

Said fellow religion professor David Hackett: “When I first came on the faculty he pulled me aside to say that what we really were doing in our teaching was ‘character formation.’ One could not have found a better mentor in this than Sam.”

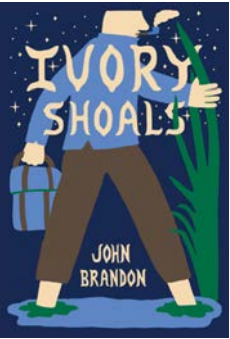
ALUMNI AUTHORS



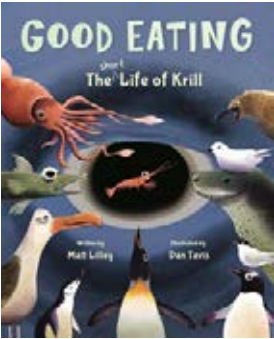
‘DODGERS’
A young LA gang member named East is sent by his uncle to kill a witness hiding out in Wisconsin. **Bill Beverly**, (MA ’91, PhD ’98) Hyattsville, Maryland. He is an associate professor and chair of English at Trinity Washington University in Washington, D.C.



‘IF WINE COULD TALK’
A young girl’s narrative molded by wine and the answers to all your need-to-know wine questions. **Kara Joseph** (BSAdv ’14) Sonoma, California. She is a certified sommelier and dipWSET, who has traveled to famous vineyards around the world.



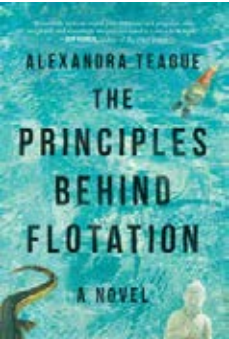
‘IVORY SHOALS’
Twelve-year-old Gussie Dwyer undertakes to trek across the peninsula of post-Civil War Florida in search of his father. **John Brandon** (BA ’99). He is an associate professor of creative writing at Hamline University in Saint Paul, Minnesota.



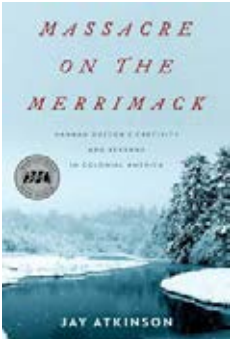
‘GOOD EATING: THE SHORT LIFE OF KRILL’
Follows one krill among billions as it pursues its brief existence, eating while metamorphosing from one thing into another and trying to avoid being eaten. **Matt Lilley** (BS ’02) Minneapolis, Minnesota. Selected by The Junior Library Guild for its spring reading list.



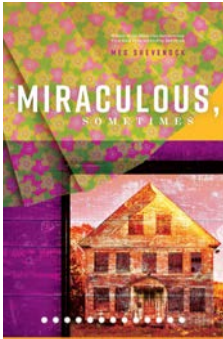
‘I WAS TRYING TO DESCRIBE WHAT IT FEELS LIKE: NEW AND SELECTED STORIES’
Set on two continents and ranging in length from a single page to a novella, these stories remind us of the reach of our compassion and of the possibilities of language. **Flournoy “Noy” Holland** (MFA ’94) Heath, Massachusetts. She is a professor in the MFA program for poets and writers at the University of Massachusetts Amherst.



‘THE MIRACULOUS, SOMETIMES’
A hybrid work, grounded in poetics. Conceptually, the narration echoes the effects of trauma. Sometimes it unfolds in long prose poems, while at other times, a single fragment may appear alone on the page. **Meg Shevenock** (MFA ’06) Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. She is a research assistant for the artist Ann Hamilton.



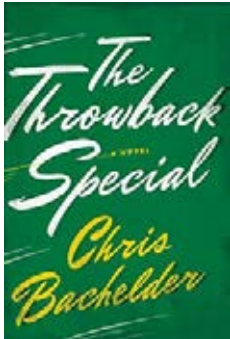
‘THE PRINCIPLES BEHIND FLOTATION’
When the Sea of Santiago appeared overnight in Arkansas, it seemed, to some, a religious miracle. But to high school sophomore A.Z. McKinney, it’s marked her chance to make history—as its first oceanographer. **Alexandra Teague** (MFA ’98) Moscow, Idaho. She is editor of Broadside, and assistant professor at the University of Idaho.



‘MASSACRE ON THE MERRIMACK: HANNAH DUSTON'S CAPTIVITY AND REVENGE IN COLONIAL AMERICA’
In 1697, a band of Abenaki warriors in service to the French raided the English village of Haverhill, Massachusetts, taking captive 13, including Hannah Duston , whose week-old daughter was killed. Duston gets revenge on her captors, but, was she a prototypical avenger, or the harbinger of genocide? Bestselling author, **Jay Atkinson** (MA ’82) Methuen, Massachusetts. He is an essayist, critic and investigative journalist and lecturer at Boston University.



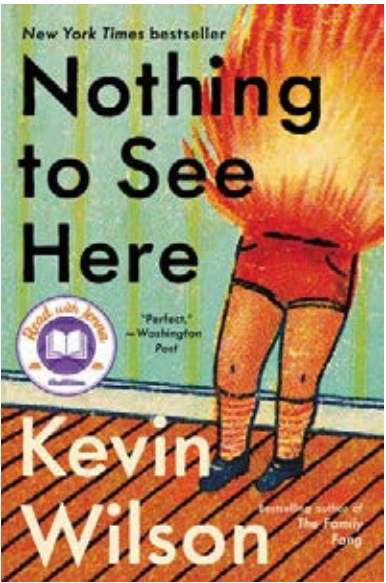
‘ROYAL TRIVIA: YOUR GUIDE TO THE MODERN BRITISH ROYAL FAMILY’
A compendium of facts and stories about the monarchy. **Roberta Fiorito** (BSJ ’15) Tallahassee. She is also a co-host of the Royally Obsessed podcast, which was named one of the best podcasts of 2021 by Town & Country magazine.



‘THE THROWBACK SPECIAL’
Twenty-two men gather every fall to reenact the 1985 NFL game in which Joe Theismann had his leg horribly broken live on Monday Night Football. **Chris Bachelder** (MFA ’02) Cincinnati, Ohio. The book was a finalist for the 2016 National Book Award, and winner of the Paris Review Terry Southern Prize for Humor. Bachelder is a professor at the University of Cincinnati.

Novel’s screen rights purchased

A New York Times Bestseller in which a woman finds meaning in her life when she begins caring for two children with remarkable and disturbing abilities. **Kevin Wilson** (MFA ’04) of Sewanee, Tennessee, also wrote “Baby, You’re Gonna Be Mine” and “Perfect Little World.” He is assistant professor of English and coordinator of the Creative Writing certificate program at Sewanee: The University of the South. The novel’s screen rights were purchased in 2019 by Sony-based production label 3000 Pictures. It would be the second film adaptation of a Wilson novel — the 2015 adaptation of “The Family Fang” starred Nicole Kidman, Jason Bateman and Christopher Walken.



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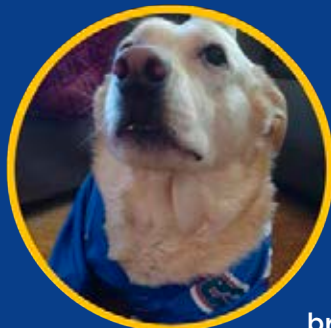
FLORIDA GATORS

FLORIDA GATORS

FLORIDA GATORS

Four-Legged Fans

GATORS AREN'T THE ONLY ONES WHO CHEER FOR FLORIDA. MANY OF THEIR BEST FRIENDS ALSO ROOT FOR THE OLD ORANGE AND BLUE. MEET THESE FURRY AND LOVABLE FANS.



Obi

Brad Tester said his dog, Obi, is a Gator fan for sure. Tester works in radio broadcasting and production and lives with Obi in Knoxville, TN.



Ty

Cara Trench (BSBioChem '21) shared this photo of Tiberius, her best friend and fellow Gator fan. She says "Ty enjoys wearing his jersey on game day." Trench is a lab tech in Gainesville.

Neo

Trial attorney Bill Shilling (JD '99) of Murphy, NC, says his pup, "Neo, the Australian Shepherd," loves watching the Gators on TV and barks madly whenever the Vols are on!



Cosmo

Karen Schwalen-Lane (BA '91) is a fifth grade teacher in Baintree, MA. This is her dog, Cosmo.



SEND YOUR PHOTOS TO:

FloridaGator@ufalumni.ufl.edu

Include your name, occupation, town and your pet's name.



OR SHARE [@ufalumni](https://www.instagram.com/ufalumni)
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MINUTES WITH KRISTEN BERSET- HARRIS



PHOTOS COURTESY OF KRISTEN BERSET-HARRIS

Kristen Berset-Harris says being a ZTA at UF saved her life.

ONLY 40 YEARS OLD, AND I SURVIVED BREAST CANCER — TWICE

BY KRISTEN BERSET- HARRIS (BSTEL '03)

I REALIZE NOW THAT WHILE THERE ARE BIG EVENTS AND DECISIONS IN YOUR LIFE THAT CAN CHANGE EVERYTHING, for the good or bad, it is really the small moments that build you and prepare you to survive and thrive. UF is part of why I'm alive and thriving today. When I look back at the past 12 years to where I am now, the gifts I have received far outweigh what cancer took away.

I became a member of the Zeta Tau Alpha sorority when I was a freshman. Although ZTA was not my No. 1 choice during rush, it turns out that accepting the bid to become a ZTA sister was the right choice.

The philanthropic focus of ZTA was breast cancer awareness through the Susan G. Komen Foundation. My fellow ZTA sisters and I would fundraise for the organization through our annual Zeta Line Dance. We would also help raise breast cancer awareness by handing out waterproof cards to hang in your shower that explained how to properly perform a self-breast exam. Little did I know at the time, but my casual awareness of the information we were providing for others ultimately saved my life, not once, but twice.

Prior to my first diagnosis, I was working in my first full-time job as a news anchor in Panama City. One day I was in the shower performing a self-breast exam (just like I was shown on the cards I used to hand out as a ZTA) when I felt a hard lump in my left breast. I told myself it was nothing, but truly I knew something was not right. I eventually saw a doctor and had multiple ultrasounds. I was told the lump was a simple



Kristen Berset-Harris interviewed civil rights icon Rep. John Lewis and has been active in the Susan G. Komen Foundation.

cyst and nothing to worry about. After moving to Baltimore a year later, I made an appointment with a plastic surgeon at Johns Hopkins Hospital to have the “cyst” removed. The doctor felt the lump and the look on his face said it all. After being misdiagnosed twice the year before, the doctor expedited my care, and I was scheduled that same day for a mammogram, MRI and two biopsies. The next day I got the call: “You have breast cancer.” I was 27 years old.

Of course, I was shocked, not only because of my age, but also because I have no family history and didn't know anyone close to me who had fought this battle. I decided to undergo a prophylactic bilateral mastectomy, having both my breasts removed, to reduce the risk of recurrence. Despite this major life- and body-altering choice, I developed a second breast cancer nine years later at age 36.

My second diagnosis came a month before my wedding. No one except for family and our wedding party knew about the diagnosis, making that night all about the love we all shared for each other. The next few months were filled with surgeries and radiation treatments. Our dream honeymoon to Italy was canceled. While that time was physically painful, it provided us with so many blessings. It

“For me, attending UF was a dream come true. I always wanted to be a Gator and a journalist — UF gave me both opportunities.”

was an opportunity to slow down and be grateful for our time together as a family.

During this time, an incredible opportunity became available at my current station to be the host of the morning talk show Great Day Washington. It was a dream position I had wanted years earlier. I left the hospital that day after completing one of my 36 rounds of radiation treatment and drove to the station to audition. Not long after, I found out I got the job. And now here I am five years later as an award-winning host of Great Day Washington working alongside an incredible team where we get to share others' stories of resilience and inspiration. I've interviewed trailblazers such as the late civil rights leader Rep. John Lewis as well as some of the biggest stars in sports and entertainment. However, my most memorable and meaningful interview has been with Nancy Brinker, founder of the Susan G. Komen Foundation.

I have been given an incredible platform to educate others on the importance of

early detection and how it can save lives.

I am blessed to work with incredible organizations such as the American Cancer Society, Tigerlily and For 3 Sisters, each of which help women and families who are impacted by this terrible disease.

For me, attending UF was a dream come true. I always wanted to be a Gator and a journalist — UF gave me both opportunities. Furthermore, being a Gator and a ZTA saved my life. And hopefully with my work, I can help save the lives of others as well.

Life is not an easy journey for anyone. But for those who have survived or are living with a severe medical condition or injury, there is a constant battle to keep fear at bay and find a new normal. We have all been through a tough time the past couple of years. Give yourself some grace and have faith that the little moments and small decisions through your life, many that you don't even realize at the time, have given you the fortitude and strength to push onward.



The UF Alumni Association is offering a \$25 rebate to Gators who switch from plain tags to the official UF license plate. Learn more at:

[UFPLATES.COM](https://ufplates.com)

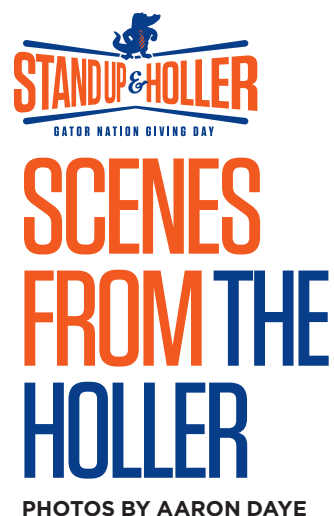


Share your ride and Gator tag @ufalumni #GatorPRide

FEATURED TAG



Paul Gartenberg (BS '81, MS '86, DVM '87) is a 35-year veterinarian in Bradenton. He and his wife, Jeanne, have two proud Gator daughters: Lauren (BSBA '09) and Emily ('20).



PHOTOS BY AARON DAYE



Director of Black Affairs Satcha Sanon, from left, with Destiny Caldwell, Linda Dillon, Tyler Brown and Syndee Alexis at the Reitz Union



Wind dancers at the Reitz Union

ABOVE: Posters and shirts for students at the Reitz Union

AT RIGHT: Beau the Therapy Dog visits with students, faculty and staff during the Stand Up & Holler Pop Out & Give event in the Health Professions Nursing and Pharmacy Courtyard.



ABOVE: Senior Class President Jacob Van De Car tries to dunk Noah "Drew" Baker (BA '16), assistant director of Campus Traditions, to raise funds.

BELOW: Ties were hung on buildings and statues across campus, like these on the Heisman statues in front of the stadium.



World champion hurdler Grant Holloway, at top, Heisman trophy winner Danny Wuerffel (BSPR '96) and James Bates (BSTEL '97) film segments for the Stand Up & Holler livestream.



Students Janae Hodge, left, and Jackie Sanchez, right, volunteer to write thank you notes to those who donated.



UF athletes who graduated in December 2021

COURTESY CULBREATH/UF ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION

Success On and Off the Field

SEVEN UF TEAMS POST PERFECT 100s

GATOR STUDENT-ATHLETES who earned their degrees in December tied UF’s graduation success rate (GSR) record at 92%, which is higher than the NCAA Division I overall GSR of 90%.

Twelve of UF’s teams achieved GSRs at above or equal the national average for their sport. They include men’s and women’s basketball, football, men’s and women’s golf, gymnastics, lacrosse, soccer, softball, women’s tennis, men’s track and field, cross country and volleyball.

Seven teams posted a perfect 100% GSR: men’s basketball, men’s and women’s golf, gymnastics, lacrosse, women’s tennis and volleyball, which also ties UF’s record for the most teams to earn a perfect rate.

In the fall, UF was ranked the fifth best public university in the nation by US News & World Report. The combined grade point average for all Gator student-athletes for the 2020-21 academic year was 3.16, and 1,205 student-athletes earned bachelor’s or master’s degrees in the last academic year.

The most recent GSRs are based on the four entering freshmen classes in Division I from 2011-12 to 2014-15.

TEAM	UF ATHLETE GRADUATION SUCCESS RATE	DIVISION I NATIONAL AVERAGE
MEN’S BASKETBALL	100%	84%
MEN’S GOLF	100%	91%
WOMEN’S GOLF	100%	96%
GYMNASTICS	100%	97%
LACROSSE	100%	97%
WOMEN’S TENNIS	100%	96%
VOLLEYBALL	100%	94%
SOCCER	96%	95%
SOFTBALL	95%	93%
FOOTBALL	93%	80%
WOMEN’S BASKETBALL	92%	92%
WOMEN’S SWIMMING	92%	96%
MEN’S CROSS COUNTRY & TRACK	89%	84%
MEN’S TENNIS	88%	93%
WOMEN’S CROSS COUNTRY & TRACK	86%	91%
MEN’S SWIMMING	83%	91%
BASEBALL	75%	86%
OVERALL ATHLETICS PROGRAM	92%	90%



Founded in 2014, Walk-On’s Bistreaux & Sports Bar made the Gator100 list of the fastest-growing Gator-owned or -led businesses in 2021. The company’s growth rate for 2021 was almost 90%. **The 2022 Gator100 awardees will be announced on April 22.** Visit **GATOR100.UFL.EDU** for details.

A TEAM CULTURE

Gave Walk-On’s Bistreaux & Sports Bar an Edge in Pandemic Recovery

AT WALK-ON’S BISTREAUX & SPORTS Bar, every shift starts with a rumble.

That’s what the 55-unit casual-dining chain calls its traditional pep rally of sorts. Workers pound on the tables and make some noise to rev up to perform, just as a sports team might before giving their all in a game.

“We’ve had people call 911 saying there’s a terrorist attack in the kitchen,” joked **Scott Taylor** (BA English ’86), Walk-On’s president and chief operating officer, in the latest episode of the Ask The Experts series, part of the Nation’s Restaurant News.

It’s an example of the “walk-on mentality” — giving your all for the love of the game and the team — that inspired the concept and drives the culture that helped Walk-On’s survive the pandemic, Taylor said.

The goal is to build a culture that’s playful and fun, but also to create a career path for workers who might discover new potential, if given a chance, said Taylor.

“A lot of it is just treating them right, providing a path. The restaurant business has never been considered a permanent job,” he said, but “this can be a great career, you can do things here.”



Give workers a path, treat them right and start each shift with a **‘rumble,’** says president and COO Scott Taylor (BA English ’86)

Taylor is Walk-On’s Bistreaux & Sports Bar president and chief operating officer.

FACEBOOK

And even if you don’t end up staying in the restaurant business, we’re going to teach you life lessons that will help you with anything you get into.”

During the pandemic, while dine-in was shut down, the restaurants pivoted to takeout, and the company tried to help the front-of-house employees find work, whether doing third-party delivery or furlough kitchens. Workers were offered food every day, and the company kept in touch every week. For franchisees, the company started a prayer network on Facebook.

Now that dining rooms are open, Taylor said the chain has been able to maintain staffing levels. The company offers cash for referrals to fill open positions, which Taylor said helps build community.

The company has a “director of brand culture” and regular WOW meetings to encourage the “Walk-On’s Way” of building culture. “They’re not doing compliance visits, they’re doing culture visits,” he said.

And that strong culture helped the Baton Rouge, LA-based concept come roaring back this year.

Even at only 25% capacity, Walk-On’s was able to win back about 90% of sales, Taylor said. At 50% capacity, the chain was setting national sales records, he said. Even during the heat of COVID, franchisees were signing on because they saw opportunity.

The chain expects to add 25 new units this year.

“COVID didn’t happen to us. It happened for us,” said Taylor. “It taught us a lot of lessons. It made the franchise family a lot tighter.”

— Lisa Jennings, Nation’s Restaurant News executive editor



Walk-On’s founders Brandon Landry and Jack Warner were walk-on players for the LSU basketball team in 1997, then opened the first location in Baton Rouge in 2003.

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AMBER YOO (DBA ’23, MBA ’10, BA ’04)
Co-Founder & Vice President, SKY Facial Plastic Surgery, Inc.

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→ warrington.ufl.edu/DBA
or contact Angie at: angie.woodham@warrington.ufl.edu



MEET FELLOW GATORS

CARLOS (BSISE ’72) AND **OLGA DEL SOL** (BAE ’74)

“**I OWE A LOT TO THE UNIVERSITY.** Being a member of the Alumni Association is a way for me to give back to UF. One of my goals in retirement is to share my experience and expertise with other individuals, including students, faculty and staff, and to help them achieve their personal and professional goals.”

— **Carlos del Sol**, retired vice president of global engineering for Campbell Soup Co.

After graduation from UF, Carlos del Sol worked for General Electric in a variety of manufacturing, engineering and supply chain leadership roles. Fifteen years later, he went to work for the Campbell Soup Company as director of advanced engineering systems. He retired as the company’s vice president of global engineering systems in 2011.

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GATORS GO AROUND THE WORLD

Reader-submitted photos from their past and present adventures

Stephen Sherman (BSBA '03) of Tampa took this summer trip to South Africa. He went on safari on the Phinda Nature Preserve. He owns Heads and Tails, a collegiate apparel company. He is also managing partner of Beveridge Medical Associates.

SHARE YOUR TRAVELS

Send your photos & captions to:
FloridaGator@ufalumni.ufl.edu



With COVID quarantines restricting distant travel, **Robert C. Dowd** decided to visit the remaining 62 New York counties which he had not yet experienced. This included a road trip to Gainesville (Wyoming County), New York. Dowd lives in Albany, New York. He worked at the New York State Library for many years before shifting over to social services in 2010.



Nancy Nicoletti Leader (BA '82) of Hattiesburg, Mississippi, represented the Gators on her December trip to Galapagos, sponsored by National Geographic. She is retired from advertising and photography careers, and now manages properties and teaches children Sunday school art.

FOND MEMORIES NEW DISCOVERIES UNDER THE GLOW OF ORANGE & BLUE

10

TALLAHASSEE

75

JACKSONVILLE

Visit
GAINESVILLE
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MULTI-DAY MUSIC & ARTS EVENTS
6 AWARD-WINNING BREWERIES
THOUSANDS OF FREE-FLYING BUTTERFLIES
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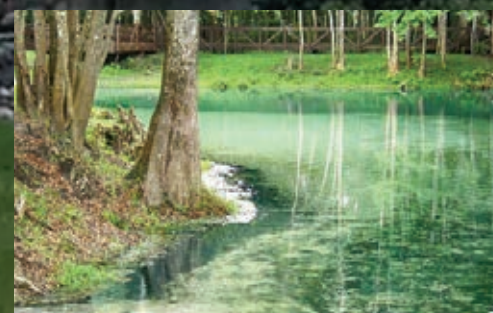
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Main Image: Sweetwater Wetlands Park by @wildlifeventures | Poe Springs: Courtesy of Alachua County
Drink Gainesville Beer: Courtesy of Swamp Head Brewery | Musical Performance: Courtesy of Heartwood Soundstage



Lee Humphrey

- BSESS '07 of Jacksonville
- Sales director, Pontoon Solutions, a talent management company that delivers HR solutions for Fortune 1,000 companies
- Basketball announcer, Gator Radio Network

FINISH LINE: **LEE HUMPHREY**

A RECORD-BREAKER REFLECTS

BACK-TO BACK NATIONAL CHAMPION REFLECTS ON TIME AT UF AND MOVING FROM PLAYING TO COVERING GAMES

STORY BY LIESL O'DELL (BSJ '95)

PHOTO BY AARON DAYE

HOW OFTEN DO GATORS RECOGNIZE YOU AND WHAT DO THEY TYPICALLY SAY?

It doesn't happen as often as you'd think, but I do get recognized every so often. Most folks I talk to are interested in what I did after college. I played professionally: eight years overseas in eight different countries and one year in the NBA's Development League, so I get to tell some of those stories and talk about what I'm doing now.

WHAT IS THE STRANGEST OR MOST MEMORABLE REQUEST FROM A FAN?

In Europe a coach came and introduced himself to me. He started to coach me up a bit during a workout, and we were shooting. Eventually he said, "Oh, you are Lee Humphrey who played at UF and won two national championships." After the workout he asked if I'd call his girlfriend to say hello and wish her a happy birthday.

WHAT'S IT LIKE TO HAVE MICK HUBERT ONCE CALL YOUR SHOTS AND NOW CALL GAMES WITH YOU?

It's pretty incredible. It's something you don't think about too much as a player because you're in the game. But now when you're outside the game, it's amazing to hear his talent and what goes into a game. It's part of creating an atmosphere around the university and the game experience so it's a ton of fun.

WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNED FROM WORKING WITH MICK?

So much. How to prep for games. How to jump in and to be quick and concise and to the point. He'll give me pointers every once in a while. He's helped me quite a bit.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE GAINESVILLE HANGOUT?

I lived on campus all four years, as did all the guys on the team, so obviously we spent a lot of time here at the practice facility. But when we weren't doing basketball or school we mainly were just hanging out with friends, so just different apartments with my buddies and spending time with friends.



UNIVERSITY ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION/JAY METZ

Lee Humphrey takes a piece of the net after the Gators beat UCLA 73-57 in the NCAA national championship basketball game in 2006.

WHAT'S YOUR FAVORITE UF TRADITION?

That's pretty easy: it's the "You Can Call Me Al" song the band plays during the second half of the basketball games. Coach would always talk to us in the huddle. I'll always remember, depending on how the game was going, I'd have one ear listening to Coach and one ear listening to that song.

WHO MADE THE BIGGEST IMPACT ON YOUR LIFE AND/OR CAREER?

There are a few folks I could name. Billy Donovan obviously had a huge impact on my life. I learned a ton playing for him – mostly about basketball but more importantly about life – a lot of skills that were transferrable to me, my family and my career. Also two Gators who had a big impact on my life are Gerry Schackow (BA '63, JD '65) and Mike Wachholz (BA '91, JD '95). Both had a big impact on my life when I was transitioning out of basketball and into the professional world. Mike hired me originally at Pontoon. They gave me some great career and professional advice as I was transitioning.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO YOU TO CALL GAMES ON THE BILLY DONOVAN COURT?

It's pretty special. I get chills every time in the O'Dome when the ball goes up, the guys are playing, especially now when they're in SEC play because the games are more intense. It brings back a lot of great memories from my playing days. I'm thankful to still be a small part of this atmosphere.



UNIVERSITY ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION/TIM CASEY
Humphrey with Mick “Voice of the Gators” Hubert during the Gators’ game against Michigan State on December 8, 2018, at the Stephen C. O’Connell Center.

WHAT’S BEEN THE MOST DIFFICULT PART OF YOUR TRANSITION FROM PLAYING TO COVERING GAMES?

It’s completely different. When you’re playing, you’re focused mainly on your role and your job and what you’re supposed to execute during the game. You react and it’s all about intensity. On the radio, you have got to see more and be focused on the larger picture, seeing trends. Then you try to tell that story to the audience because they can’t see the game. You’ve got to be descriptive, and at the same time things move really fast. You’ve got to get in and get out really quickly and concisely.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO YOU TO STILL HOLD SO MANY NCAA AND UF 3-POINT SHOOTING RECORDS?

It’s a bit surreal because I never really dreamed I’d hold those records. To hold them is definitely an honor. It’s proof that I played on an incredible team with great teammates. We achieved so much, and it’s really a team effort.

WHAT ARE THE BIGGEST JOYS IN YOUR LIFE NOW?

That’s easy: my family. I’ve been married for a little over 10 years. Met my wife in college. She’s a Gator [Chelsea Humphrey (BHS ‘09, MOT ‘10)]. She was with me overseas even before we had kids. Now we have three boys, ages 7, 4 and 2.

IF YOU COULD REWIND YOUR COLLEGE CAREER, WHAT WOULD YOU CHANGE?

It’s tough to find something to change because everything turned out so well. We won two national championships and three SEC conference tournaments. It’s been pretty incredible. I’m sure there are some little things I’d change along the way. Maybe I’d be more aggressive early on in my career and look for more opportunities, which is what Coach Donovan used to always tell us. I would have spent a little more time practicing my free throws (laughing). I shot a lot of threes, but I could have spent more time on free throws.

WHICH GAMES DO YOU LOOK FORWARD TO CALLING THE MOST?

Tennessee in Knoxville is an awesome game for me because my family is right there. It’s always a great atmosphere, too. If I can bring one of my kids along for that trip, it’s always fun. SEC home games are great: LSU, Kentucky, any of those big games are fun. The conference tournament was always my favorite thing to play in. I haven’t called one of those live yet because last year it was remote. But I’ll be pretty pumped to call it in person.

WHAT WAS THE GREATEST LESSON YOU LEARNED DURING YOUR COLLEGE CAREER?

There are many. One that has transferred the most is perseverance. There are ups and downs especially when you’re coming in as a freshman. You’re used to being the focal point of the team, and obviously you’re not going to be when moving into college. Then trying to figure out how you can fight your way into the lineup and into the rotation and figure out how you can earn playing time. So those lessons. It worked out really well at Florida. But then professionally where I played eight years, it was tough because you’re in a different country, things change more quickly, it’s less about the team and more about the individual in some cases, so you really have to persevere throughout some adversity. And I even need to exercise that lesson now in my career outside of basketball.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO YOU TO BE A GATOR?

It’s a huge part of my life. I met my wife here. The foundation of our family together is rooted here. UF opened up so many doors for me in basketball, but also professionally. It’s my tie to the state of Florida. I’m a Tennessee boy, so I wouldn’t have been here if it weren’t for basketball.

GATOR CAREER HIGHLIGHTS

- UF basketball team member 2003-2007
- One of the legendary ‘04 starters credited for helping UF win back-to-back national championships in 2006 and 2007
- Holds the NCAA Tournament’s record for most made 3-point shots (55 in 14 games)
- Holds NCAA’s record for making a 3-point shot in the most consecutive games in a season (39)
- Holds UF’s record for most 3-point shots in a season (113 in both 2005-06 and 2006-07)
- Holds UF’s record for career shots made from behind the arc (288)
- Two-time SEC Scholar Athlete of the Year



UNIVERSITY ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION/JIM BURGESS

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