

# Always IFAS

**UF | IFAS**  
UNIVERSITY of FLORIDA

*A Newsletter for Retired & Emeritus UF/IFAS Faculty & Staff*

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## A WORD FROM THE SVP

*J. Scott Angle, Ph.D., Senior Vice President for Agriculture and Natural Resources | [jangle@ufl.edu](mailto:jangle@ufl.edu)*

When I was asked to serve as provost last year, I told the president that I would do so if needed but preferred to work where my heart was – at UF/IFAS.

My 14 months as provost was a valuable experience. The relationships I formed and strengthened with other UF senior leadership will help as I champion the UF/IFAS cause to my colleagues across campus.



But I am happy to be back! On Sept. 6, I returned to my job as UF senior vice president for agriculture and natural resources administrative head of UF/IFAS. This is where I always wanted to be.

Rob Gilbert did such an outstanding job as interim senior vice president while I was gone that I wanted the organization to continue to benefit from his experience. So I added to his portfolio of duties. He now directly supervises most unit leaders, freeing me to focus more on externally-facing functions – fundraising, legislative affairs, stakeholder relations – and paying more attention to retired and emeritus faculty and staff.

Rob's new title is dean for research and executive director for academic affairs. This does not put him in charge of the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences, but it does signal that he will supervise academic department chairs and attend to building organizational culture.

Speaking of academic affairs, this month is the end of an era. Dean Elaine Turner is stepping down as CALS dean after a historic decade in which enrollment increased by more than a third. Kati Migliaccio, currently chair of the UF/IFAS Department of Agricultural and Biological Engineering, will start as CALS dean on Jan. 1.

As I came back to McCarty Hall D, Jeanna Mastrodicasa went back to Tigert Hall. Jeanna came to us from UF Student Affairs in 2015. In October, she accepted a job as director of the UF Office of Institutional Assessment. Her work at UF/IFAS was transformational and she will be missed.





*Dr. Jeanna Mastrodicasa is now the director of the UF Office of Institutional Assessment. Dr. Elaine Turner is transitioning from dean to a faculty role.*

The changes at UF are not complete. UF recently announced the formation of a [search committee](#) to help identify the university's next president.

It is very important that UF/IFAS and Florida agriculture and natural resources be represented on that committee. That's why I'm glad blueberry grower and double Food and Resource Economics alumnus Chuck Allison agreed to serve on the committee. In addition, [Dr. Sarah Lynne](#) of our Department of Family, Youth and Community Sciences, is on the committee. She was appointed in her capacity as UF Faculty Senate chair.

When our new president arrives, hopefully next year, we'll work hard to let him or her know how important the agriculture and natural resources mission is, and that to advance that mission there's Always IFAS.

## SOIL, WATER, AND ECOSYSTEM SCIENCES

Three faculty members from the UF/IFAS Department of Soil, Water, and Ecosystem Sciences, Drs. [Kelly Morgan](#), [Tom Obreza](#), and [Andy Ogram](#), recently retired. Together they have more than a century of combined experience. **Congratulations!**



## FAMILIAR FACES, NEW PLACES



**Greg Kiker**  
[ABE Dept. Interim Chair](#)  
(starting Jan. 1)



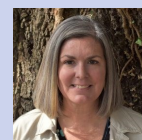
**Jay Ferrell**  
[Agronomy Dept. Chair](#)



**Kati Migliaccio**  
[CALs Dean](#)  
(starting Jan. 1)



**Katelyn Mulinix**  
[DeSoto County CED](#)



**Joy Hazell**  
[NRLI Interim Director](#)



**Michael Dukes**  
[Nutrient Management Program Interim Director](#)



**Matthew Cohen**  
[UF Water Institute Director](#)

# A DECADE OF GROWTH

*R. Elaine Turner, Ph.D., Dean for the UF/IFAS College of Agricultural and Life Sciences | [returner@ufl.edu](mailto:returner@ufl.edu) | [@UFCALS](https://twitter.com/UFCALS)*

**A**s I prepare to transition from my role as dean of the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences (CALs) and return to the faculty, I have been reflecting on the incredible strides we have made in the college over the past decade. It has been the honor of a lifetime to lead a college so deeply committed to the holistic student experience and to excellence in teaching, advising and mentoring those students.



From the beginning, my focus as dean was clear: to ensure CALs students had an exceptional experience, both academically and personally. Together, we created opportunities which have empowered thousands of students to pursue their passions and prepare to tackle some of the world’s most pressing challenges.

We also worked diligently to support our faculty, whose teaching excellence forms the backbone of CALs. Programs like the **Roche Teaching Scholars**, the **CALs Mentor Academy** and the **Teaching Enhancement Symposium** have elevated teaching and mentoring across the college. Whether new or longstanding, these initiatives were born out of a shared commitment to foster creativity and innovation and ensure our students benefit from the best educational practices.

One of our top priorities as a college has been to recruit and retain outstanding students and we have a philosophy in the Dean’s Office that we are always recruiting. Alongside an exceptional team and with support of UF/IFAS and many of our stakeholders, we launched the **Florida Youth Institute** in 2016. This program has brought 271 high school students to campus to explore solutions to global food security, inspiring many to join us in CALs. It has been gratifying to see how these young leaders have embraced their potential to make a difference.

*Continued*



*The Florida Youth Institute is a week-long, on-campus experience for rising high school juniors and seniors. Students engage in hands-on-activities, meet faculty and local experts, and learn about critical global challenges and ways to make a difference in Florida and around the world.*

Since 2014, nearly 30,000 degrees have been conferred, and I am immensely proud of the impact our graduates are making in agriculture, natural resources and the life sciences. Every step of the way, it has been a joy to collaborate with faculty and staff who make each student’s degree possible.

As I reflect on our progress, I am confident in the future of CALS. The college is built on a legacy of excellence, and I am excited to see how the next chapter unfolds under new leadership. For me, this is not a farewell, but a new chance to contribute to a community I hold so dear.

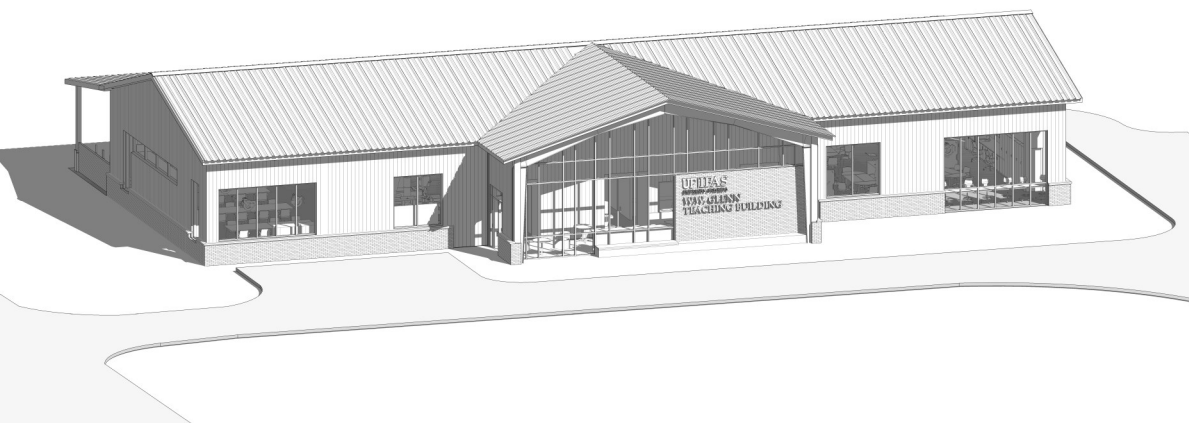


*The R. Elaine Turner Endowment Fund in CALS supports recruiting scholarships for Florida Youth Institute participants, as well as program resources, field experiences, and leadership development opportunities. To make a gift, please visit [tinyurl.com/TurnerFYI24](https://tinyurl.com/TurnerFYI24).*

## W. W. GLENN TEACHING BUILDING

On October 5, UF broke ground on the W.W. Glenn Teaching Building, a dynamic new learning space for students in the UF/IFAS Department of Agricultural and Biological Engineering. The building will be located on Museum Drive across from the Katie Seashole Pressly softball stadium, and will feature a mechanical workshop paired with an engineering design space. Construction is expected to finish by late August, to be available to students at the start of the fall semester.

Generous donations from the UF community funded the project. The building’s name reflects financial support from the family of the late W.W. Glenn, a CALS graduate and long-time UF/IFAS Extension agent.



## Art & SCIENCE

Through Jan. 15, the **Dr. E. T. and Vam C. York Art & Agriculture Competition** is accepting proposals that showcase the collaborative power of science and art.

Teams of up to three UF students, with representatives from CALS and/or the College of the Arts, will compete for a \$5,000 award to create a finished product. A faculty member will receive an additional \$500 for serving as project mentor.

The contest was inspired by York Distinguished Lecturer Series speakers Mel Chin and Rufus Chaney, an artist-scientist team. The pair collaborated on “Revival Field,” pictured above, a geometric garden built at a landfill that features plants that extract heavy metals from the soil.



Watch the lecture: [ifas.ufl.edu/york](https://ifas.ufl.edu/york)





## A DIFFERENT KIND OF FLORIDA FOOTBALL

The 4-H Soccer for Success program at UF/IFAS Extension Orange County partnered with Manchester City Football Club to host a soccer skills workshop this summer, coaching 100 local youth. You can [view a gallery](#) from that event, or [read more](#) from CED Kevin Camm.

## CABINS AT FLORIDA 4-H CAMP CHERRY LAKE

Florida 4-H has the green light to begin renovating Camp Cherry Lake as a future center for agriculture and workforce development for youth and young adults.

Thanks to \$1.1 million in public and private funds raised to date, construction of new, ADA-compliant cabins is expected to begin by spring 2026. Additional private, state, and federal funds are being pursued to complete remaining cabins and critical infrastructure.

“Having grown up as a camper at 4-H Camp Cherry Lake, I have experienced firsthand the life-changing impact of the positive community fostered at summer camp,” said Stacey Ellison, Florida 4-H state program leader.

“I am thrilled that our state recognizes the value of these efforts and is supporting us in building new lodging facilities that can be utilized year-round, extending the benefits of camp beyond the summer months.”

[Read more](#)



*Located in Madison County, 4-H Camp Cherry Lake gives youth and visitors a safe place to play and learn. Youth develop life skills through experiential education in the camp environment.*



*Photo source: Adrian Andrews, WSFU*

On June 19, the UF/IFAS Extension **Gadsden County** office was named in honor of Congressman Alfred J. Lawson, Jr., Gadsden County 4-H alumnus. [Read more](#)



On July 17, **Okaloosa County** began construction on a new 3,000 ft<sup>2</sup> building in Fort Walton Beach. [Watch the groundbreaking ceremony.](#)



In October, **Gilchrist County** began construction on a 20,000 ft<sup>2</sup> building adjacent to the county agriculture complex in Bell. [Read more.](#)

## UPDATE: IMPACTS OF HURRICANE HELENE

Mike Allen, Ph.D., Director, UF/IFAS Nature Coast Biological Station  
msal@ufl.edu | @ncbs\_uf\_ifas

**H**urricane Helene was a devastating storm for much of the Gulf Coast of Florida, with substantial storm surge flooding and wind damage from St. Petersburg through the Big Bend Region.

In Cedar Key, we had the highest storm surge (13.1 feet from Mean Low Water) recorded since 1896. Many businesses were only beginning to recover from Hurricane Idalia in 2023, so this storm was particularly difficult for residents and businesses alike.



*Damage from Hurricane Helene to the UF/IFAS Nature Coast Biological Station.*

At our biological station, the building worked as designed with essentially no damage to the upstairs and interior of the building. However, the downstairs suffered heavy damage to the electrical system, elevator, and fire system, as well as our Discovery Center and aquarium. We have the repairs underway, but currently we are not able to use the building, and our team is working from home and on campus to complete their research, teaching and Extension projects. We hope to be back in the building by mid-December, but the full repairs downstairs will extend into the spring of 2025.

At Seahorse Key, the light station suffered minor damage, but the island had substantial erosion on the south shore, and the wet lab at the island was heavily damaged and will have to be demolished. We will be working with the Lower Suwannee National Wildlife Refuge toward repairs at the island, as well as shoreline restoration options that could help protect the island during future storms.

## Seeing Green

UF and Florida Sea Grant have secured a \$250,000 grant from NOAA to investigate Florida seaweed aquaculture. This three-year research project aims to kickstart a new industry that could boost Florida's economy while benefiting its environment and coastal communities.

"Florida's aquaculture industry is primed for this opportunity," said [Ashley Smyth](#), principal investigator. "We have an aquaculture industry with the skills and knowledge to cultivate seaweed."

While kelp and nori are the seaweeds farmed most around the world, this project will examine tropical seaweeds that may be better suited for Florida's warm waters.

Research objectives include identifying the best species for cultivation; developing scalable farming methods and business models; exploring commercial uses and market demand; and assessing potential bioremediation benefits.



This storm has created challenges for all of us, but I'm most encouraged by the response of our communities. People work together to solve one problem at a time, and here we are six weeks after the storm and things are looking much better. The path to recovery is clearly evident now, and we are off and running.

Building back will take some innovation to minimize impacts of future storms. Some businesses have opened back up in food trucks, making them mobile in the case of another storm. Others have begun raising buildings to higher elevations, and unfortunately quite a few homes have had to be demolished and will be replaced ultimately with higher elevation construction. It's been a trying time for everyone in this region, but brighter days are ahead of us now. We are seeking help with renovations of our facility, and will be making a large push this year during Giving Day in February. If you are in our region, stop by to say howdy!



Visit [tinyurl.com/NCBSCedarKey](https://tinyurl.com/NCBSCedarKey) to make a gift to the UF/IFAS Nature Coast Biological Station.

## A NEW WAY TO DETECT INVASIVE SNAKES

Researchers at the UF/IFAS Fort Lauderdale Research & Education Center have developed a new, more efficient way to manage invasive snakes: by looking at DNA in the environment. Uniquely, their tetraplex digital PCR assay checks for the presence of four snakes at once: Burmese pythons, northern African pythons, boa constrictors and rainbow boas.

Traditional wildlife surveying methods aren't very effective for snakes, and state and federal agencies have invested more than \$10 million since 2004 to manage Burmese pythons alone. This rapid, accurate, and cost-effective tool should significantly strengthen early detection and monitoring efforts in the Everglades.

Multi-species DNA tests like this can potentially be developed for other species, too—Good news for a biological hotspot like Florida!

► *Dr. Melissa Miller taking measurements of a Burmese python in the Everglades. She is the lead author on the study published in November.*



## Taking UF/IFAS to New Heights

UF/IFAS horticultural sciences researcher Rob Ferl is the inaugural director of the [UF Astraeus Space Institute](#). On August 29, he became the first NASA-funded university researcher to [conduct his own experiments in space](#). Ferl and fellow UF/IFAS researcher Anna-Lisa Paul are the [speakers](#) for UF's fall commencement ceremonies Dec. 13 and 14.

## UF/IFAS Leads in Research Expenditures

According to the **National Science Foundation's** Higher Education Research and Development survey, UF continues to lead the nation in agricultural and natural resources research. This marks the sixth consecutive year as #1, emphasizing UF/IFAS's prominence in research and development.

"The state of Florida is fortunate to have the scientists of UF/IFAS, whose expertise in hundreds of commodities supports a \$300 billion agricultural industry," said David Norton, UF VP for Research. "It is clear from these numbers that funding agencies place high value on the work being conducted by our researchers, which benefits agriculture not just here in Florida, but around the country."

Of UF's \$1.25 billion in research expenditures for fiscal year 2023, more than \$260 million was from UF/IFAS.

Other top schools in the category include Texas A&M, Colorado State, and UC Davis.

## IN MEMORIAM

**Sidney Banack, Jr.** — Sid was a CALS alumnus (class of '51), AGR brother, insurance agent, citrus grower and business owner in Indian River County. He founded Quality Fruit Packers of Indian River, Inc., and partnered with peach and pecan growers in Georgia to form Lane Southern Orchards. He owned Countryside Citrus, a business which grew to include a beachside location and restaurant, El Sid Taqueria. He served on the UF/IFAS Advancement (SHARE) Council. He passed away July 20.



**Daniel Canfield, Jr., Ph.D.** — Dan was the founder of Florida LAKEWATCH and co-founder of the Fishing For Success program. He was a professor of limnology, specializing in the management of aquatic ecosystems. He was recognized with awards including the Secchi Disk Award from the North American Lake Management Society. He passed away November 3.



**Lewis H. Kent** — Lew was a UF alumnus who helped make the renovation of the Reed Lab a reality for the UF/IFAS geomatics program through the [Lewis H. Kent Geomatics Endowment](#). He was president of George F. Young, Inc., chairman of the FL State Board of Land Surveyors, member of the American Congress on Surveying and Mapping, president of the Florida Society of Professional Land Surveyors, and more. He passed away October 4.



**W. Bernard Lester, Ph.D.** — Bernie was a double CALS alumnus, research economist and leader in the Florida citrus industry. He was inducted into the [Florida Citrus](#) and [Florida Agriculture](#) Halls of Fame and awarded the UF/IFAS CALS Award of Distinction. He served on several citrus and higher education boards and established an [endowment to support UF FRE students](#). He passed away December 6.



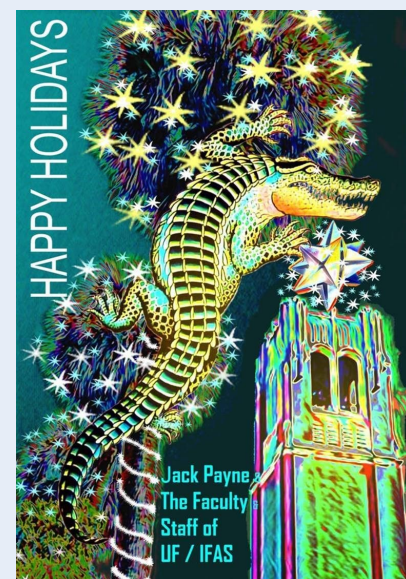
**John E. Morris** — John was a double UF forestry alumnus and former owner of Foley Land & Timber in Perry, FL. He was a Bull Gator for 53 years and even a trainer for the football team while a student. The [Cathryn Herrin Morris Student Enrichment Endowment](#) supports students in honor of his late first wife. He passed away October 22.



**Renee L. Payne** — Renee was born in Berkeley CA, and graduated from the University of California, Berkeley with a bachelor's in architecture and master's in psychology. She led a multifaceted life, including time as: architect, artist, and gallery owner; newspaper editor, marketing director, and psychologist; and even pilot, car racer, and professional ballet dancer. The wife of Dr. Jack Payne, she was first lady of IFAS from 2010-2020. She passed away in October.

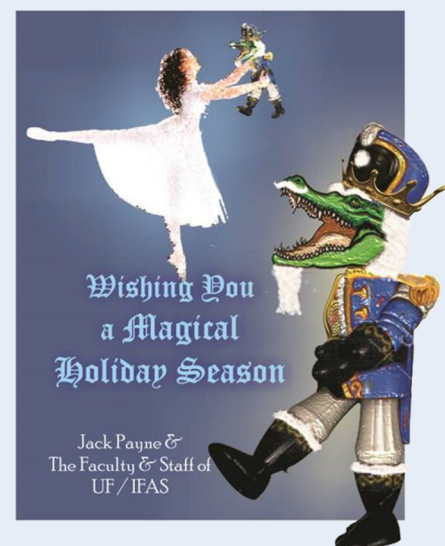


**Joel Wahlberg** — Joel was a UF football player, businessman, and double Gator alumnus. He and Robert Grebe created the [Grebe-Wahlberg Memorial Scholarship](#), benefitting CALS and Veterinary Medicine students, many of whom Joel also mentored. He served on the UF Foundation Board and as president of the Houston Gator Alumni Association. He was awarded the Distinguished Alumni Award in 1983 and the University of Florida Outstanding Volunteer of the Year 2009/2010. He passed away August 24.

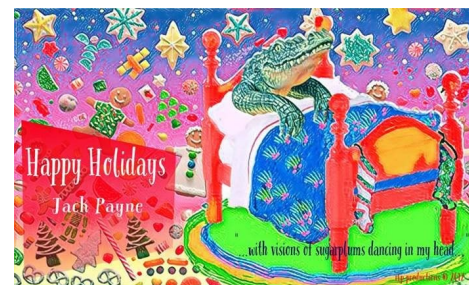
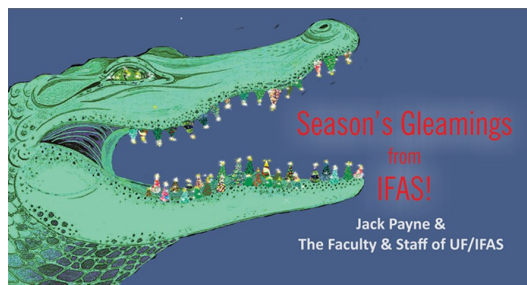


Renee Payne produced digital holiday card designs for the UF/IFAS Vice President's Office in the 2010s. Boldly whimsical and never boring, these kitsch pieces evoke a sense of playful joy, and remind the viewer not to take life too seriously. I will always remember the gator nutcracker design from 2015, the year I started at IFAS at age 23: the mustache, lovingly placed on the snout. The jaws, echoing the angle of the legs. *The miniature in the dancer's arms*. Its careful absurdity appealed to my sense of humor in a way that, somehow, made me feel a little less lonely and out of place in McCarty Hall. I never met the artist, but her work brightened the holidays for me every year, and I am sorry to hear of her passing.

— Kelly Westfall, UF/IFAS Advancement







## UPCOMING EVENTS

- Jan. 31**      **[FL4-H Hall of Fame Nomination Deadline](#)**
- Feb. 20**      **[Gator Nation Giving Day](#)**
- Mar. 25**      **[Florida 4-H Day at the Capitol](#)**
- Apr. 3**        **[Flavors of Florida](#)**
- Apr. 4-5**     **[FFGS Spring Celebration](#)**
- May 15-17**   **[UF Grand Guard Reunion, Classes of '74 & '75](#)**

[UF/IFAS Event Calendar](#)

[FDACS Event Calendar](#)

[Extension Event Calendar](#)


[Retired Faculty of UF Events](#)

[Florida 4-H Event Calendar](#)

Always IFAS is a biannual newsletter distributed by UF/IFAS Advancement via email and online at [give.ifas.ufl.edu/AlwaysIFAS](https://give.ifas.ufl.edu/AlwaysIFAS).

If you have comments, questions, suggestions, or would like to submit your own short article of interest, please direct them to [advancement@ifas.ufl.edu](mailto:advancement@ifas.ufl.edu).

## Don't Forget: TAX DEADLINES

Make your charitable gifts before the end of the year to be eligible for 2024 tax deduction. 

Mailing a check? Have the envelope **USPS postmarked** (must be USPS) by Dec. 31.

➔ **Did you know?** Gifts to support UF/IFAS, including local county Extension programs, may be eligible for tax deduction. The UF Foundation is a 501(c)(3) non-profit, EIN 59-0974739.

**What do you want to hear about in the next newsletter?**  
[Click here to let us know!](#)

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