



# ORDER OF **PEGASUS**

UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL FLORIDA

CLASS OF 2023

# THE UCF CREED

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## INTEGRITY

I will practice and defend  
academic and personal honesty.

## SCHOLARSHIP

I will cherish and honor learning as a fundamental  
purpose of my membership in the UCF community.

## COMMUNITY

I will promote an open and supportive campus environment  
by respecting the rights and contributions of every individual.

## CREATIVITY

I will use my talents to enrich  
the human experience.

## EXCELLENCE

I will strive toward the highest standards of  
performance in any endeavor I undertake.

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SPRING 2023

## WELCOME FROM THE PRESIDENT

Welcome, and thank you for helping us honor the Class of 2023 Order of Pegasus recipients.

The Order of Pegasus is the highest honor a student can receive from UCF, recognizing outstanding graduating seniors and graduate students who have demonstrated exemplary academic achievement, university involvement, leadership, and community service.

This year's 30 students are remarkable and are already making an impact on the world. Aside from focusing on academics and campus causes, many of the student honorees volunteered at hospitals, food banks, shelters, and with many other community service organizations. Among them are ground-breaking national and global scholarship winners, researchers, athletes, teaching assistants, and leaders in campus organizations such as Student Government, LEAD Scholars, and the President's Leadership Council.

They are among our brightest students — with a collective GPA of 3.94 — and include National Merit Scholars, Burnett Honors Scholars, and earners of prestigious honors such as the Astronaut Scholarship, Goldwater Scholarship, National Science Foundation Scholarship, and Gates Cambridge Scholarship.

They conducted, presented, and published research on many subjects, including advancements in healthcare for people of all ages and a variety of conditions, domestic violence, emergency management, suicide prevention, natural hazards, and food insecurity on college campuses.

The UCF community is incredibly proud of these recipients and all they have accomplished. Please join us in offering your congratulations and best wishes for a very rewarding and impactful future.

Best,

*Alexander Cartwright*

**Alexander N. Cartwright, Ph.D.**  
President



## GRADUATE



### JAVED ALI

#### **Degree Program**

Civil Engineering Ph.D.  
(Water Resources Engineering)

#### **College**

College of Engineering  
and Computer Science

#### **Hometown**

Roorkee, Uttarakhand, India

**Javed Ali** is a Ph.D. Candidate in Civil Engineering, majoring in Water Resources Engineering. He is also a Graduate Research Assistant at UCF Coastal, where he focuses on multi-hazard risk assessment, analyzing compound weather/climate extremes and their spatial and temporal interactions, and modeling the impacts of natural hazards and climate change adaptation. He received a highly prestigious Erasmus Mundus Fellowship from the European Commission to complete a joint master's degree program in Water Science and Engineering, specializing in Flood Risk Management, at four different European universities: Technische Universität Dresden – TU Dresden (Germany), UNESCO-IHE (the Netherlands), Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya (Spain), and University of Ljubljana (Slovenia). He is currently involved in four big multi-institutional research projects funded by the National Science Foundation, U.S. Department of Energy, and National Academy of Sciences. His ultimate goal is to continue conducting cutting-edge research that advances our understanding of natural hazards and their impacts, and develop effective solutions to improve community resilience from disasters and climate change. He plans to continue contributing to the larger scientific community through collaboration, mentorship, and publication in high-impact research outlets.



**My time at UCF has been invaluable, providing me with unparalleled opportunities to engage in cutting-edge research, gain leadership experience, and connect with a diverse and supportive community.**



#### **JAVED'S FUTURE PLANS**

My ultimate goal is to continue conducting cutting-edge research that advances our understanding of natural hazards and their impacts, and develop effective solutions to improve community resilience from disasters and climate change.

**BRENDEN BROWN****Degree Program**

Healthcare Administration M.S.

**College**College of Community Innovation  
and Education**Hometown**

Delray Beach, Florida

**Brenden Brown** graduated from the University of Central Florida in 2020 with a B.S. in Health Sciences. He is currently pursuing a master's degree in Healthcare Administration. As a graduate student, he works as a Graduate Teaching Assistant for the School of Global Health Management & Informatics. He has served his community by serving as the president and founder of the National Association of Health Services Executives at UCF, Chair and Founder of the MHA Student Advisory Council, and an inaugural member of the CCIE Strategic Planning Committee. Brenden also serves on the President's Leadership Council, the American College of Healthcare Executives, and is a member of Alpha Kappa Psi Professional Business Fraternity. Brenden looks forward to utilizing his leadership to serve underserved communities and being an advocate for health equity.

“ **My UCF experience has been full of transformative and developmental opportunities. Upon my arrival at this university in 2016, I joined several clubs and organizations, allowing me to cultivate strong leadership and interpersonal skills that served as a catalyst for my undergraduate career. While returning to UCF for my graduate degree, I utilized the skills acquired to become a pioneer in my school and college by participating in extracurriculars, such as student case competitions, and becoming the founder of various student organizations.** ”

**BRENDEN'S FUTURE PLANS**

After completing my master's degree, I will be moving to Houston, Texas, to work as an Administrative Fellow at Houston Methodist Hospital. This 18-month fellowship emphasizes learning through rotational exposure to corporate services, an academic medical center, and dynamic community hospitals and provides the opportunity to develop a comprehensive understanding of a complex healthcare organization with a strong mission and values.

## GRADUATE



## BRENDON CAVAINOLO

### Degree Program

Aerospace Engineering M.S. and Ph.D.

### College

College of Engineering  
and Computer Science

### Hometown

Jacksonville, Florida

**Brendon Cavainolo** is a M.S. and Ph.D. student in Aerospace Engineering and a National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowship recipient. He holds a B.S. in Aerospace Engineering from UCF. His research focuses on using computational fluid dynamics to understand various multi-phase flow problems, including sand ingestion in aircraft engines, and lunar regolith melting, solidification, and impact on structures. Brendon has presented his research at many conferences, and won the 3AF Silver Medal at the 73rd International Astronautical Congress. During his undergraduate degree, Brendon was a member of the UCF Students for the Exploration and Development of Space, where he was the treasurer for two years. He was also a member of the President's Leadership Council from 2020-2021. As a graduate student, Brendon maintains a legacy-officer role within SEDS, and also administrates a virtual community for engineering graduate students.



**UCF has undoubtedly helped me grow professionally by supporting my award-winning research. Beyond that, the community has also helped my personal growth, helping me form lifelong friendships and even finding the love of my life.**



## BRENDON'S FUTURE PLANS

For now, I will be continuing my Ph.D. here at UCF. After that, I hope to continue pursuing research in computational fluid dynamics throughout my career, whether in an academic position, a national laboratory, or an industry role. Within CFD, my research interests are flexible. That is the beauty of CFD; it can be applied to rockets and airplanes, biomedical research, agriculture, and anything in between.

## GRADUATE



### KIMBERLY EMERY

**Degree Program**

Nursing Ph.D.

**College**

College of Nursing

**Hometown**

Leesburg, Florida

**Kimberly Emery** graduated from UCF in 2017 summa cum laude with her Bachelor of Science in Nursing (B.S.N.) degree. She was awarded her Ph.D. in December 2022. Kim is currently a postdoctoral scholar at the College of Nursing, furthering her doctoral research exploring the oral microbiome (bacteria) in non-ventilated hospitalized older adults. She incorporates a unique interdisciplinary approach to her research, including biological laboratory sequencing and bioinformatics analyses, to address an important healthcare concern — non-ventilator hospital-acquired pneumonia. Kim has a strong record of research dissemination with 13 publications (10 features and three abstracts; four first-authored) in high-impact journals and 14 podium/poster presentations at professional conferences. She was the first B.S.N.-to-Ph.D. graduate from the College of Nursing and first student from the college to receive a pre-doctoral fellowship from the National Institutes of Health to support her dissertation research, setting an exemplary standard for future doctoral students.

“ **My experience at UCF has been incredibly fulfilling. UCF has provided me with the tools and created opportunities to ensure that I reach my potential and am set up for future success both professionally and personally.** ”

#### KIMBERLY'S FUTURE PLANS

After graduating with my Ph.D. in December 2022, I began my role as a postdoctoral scholar at the UCF College of Nursing in collaboration with bioinformatics experts to continue my growth as a nurse scientist. I am further developing my knowledge and skills, combining nursing practice with basic science and bioinformatics to improve clinical outcomes in the non-ventilated hospitalized population. Ultimately, I plan to transition into a tenure-track faculty role at a college of nursing.

## GRADUATE



## REBECCA M. ENTRESS

### Degree Program

Emergency Management  
and Social Equity Ph.D.

### College

College of Community Innovation  
and Education

### Hometown

Modena, New York

**Rebecca Entress** is a Ph.D. candidate in the Public Affairs program. Her research focuses on emergency management and social equity, including how the extent to which services provided during and after emergencies are equitable and how to best provide services to socially vulnerable populations during emergencies. Her research is informed by seven years of professional experience working in local and state government, as well as for a large nonprofit healthcare system in Central Florida. Rebecca has 14 publications, two of which are in *Public Administration Review*, the top journal in Public Administration. She has presented at over 11 conferences, including regional, national, and international conferences. Rebecca has won numerous awards for her research, including the American Society for Public Administration (ASPA) Petak Award for the best emergency management paper in 2023, the University of Central Florida Dean's Dissertation Fellowship, and was selected as an ASPA Founders' Fellow in 2022.

“ **At UCF I learned important research skills to transition from a student to a scholar. I can now combine these skills with my background and experience working as a public administrator to develop thoughtful, informed, and systematic analysis of public administration issues to help improve how services are provided during emergencies, to ensure all of society is able to react to and recover from emergencies.** ”

### REBECCA'S FUTURE PLANS

After graduation, I hope to enter academia to continue researching important emergency management and social equity research. With a career in academia, I would also have the opportunity to collaborate and work with future public administrators and emergency managers on important and burgeoning topics in the field, to together improve resilience and equity when emergencies arise.





## LAYTON HALL

### **Degree Program**

Optics and Photonics Ph.D.

### **College**

College of Optics and Photonics

### **Hometown**

Statesville, North Carolina

**Layton Hall** is a doctoral candidate and research assistant at the College of Optics and Photonics (CREOL) and is the recipient of the ORCGS Doctoral Fellowship and Suchoski Fellowship. In his research, he has studied the consequences of coupling the spatial and temporal degrees of freedom of optical pulses, which has led to the development of a new class of optical fields by taking age-old concepts and bringing a new twist upon them. Layton has been able to not only demonstrate scientific achievement through the discovery of an optical effect and synthesis of only previously theorized optical wave packets, but also engineering achievement through the demonstration of propagation invariant beams over kilometer distances. These discoveries and advancements have resulted in 15 peer reviewed manuscripts in high impact journals, such as *Nature Physics* and *Physical Review Letters*. In addition, Layton tutors and mentors young students in their academic goals.

“ **My time at UCF has been one of unique experiences of performing cutting edge research and learning key tools and gaining experience that will lead me to success in the future.** ”

### LAYTON'S FUTURE PLANS

After graduation, I plan on continuing the pursuit of academia with the goal of becoming a professor. Through my research, I hope to advance not only my own understanding of the world around me, but to develop technology for the betterment of mankind.

## GRADUATE



## CHRISTOPHER NGO

### Degree Program

Biomedical Sciences M.S.

### College

College of Medicine

### Hometown

Hollywood, Florida

**Christopher Ngo** is a Biomedical Sciences master's degree candidate whose passion for medicine was ignited after his little brother suffered a burn accident that effected 53% of his body, which has led Chris to dedicate his career to treating future trauma patients. Chris carried out his ambitions by becoming a certified Fire Fighter/EMT, being selected for a NASA Minority University MSTAR fellowship, and shadowing the trauma unit at Orlando Health Orlando Regional Medical Center. At the NASA Johnson Space Center Human Health and Performance Directorate, Chris worked to advance the mission of risk surveillance and enhancement of long-term management of skeletal health in long-duration astronauts and represented UCF at the 17th Annual Space Life Sciences Summer Institute Research Forum. At the international level, Chris represented UCF as a finalist in the Global Sustainability Space Challenge, by way of Qatar University, to propose innovative solutions aimed at utilizing the space environment.



**UCF's commitment to enriching the human experience created an environment that brings out the excellence within everybody, regardless of your background, obstacles, or circumstances. My experience afforded me opportunities to impact the future of innovation and grow professionally, academically, and personally.**



## CHRISTOPHER'S FUTURE PLANS

After I graduate from UCF in the Fall, I plan to go to medical school and, as an aspiring physician, I want to focus on providing healthcare to underserved and disadvantaged communities. I want to support patients in some of the darkest moments of their lives, just as doctors were there for my little brother for his full recovery.

## GRADUATE



### SARAH NOUREDDINE

**Degree Program**

Aging and Metabolic Research Ph.D.

**College,**

College of Medicine

**Hometown**

Oviedo, Florida

**Sarah Nouredine** is a recent Ph.D. graduate and current postdoctoral scholar at UCF. Having specialized in aging and metabolic research during her Ph.D. studies, Sarah's work supported the role of a potential therapeutic that demonstrates anti-senescence and anti-aging function. Through her work, Sarah was invited to speak and present at several conferences, both locally and nationally, gaining recognition at the American Aging Association and publishing in several journals, including *The Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*. In addition to publishing her research, Sarah has received numerous awards and scholarships, including the Graduate Dean's Fellowship, Maya Singla Memorial Award, Wodzinsky Scholarship, Doctoral Research Support, and the Richard Tucker Gerontology Applied Research Grant awarded by LIFE at UCF. Sarah is passionate about advancing preventative care to make healthcare more accessible and hopes to have an impact on both UCF and the greater community.



**Despite the challenges and demands while pursuing my doctoral degree, UCF has successfully cultivated a community that made me feel welcomed and encouraged critical thinking, independence, and professional and personal growth. I consider myself fortunate to have had such an incredible experience at UCF that has made me a compassionate and driven researcher equipped with the necessary skills to thrive in any environment.**



### SARAH'S FUTURE PLANS

I am currently working as a postdoctoral scholar at UCF, investigating molecular mechanisms involved in the survival and infectiousness of *Borrelia burgdorferi*, a pathogen that causes Lyme's disease, to develop diagnostic and therapeutic interventions. Upon completing my postdoctoral appointment, I hope to secure a position in research and development to contribute directly to expanding preventative care and keeping communities healthy.



## ERIC SWITZER

**Degree Program**

Physics Ph.D.

**College**

College of Sciences

**Hometown**

Beaverton, Oregon

**Eric Switzer** is a Physics Ph.D. candidate at UCF who investigates and develops theories that will help build the next-generation quantum computer using the world's smallest magnets. His collaborative work on quantum computing spans several projects with scientists from around the world, including the Max Plank Institute in Stuttgart, Germany; the Materials Physics Center in San Sebastian, Spain; the Center of Quantum Nanoscience in Seoul, Korea; and a U.S. Department of Energy-funded Research Frontier Center at the University of Florida, where he is also the early career representative. His research and dedication to science has earned him several distinctions, including most recently the IBM-Zerner award. Drawing on his 20+ year experience in various industries, he founded the UCF chapter of the American Physical Society to build a more diverse and supportive physics community. His team of motivated student scientists has fostered mentorship, facilitated talks with guest researchers from underrepresented backgrounds, and recently championed local science issues to U.S. congressional representatives with the help of APS leadership.



**UCF has offered me unique and valuable scholarship, leadership, and stewardship opportunities. These opportunities helped me flourish as a collaborative physical scientist, make impactful national and international contributions to my field, and inspire others to support our local community.**



### ERIC'S FUTURE PLANS

I plan to continue working in an academic position at a university or a research scientist position at a U.S. national laboratory, researching novel quantum architectures. I intend to continue my national and international collaborations, as teamwork is the only way to move forward to build the next generation of quantum computers and quantum sensors. I will also continue to empower and support students to grow and thrive in higher education.

## UNDERGRADUATE



### LAUREN ABBITT

**Degree Program**

Biomedical Sciences and Biotechnology  
Psychology (minor)

**College**

College of Medicine,  
Burnett Honors College

**Hometown**

Oldsmar, Florida

**Lauren Abbitt** is majoring in Biomedical Sciences and Biotechnology with a minor in Psychology. Through the Burnett Honors College, Lauren has served as an inaugural member of the Deans' Leadership Council, worked as an Honors Orientation Ambassador, and participated in Honors Congress as a mentor and committee member. Under the mentorship of Dr. Griffith Parks, Lauren will defend her thesis on endoplasmic reticulum stress and persistent parainfluenza virus infection to complete the Honors Undergraduate Thesis program prior to her graduation. During her time at UCF, Lauren has volunteered with Knights Pantry, Orlando Health, Give Kids the World Village, and Shepherd's Hope, and has worked as a Biochemistry I teaching assistant. As president of the Pediatric Association of Caring Knights, Lauren has focused on bringing more opportunities to UCF students by hosting professional development sessions and guest speakers, and by arranging volunteer events with local organizations such as Bears Who Care.



**My time at UCF has provided me with various amazing mentors to guide me in my journey of becoming a physician. I will forever be grateful for the experiences I gained as a Knight, and I hope that I may pay these experiences forward to younger generations.**



### LAUREN'S FUTURE PLANS

Later this year, I will begin attending medical school to become a physician. I look forward to continuing my involvement in research so I may improve my understanding of human function and pathology. In my future practice, I plan to emphasize the importance of patient education and preventive medicine. It is my hope to help ease the burden of chronic illnesses in my future patients' lives.

**FRANCESCA ALLEGRINI****Degree Program**

Biomedical Sciences and Biotechnology  
Health Sciences (minor)

**College**

College of Medicine

**Hometown**

Rome, Italy

**Francesca Allegrini** is a first-generation student double-majoring in Biomedical Sciences and Biotechnology, with a minor in Health Sciences. During her time at UCF, she served as the chief of staff for Pre-Med AMSA, executive board recruitment coordinator for the President's Leadership Council, peer ambassador for the Pre-Health & Pre-Law Advising Office, a representative on the Student Government Scholarship Committee, and teaching assistant for the Quantitative Biological Methods course, where she conducts research on enzyme kinetics. Additionally, Francesca does research with the Department of Sociology, where her team analyzes domestic violence in Miami-Dade County, and looks into ways to improve service accessibility to those affected. Combining her passions for leadership and community service, she also established a partnership with Orange County Public Schools, providing first-generation students, like herself, with mentorship and guidance in applying for secondary and vocational schools, in hopes of elevating their voices.



**Reaching for the stars was nothing but a joyful and eventful ride when surrounded by such a supportive and educated community. UCF allowed me to find myself and my passions, giving me the opportunity to turn them into life-changing experiences and help fuel the upcoming generation with strength and hope.**

**FRANCESCA'S FUTURE PLANS**

My experience at UCF has been nothing short of a life changing experience. After graduating from UCF, I am planning to take a growth year in hopes of gaining more knowledge before entering the global healthcare workplace. I plan on pursuing a master's in Healthcare Administration to better understand the dynamics of the public health field, with the ambition to one day attend medical school and improve healthcare accessibility to the underserved pediatric communities.

## UNDERGRADUATE



### MELINDA AMMON

**Degree Program**  
Accounting

**College**  
College of Business,  
Burnett Honors College

**Hometown**  
Kalamazoo, Michigan

**Melinda Ammon** is a first-generation college student in her senior year majoring in Accounting. She recently joined the Burnett Honors College and the Honors Undergraduate Thesis program to begin work on a thesis researching deliberative versus implemental mindsets in new aspiring accountants. She has served in several registered student organizations, allowing her to obtain multiple summer leadership programs, complete job shadows, and achieve internships with WithumSmith+Brown and RSM. She is currently a member of Beta Alpha Psi and Tau Sigma Zeta and the active president of the Student Accounting Society. As president, she gets the opportunity to help other students learn about careers in accounting and assists them with professional networking. She strives to positively impact UCF and its community by mentoring fellow students, volunteering at nonprofit organizations, and being a teaching assistant for Microsoft Office Excel certifications and the Kenneth G. Dixon School of Accounting.

“ **UCF can only be described as a welcoming community that supported my dreams and helped guide them into reality. I have learned, grown, and become a better person during my time here and have gained skills, friendships, and a network that will last a lifetime.** ”

#### MELINDA'S FUTURE PLANS

After graduation in the Fall of 2023, I will begin the UCF M.S. in Accounting graduate program and work on getting my CPA license. After obtaining this degree and certification, I plan to work in public accounting for a top accounting firm. Someday, I hope to pursue a Ph.D. in accounting and become a professor to help students like me have a positive and successful college experience.

## UNDERGRADUATE



### NICOLE BOISSON

**Degree Program**

Environmental Studies  
and Political Science

**College**

College of Undergraduate Studies, College  
of Sciences, Burnett Honors College

**Hometown**

Tampa, Florida

**Nicole Boisson** is a junior pursuing dual degrees in Environmental Studies and Political Science. She is a member of the Burnett Honors College and a LEAD Scholars Academy graduate. Throughout her time at UCF, she has created a community to educate students and faculty on what sustainability means and how it can be improved throughout campus activities. She has held many leadership positions through Student Government, serving as the Sustainability and Innovation Coordinator, as well as through the Arboretum and Sustainability Initiatives, serving as a Community Garden Coordinator. Her passion has spread to others through her many initiatives that have brought awareness and education. As a leader, she engages with others to find new and innovative solutions to increase campus sustainability through weekly Green Assembly meetings and regular meetings with higher administrators. Her service and passion have led others to think twice about their daily actions and consider greener alternatives.

“ **UCF has given me the unique opportunity to apply my knowledge as I continue to pursue a degree to increase sustainable practices and awareness in the community at large. I have found my passion at UCF, and I am grateful to my mentors who helped me build my confidence and leave a legacy.** ”

#### NICOLE'S FUTURE PLANS

Following graduation, I plan on taking a year to travel and learn more about where my help would be needed. I want to learn from others who have developed long-term sustainable practices and how they could be applied elsewhere. Afterward, I hope to pursue a master's degree in Environmental Policy and use my knowledge and research to make meaningful policies to ensure the Earth's well-being.



## UNDERGRADUATE



## BETHANY BRADSHAW

### Degree Program

Kinesiology

### College

College of Health Professions and Sciences,  
Burnett Honors College

### Hometown

Clermont, Florida

**Bethany Bradshaw** is pursuing a bachelor's degree in Kinesiology. She has worked as an undergraduate research assistant in the UCF Neuromuscular Plasticity Lab, assisting with data collection focused on resistance training in older adults. Showcasing her passion for research, Bethany led the event management committee as a student ambassador for the UCF Institute of Exercise Physiology and Rehabilitation Science's 3rd-Annual Conference. In the Burnett Honors College, Bethany has served as an Honors Orientation Ambassador and Honors Symposium Team Leader. She is involved in organizations, including the National Strength and Conditioning Association, Undergraduate Physical Therapy Association, Honors Congress, and ASL Knights. Additionally, she is the current president of Life to Life Ministry. Serving others with compassion, Bethany has volunteered with organizations, including NextStep Orlando, Muscular Dystrophy Association, and Huntington's Disease Society of America. She is passionate about mental health awareness, and recently fundraised for the National Alliance for Eating Disorders.



**Being an involved member of the UCF community has allowed me to ignite new passions, challenge myself in innovative ways, and pursue my dreams with vigor. I cherish the relationships I have built while at UCF and look forward to charging on towards excellence in every future endeavor.**



### BETHANY'S FUTURE PLANS

After graduation, I will further my education and become a Doctor of Physical Therapy. I hope to instill values of rest, recovery, and joyful movement in my practice. I will help others to build meaningful relationships, find confident strength, face their fears, and live an empowered life. I plan to continue to stay involved in the research community and promote awareness for mental health.

## UNDERGRADUATE



### ALLI CALVERT

**Degree Program**

Communication and Conflict

**College**

College of Sciences

**Hometown**

Grapevine, Texas

**Alli Calvert** graduated summa cum laude with a bachelor's in Communication and Conflict in December 2022. She is currently pursuing a graduate degree in Emergency and Crisis Management at UCF. Throughout her time as a Knight, Alli cultivated her passion for servant leadership by holding a variety of leadership roles, including as Panhellenic Council president, an executive board member of the President's Leadership Council, a member of the Student Government Executive Cabinet, and director of community relations on the Greek Council. She was on the President's Honor Roll each semester and was inducted into the Phi Kappa Phi National Honor Society as a junior. Alli volunteered with the Boys & Girls Club of Orlando, the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation, and the National Eating Disorder Association. She has worked for UCF's Department of Housing and Residence Life in various positions since 2020 and continues to work there today.

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**My time at UCF has been one full of opportunities I never thought possible when I first visited the campus as an out-of-state student. The community I found here pushed me to try new things, seek out new adventures, and gave me the tools to become the best version of myself. I will forever be thankful for the unique opportunities presented at UCF that allowed me to grow as a person, a professional, and a leader.**

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### ALLI'S FUTURE PLANS

Over the next year, I will be completing my master's in Emergency and Crisis Management. After leaving UCF, I hope to work in government service in crisis management and eventually establish an innovative crisis communications firm. My hope is to make a significant contribution to this relatively young industry and assist people in their times of greatest need. I am confident that my UCF education and experience will prepare me well for these endeavors.

## UNDERGRADUATE



### BRANDON COHEN

**Degree Program**  
Biomedical Sciences

**College**  
College of Medicine

**Hometown**  
Miami, Florida

**Brandon Cohen** has made a profound impact through his research, service, and leadership involvement. Brandon's work includes a comparative analysis of HIV medication on weight, BMI, cardiovascular health, and lipid panels. Brandon has also conducted research measuring food insecurity on college campuses and evaluating the quality of homeless shelters, as well as volunteering with organizations like Grace Medical Home, Hearts for the Homeless, and Second Harvest Food Bank to promote the overall well-being of underserved populations. Brandon has taken up numerous leadership roles, such as the founding executive board member of Good News Initiative, which aims to provide relief to Latin American countries, and the involvement officer for SALT Outreach at UCF, which supports the welfare of the homeless community in Orlando. Through his work, Brandon has demonstrated a substantial commitment to improving the health of individuals in his community and beyond.



**UCF has given me the tools to become an effective leader through its unique LEAD Scholars program and supported me in my pursuit of medical school via diverse student organizations and research opportunities. Additionally, the university's resources enabled me to excel academically while serving underserved communities through volunteer work.**



### BRANDON'S FUTURE PLANS

Following graduation, I plan to attend medical school in the state of Florida with the goal of becoming an orthopedic surgeon. During my time in medical school, I am committed to pursuing research on meniscus injuries, an area of particular interest to me. Looking forward, my long-term goal is to establish a healthcare facility that is similar to Grace Medical Home, where I can provide critical care to underserved populations and contribute to the broader medical community.

## UNDERGRADUATE



## SEBASTIÁN J. DELGADO SUÁREZ

### Degree Program

History and Political Science

### College

College of Sciences,  
College of Arts and Humanities

### Hometown

San Juan, Puerto Rico

**Sebastián J. Delgado Suárez** is a senior pursuing degrees in History and Political Science (American Policy Track). He feels fortunate to have found a welcoming and motivating community of peers and instructors at UCF who have pushed him to do his best. Because of them, Sebastián was motivated to pursue his degree in History and an Honors Undergraduate Thesis concerning Puerto Rico's politico-legal status. In fall of 2022, Sebastián was awarded the Dr. Thomas Greenhaw Scholarship, which recognizes outstanding History students who are committed to the field and to their communities. Part of his community involvement includes being an undergraduate fellow for Equally American, an organization devoted to advancing equality in the U.S. Territories, and officiating baseball. He will start his MPhil. degree in American History at the University of Cambridge this Fall. After Cambridge, he will go on to law school to do all he can to solve society's most complex issues.

“ **Because of my invaluable peers, mentors, and instructors at UCF, I have learned never to give up and to reach for the stars. UCF's community reminded me of my potential when I could not see it in myself.** ”

## SEBASTIÁN'S FUTURE PLANS

This Fall, I will go to the University of Cambridge to pursue a MPhil. in American History. After, I will go to law school, focusing on constitutional law.

## UNDERGRADUATE



### SHANNON DOHERTY

#### **Degree Program**

Clinical Psychology  
Human Communications (minor)

#### **College**

College of Sciences

#### **Hometown**

Broward County, Florida

**Shannon Doherty** is earning a degree in Clinical Psychology with a minor in Human Communications. Her academic success is stellar. She has spent her last undergraduate year as a research assistant to Dr. Clint Bowers, looking to find the impacts of managerial coaching in the workplace. At the completion of the study, Shannon will be an author of a published meta-analysis/literature review. In addition to her academic accomplishments, Shannon is a captain on the UCF Softball team. As a student-athlete, she has achieved many incredible feats, like clutch extra inning walk-offs that have earned her way into the record books; however, her greatest accomplishments have been the result of being a servant leader to the program. As a captain, Shannon's leadership has contributed to hosting and winning the UCF Softball program's first ever NCAA Regional Tournament, which has set the standard for years to come.



**On a personal level, UCF has helped me embrace the person I have come to be by providing support and opportunities to grow, gain confidence, and determine what I want my future to be like. Through my experience at UCF, I have been empowered to serve as a leader who promotes not only the university's core values, but the core values that I believe future leaders of the world need, to make a difference.**



#### SHANNON'S FUTURE PLANS

After completing my undergraduate degree, I will continue to further my academic and athletic career at UCF. I will pursue my master's degree as I finish my eligibility as a student-athlete, but my passion for softball and competing will likely keep me in the game for years to come as a coach. Ultimately, I plan to use my degrees to have a career as an executive consultant for Fortune 500 companies across America.



## NEFERTARI ELSHIEKH

### Degree Program

Economics and International and Global Studies

### College

College of Sciences, College of Business Administration, Burnett Honors College

### Hometown

New York, New York

**Nefertari Elshiekh** is a senior majoring in Economics and International and Global Studies. After graduating from UCF this semester, she will be attending law school in the fall. Nefertari's research while at UCF focused on using empirical research to analyze misdemeanor cases and the legal system. She first began researching bail reform in Orange County, Florida, and then continued to study bail reform in New York. Nefertari completed her thesis on how the type of counsel impacts case outcomes and bail decisions. Nefertari has also served on the editorial board for the *UCF Undergraduate Law Journal* and is a researcher with the Institute for Economic Forecasting. She previously served as a team leader through the Burnett Honors College and was on the executive board for Knight-Thon. Nefertari has interned with the *New York Times*, the National Immigrant Justice Center, and Georgetown Law.

“ I came to UCF from New York City hoping to experience something different, and UCF has given me that opportunity time and time again. From research to Knight-Thon, to advisory councils and so much more, UCF has allowed me to discover my true passions, challenged me to expand my horizons, and helped prepare me for my future as a lawyer, who will zealously advocate for my clients. ”

### NEFERTARI'S FUTURE PLANS

After graduation, I will be attending law school with the hopes of becoming a lawyer. In the future, I hope to further explore the intersection of law, economics, and policy. I am currently interested in criminal and immigration law, as well as using social science to reform the criminal legal system.

## UNDERGRADUATE



## SANJEEV GURSHANEY

### Degree Program

Biomedical Sciences

Math (minor)

### College

College of Medicine,

Burnett Honors College

### Hometown

Montgomery, Alabama

**Sanjeev Gurshaney** is a Biomedical Sciences major with a Math minor. He has been extensively involved in immunometabolism research with the Nguyen Lab during his time at UCF. As a result of his extensive contributions, he has co-authored multiple scientific papers, including a first-author manuscript based on his COVID-19 research, which has been accepted for publication in *Communications Biology*. Outside of the lab, Sanjeev has spent countless hours volunteering with the special needs community, helping to teach autistic students tennis through the Love Serving Autism and Special Olympics organizations. He serves as the current president of the UCF Knight PALS for Autism registered student organization. Additionally, Sanjeev volunteers to teach a weekly civics and English class with the Hope Community to help Hispanic immigrants pass their citizenship interview.

“ **The unparalleled resources and opportunities available at UCF have propelled me to push boundaries, make cutting-edge discoveries in the lab, as well as form extensive roots in my community through voluntary service.** ”

### SANJEEV'S FUTURE PLANS

After graduation, I plan to pursue an M.D./Ph.D. program concentrating in immunology. I hope to one day lead my own research laboratory developing novel, targeted, immunotherapy-based treatments to improve the lives of patients.

## UNDERGRADUATE



### MARIE HAMEL

#### Degree Program

Biomedical Sciences  
Theatre and Psychology (minors)

#### College

College of Medicine  
Burnett Honors College

#### Hometown

Cape Neddick, Maine

**Marie Hamel** is a senior graduating with a major in Biomedical Sciences and minors in Theatre and Psychology. She comes from a small town in Maine and has enjoyed every moment of sunshine at UCF. She is a National Merit Scholar and Burnett Medical Scholar. She has held numerous leadership positions at UCF, including serving as community outreach chair for Hearts for the Homeless and a facilitator of the Science Leadership and Mentoring (SLAM) program. She serves as the president of the March of Dimes National Collegiate Leadership Council and conducts research in neonatal palliative care. She has presented her research at many conferences, including the American Public Health Association (APHA) National Conference in Boston this year. She has published three research articles during her time at UCF and has received international recognition for her work. In her spare time, she enjoys cooking and performing improv.

“

**Coming from a small, rural town in Maine, UCF has provided endless opportunities to engage with diverse communities, establish impactful connections with mentors, and grow as a scholar and individual. UCF has expanded my worldview and become my second home, and I have taken every opportunity to support younger Knights in finding their home at UCF.**

”

#### MARIE'S FUTURE PLANS

After graduation, I will be traveling to Vietnam for a month before beginning medical school. In medical school, I hope to continue and expand upon my research in improving neonatal care. I am also passionate about learning how to integrate arts and humanities within medicine.



## UNDERGRADUATE



## RAYNIAH JONES

### Degree Program

Criminal Justice  
Journalism Studies (minor)

### College

College of Community Innovation  
and Education

### Hometown

Miami, Florida

**Rayniah Jones** is pursuing a major in Criminal Justice and a minor in Journalism Studies. A member of the track and field team for UCF, she specializes in hurdles and sprints. She also serves on the Student-Athlete Advisory Council. Rayniah qualified and ran at the 2021 Olympic Trials, missing finals by one spot. Rayniah is a five-time All-American, placing second in the 100-meter hurdles at the 2021 NCAA Outdoor Nationals Championship and third in the 60-meter hurdles at the 2022 NCAA Indoor National Championship. A six-time conference champion, she holds two records within the American Athletic Conference and holds three records here at UCF. Rayniah's passion for helping led her to volunteer in various community service projects, such as the YMCA and Boys & Girls Club, which had a significant impact on her upbringing as a youth.



**My experience at UCF has been nothing less than an extraordinary journey. Through education, opportunities, and lessons, I am confident I can take the world head on.**



### RAYNIAH'S FUTURE PLANS

My future plans include becoming a professional athlete and pursuing a career in law. Through the path of a professional athlete, I want to inspire all young athletes with big dreams to go after them. By attending law school, I plan to become exemplary and soon enough, have my own law firm to reform the world one case at a time.

## UNDERGRADUATE



### BRIDÉ KEY

**Degree Program**  
Clinical Psychology

**College**  
College of Sciences

**Hometown**  
Lanham, Maryland

**Bridé Key** is pursuing a major in Clinical Psychology. She is a proud graduate of the LEAD Scholars Academy, executive director for UCF Homecoming, and current resident assistant within Housing and Residence Life. As a member of the Mu Iota Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc., she serves as the South Florida state facilitator and the president of the UCF National Pan-Hellenic Council. As a student of psychology, her research focuses on the identity formation of multiracial individuals and the development of their self-awareness. Bridé frequently volunteers with Orange County Public Schools to bring the importance of post-secondary education and resources to underprivileged students in the Orlando area. As a passionate advocate for child and adolescent mental health, Bridé has worked to create programs within local schools and at the university, such as the Black Student Support Group, that emphasizes the importance of this issue.

“ **As the oldest of six children, a first-generation college student, and a Black woman in STEM, I know a thing or two about reaching for the stars, and am proud that I have added words like advocate, leader, director, mentor, and president to my list of titles while here. I will forever be grateful to UCF, who has encouraged me to push past the barriers, shine in the darkest of places, and to continue to dream — for the stars are only the beginning.** ”

### BRIDÉ'S FUTURE PLANS

Upon receiving my Bachelor of Science in Psychology, I will then pursue an M.D. in Psychiatry, with a focus on children and adolescents. Ultimately, I will be opening a family practice dedicated to providing well-rounded, affordable care and education to marginalized communities.

## UNDERGRADUATE



## NATHANAEL LAPIERRE

### Degree Program

Art History (honors) and French and Francophone Studies

### College

College of Arts & Humanities,  
Burnett Honors College

### Hometown

Laurel, Maryland

**Nathanael Lapiere** is a student in the Burnett Honors College completing a dual degree in Art History and French and Francophone Studies, a TEFL certificate, and a French Professional Diploma of Business from La chambre de commerce et d'industrie de Paris Ile-de-France at the highest level. Nathanael has served as the president of UCF's Art History Club for the past two years. He is a former Jenkins Distinguished Scholar in Community Arts and Dorothy Gillespie Art Scholar. He has publications in French and English that explore his research on expressions of Blackness in the nineteenth century. He has completed an Honors Undergraduate Thesis and shared his research at numerous conferences. Underscoring his interests in education, Nathanael has worked and volunteered as a museum docent for community enrichment, a learning assistant with UCF Academic Services for Student-Athletes, and a volunteer ESOL Instructor with HOPE CommUnity Center.

“ **For the past few years, UCF has been the support system and community that has pushed me and allowed me to achieve more than I ever thought imaginable. Through the support of faculty, friends, and peers, I have grown and come to know myself as a student and individual, learning, experiencing, and creating more than I could ever have elsewhere. Charge On!** ”

### NATHANAEL'S FUTURE PLANS

After graduation, I will attend Northwestern University to pursue my Ph.D. in Art History. I will continue to research the presence, influence, and creation of Blackness in visual culture to improve our understanding of the role of race in art and its impacts on contemporary society. After completing my doctorate, I will work in curation and university education to educate and inspire underrepresented students like myself who seek to excel and achieve more.

## UNDERGRADUATE



## SHEA MCLINDEN

### Degree Program

Health Sciences  
Medical Sociology (minor)

### College

College of Health Professions and Sciences,  
Burnett Honors College

### Hometown

Oviedo, Florida

**Shea McLinden** is pursuing a bachelor's degree in Health Sciences with a minor in Medical Sociology as part of the College of Health Professions and Sciences and Burnett Honors College. Shea has worked at Limbitless Solutions on the clinical research team, focusing on developing research protocols, data collection, and analysis. Here, she worked with clinical trial participants who used the bionic arms, supported every patient interaction with compassion, and helped make their experience in the clinical trials as smooth as possible. Shea has also participated in educational outreach engagements, including speaking to hundreds of high school students through the Florida Department of Education's Sunshine State Scholars Program. She published in the *Journal of Neuroengineering and Rehabilitation*, with another publication under review, and has given several award-winning oral and poster presentations. In addition, she volunteers at Nemours Children's Hospital with pediatric patients through therapeutic play experiences to improve patient outcomes.



**As I close out my undergraduate career, I have reflected on the tremendous personal and professional growth I have experienced as a UCF student. I want to thank Dr. Albert Manero and the rest of the team of Limbitless Solutions for supporting me and allowing me to do the same for the bionic kids I have met along the way.**



## SHEA'S FUTURE PLANS

Following graduation, I will utilize my unique undergraduate experiences to practice as a physician associate. I look forward to providing care to my future patients under the lens of accessibility and inclusivity in healthcare.

## UNDERGRADUATE



## SAMPADA NYALAPATLA

### Degree Program

Legal Studies  
Business (minor)

### College

College of Community Innovation  
and Education

### Hometown

Jacksonville, Florida

**Sampada Nyalapatla** is a senior majoring in Legal Studies with a minor in Business. At UCF, she has been heavily involved in various organizations. She served as the president of the Indian Student Association and vice president of Phi Delta Phi Legal Honor Society. She was also the founder and president of Girl Up Orlando, an organization that strives to empower women and fight for gender equality. Sampada also had multiple involvements in UCF's Student Government. She started in the Student Government Leadership Council and ultimately joined the Senate Leadership Council. She then became an associate justice in Student Government's Judicial Branch. Sampada also serves on the President's Leadership Council. For the past couple of years, she has researched the unique experiences of female Indian-American lawyers in the United States.



**UCF has given me the motivation and confidence to unleash my potential while teaching me valuable skills. It fostered a sense of community that helped me become the best version of myself academically and professionally.**



### SAMPADA'S FUTURE PLANS

After graduation, I will move to New York City to work as a paralegal for two years before heading off to law school. I plan to one day open my own law firm and start a nonprofit where I can help women and girls globally. I hope to use my platform to empower young women to follow their dreams and use their voices.

## UNDERGRADUATE



### GEELA MARGO RAMOS

#### Degree Program

Computer Science  
Cognitive Science (minor)

#### College

College of Engineering and Computer  
Science, Burnett Honors College

#### Hometown

Miramar, Florida

**Geela Margo Ramos** is a Computer Science major with a minor in Cognitive Science. They also will be graduating as a member of the Burnett Honors College and LEAD Scholars Academy. Geela's research interests span wearable engineering, assistive robotics, and cybersecurity; this resulted in their thesis, which focuses on developing an ambient-assisted living framework for monitoring generalized anxiety disorder. Outside of academics, Geela has been a member of the President's Leadership Council, Student Advisory Council, and Student Undergraduate Research Council. They have spent four years competing as a taekwondo athlete, which led to becoming vice president of the Sport Clubs Council. Within the community, Geela volunteers as a Student Advisory Committee member for National Active Minds and an advocate for different affinity groups within the Department of Defense. As a result, they have had various speaking platforms at the local, national, and even international scale to share their passions.



**After four years, I will never see the words 'Charge On' as an empty statement, because it carries the weight of my aspirations, achievements, and relationships that I've gained through UCF. My experiences here have only strengthened the drive and commitment I first came in with, to do and inspire the extraordinary.**



#### GEELA'S FUTURE PLANS

After graduation, I will begin a full-time career with the Department of Defense, following completion of the NSA Stokes Educational Scholarship program. My long-term goals include pursuing a Ph.D. in Computational Cognitive Science, in hopes of one day returning to academia as a professor and researcher. Moving forward, I hope to challenge others to unleash their potential in the same manner UCF has done for me!

## UNDERGRADUATE



### JORDAN SAMMARCO

#### Degree Program

Biomedical Sciences  
Writing and Rhetoric (minor)

#### College

College of Medicine,  
Burnett Honors College

#### Hometown

Toms River, New Jersey

**Jordan Sammarco** is a senior studying Biomedical Sciences with a minor in Writing and Rhetoric. Jordan is a Burnett Honors College Scholar and was a team leader and coordinator for the Honors Symposium course for three years. She is the head undergraduate research assistant in the Psychology Classification and Decision Lab and is conducting an Honors Undergraduate Thesis on virtual reality meditation using fNIRS. She is a member of Alpha Sigma Kappa — Women in Technical Studies, in which she served as the social chair and new member coordinator. Jordan is a staff writer for *Her Campus*, having published 15 articles. Service learning was emphasized during her time at UCF, working with the organizations Planned Parenthood and Page 15 to positively impact the surrounding community.

“

**My time at UCF has allowed me to make many valuable connections, all helping me to find my voice as a leader, teammate, and friend.**

”

#### JORDAN'S FUTURE PLANS

After graduation, I will continue to conduct research and hope to obtain a graduate degree in neuroscience. My goal is to pursue a career in academia and become an inspiring mentor to young people. I am very passionate about promoting health literacy and plan on integrating this into my work throughout my career.

## UNDERGRADUATE



### ANGELA SHAR

#### Degree Program

Biomedical Sciences  
Criminal Justice (minor)

#### College

College of Medicine,  
Burnett Honors College

#### Hometown

Leesburg, Florida

**Angela Shar** graduated in Fall 2022 with a bachelor's degree in Biomedical Sciences and a minor in Criminal Justice. Within her research journey, she has filed a U.S. Patent "Ultrasound Responsive Nanobubbles Devices and Methods", completed her Honors Undergraduate Thesis, and published first-author to *Nanomedicine: Nanotechnology, Biology, and Medicine*. She has presented in several conferences, such as the Florida Undergraduate Research Conference and Global Summit on Biomedical Engineering and Systems. Aside from research, Angela co-founded the Society for Asian Scientists and Engineers at UCF, a national chapter that brings together like-minded STEM individuals within the Asian community. Additionally, she studied abroad in Turks and Caicos, developing a sound anthropological understanding of the pre-Columbian indigenous cultures of the West Indies. There, she explored different archaeological field methods and theories for excavations, artifacts identification, analysis, and curation.



**When I look back on my time at UCF, what will always stay with me is that I was and always will be part of a huge UCF family. There are always people willing to lend an ear, to give both advice and constructive criticism, but most of all to support you and be your biggest cheerleader in every aspect.**



#### ANGELA'S FUTURE PLANS

Post-graduation, I will be pursuing an M.D. or a Ph.D. in Biomedical Sciences with the goal of one day overseeing a translational medicine lab at a medical school or university while also seeing patients in a clinical setting. My long-term goal is to be able to translate my lab benchwork into a therapeutic or treatment that can directly help patients. Currently, my research is focused on nanomedicine and tissue engineering, areas I hope to integrate within my Ph.D.



## UNDERGRADUATE



### ALEXIS WADE

#### Degree Program

Nursing

#### College

College of Nursing,  
Burnett Honors College

#### Hometown

Ocala, Florida

**Alexis Wade** is pursuing a Bachelor of Science in Nursing degree. She is an active member of her sorority, Delta Zeta, and serves as the legislative director of the Student Nurses Association. She will be inducted into Sigma Theta Tau, the nursing honors society, later this Spring. As the legislative director, Alexis maintains and updates the bylaws of the organization and creates resolutions to present on the state and national level. She has been actively involved in research throughout her college experience in an athletic training research lab, as well as in the College of Nursing. In addition to working in a neonatal ICU as a student nurse, Alexis has been involved in the bleeding disorder community both as a volunteer and as an advocate.

“

**In a university as sizeable as UCF, I was afraid I would fade into the background, but I have found my home in a diverse community that has shaped me as an activist, a lifelong student, a healthcare advocate, and a burgeoning nurse researcher. UCF’s environment provided with me with a rocket ship, its student community gave me rocket fuel, and its faculty gave me a map to truly reach for the stars.**

”

#### ALEXIS’ FUTURE PLANS

After graduating from UCF, I plan to work in a high-level neonatal ICU caring for high-risk infants. Thereafter, I hope to attend graduate school and continue my nursing research. I will continue to advocate for the bleeding disorder community as well as for my patients and their families in order to provide them with the best care possible — paying forward the care that many health professionals have provided to me throughout my life.



**THANK YOU TO THE  
2023 ORDER OF PEGASUS  
COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

**Melinda Cartwright**

UCF First Lady

**Gordon Chavis**

Student Success and Well-Being, Retired

**Manoj Chopra**

College of Engineering and Computer Science

**Kathy DeVault**

University Relations

**Maribeth Ehasz**

Student Success and Well-Being, Retired

**Germane Graham**

University Events and Engagement

**Chris Hixon**

UCF Advancement

**Jana Jasinski**

Faculty Excellence

**Vivian Ortiz**

Student Success and Well-Being

**Joshua Roney**

College of Business Administration

**Jeffrey Stout**

College of Health Professions and Sciences

**John Weishampel**

College of Graduate Studies

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