

# SPOTLIGHT ON INNOVATION: UBIQUITOUS TECHNOLOGIES

We believe that creativity is essential for innovation, and we embrace novel ideas and futuristic technologies, fueling our quest to evolve and excel. With a commitment to providing tangible benefits, we are paving the way for a more dynamic approach to lifelong learning. Here are just a few examples of how we are enacting our mission:

By harnessing the power of big data, we are empowering communities, educators, and caregivers to take bold steps to address pressing concerns. The groundbreaking **Florida School Safety Dashboard** has been launched in partnership between **Safe Schools for Alex** and the **Education Policy Research Center**, led by researcher **F. Chris Curran, Ph.D.** A freely available, comprehensive tool that provides rates of violence, disciplinary responses, public health indicators, and more, the dashboard currently serves millions of students, parents, educators, and policymakers throughout Florida.

The **Sunshine State Early Childhood Information Portal** is breaking down data silos to provide stakeholders with clear, strategic recommendations to enhance educational outcomes for children. Using the HiPerGator 3.0 supercomputer to implement machine learning approaches, **Herman Knopf, Ph.D.**, is processing hundreds of variables and millions of records from agencies across Florida. By understanding how children interact with both their out-of-school and classroom environments, researchers can develop new and effective interventions to help ensure every young child is set up for a lifetime of success.

## LAUNCHING SOON

Four 20-hour microcredentials focused on High Leverage Practices, accessibility, and more in K-12 CS education.

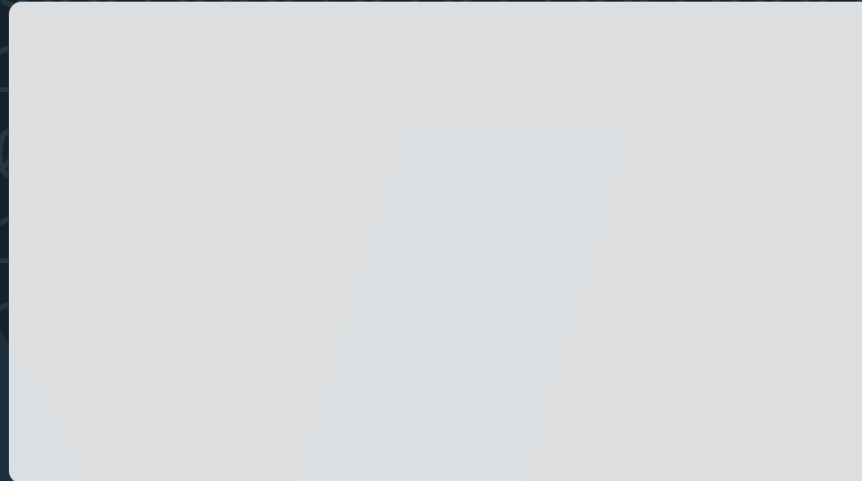
**New Worlds Reading** lives up to its name by encouraging students to explore digital and literary worlds. Drawing inspiration from virtual pet games, **New Worlds Reading AR Expeditions** will help children and their guardians engage in positive pre-reading experiences together. Designed to boost background knowledge and build comfort with vocabulary, this free game will help students who are not yet reading on grade level spark a love of reading through enriching play.

Computer science knowledge is essential in our digital world. **Maya Israel, Ph.D.**, and the **CSEveryone Center for Computer Science Education** team are committed to ensuring all K-12 students, including the nearly 15% with disabilities, can access CS education. Through funding from **Google**, including over half a million dollars in 2024, the center's transformative approach emphasizes accessible technologies, effective instructional strategies and lending libraries for instructors. Partnerships with **Broward County Public Schools** and **Chicago Public Schools** are demonstrating the efficacy of this model for widespread adoption and expansion.



UF COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

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# UF IMPACT 2024 REPORT

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# IN A WORLD OF CONSTANT CHANGE, INNOVATION IS OUR COMPASS

At the University of Florida, our commitment to creating, learning, teaching, and leading has positioned us as a catalyst for change. We are providing dynamic, hands-on student experiences and conducting interdisciplinary research that tangibly benefits the world around us. Every day, we are turning vision into action.

Society demands agile thinkers and problem solvers, so we are cultivating a new generation of educators and leaders. This forward-thinking approach ensures Florida's students are prepared for the jobs of tomorrow — earning UF the coveted "New Ivy" designation by Forbes magazine.

Our land-grant mission drives us to deliver actionable solutions that benefit Florida and beyond. By seamlessly merging research excellence with real-world impact, we ensure our contributions make lasting, meaningful change.

The future demands innovation, and we are proudly leading the charge. Inspired by what lies ahead, we believe:

- ◆ Transformation is our trajectory — we are forging new practical pathways.
- ◆ We are stronger when we share solutions with Florida and the world.
- ◆ Interwoven AI and technology enrich our mission to elevate education.

Together, we are building a future where education is accessible, empowering, and transformative.

With immense gratitude and anticipation for what lies ahead,

*Glenn E. Good, Ph.D.*

## 2024 COLLEGE OF EDUCATION BY THE NUMBERS

\$150.3M  
EXTERNAL FUNDING RECEIVED

\$64M  
PHILANTHROPIC SUPPORT

165  
STUDENTS AWARDED SCHOLARSHIPS

\$114.1M  
RESEARCH EXPENDITURES

\$400K  
STUDENT SCHOLARSHIPS

42%  
AWARDED TO FIRST-GEN STUDENTS

# LEADERS IN EDUCATION



## EDUGATOR ACCOLADES

**John "Michael" Chaires (Ed.D. Candidate)**  
2024 Florida Assistant Principal of the Year

**Kent Crippen, Ph.D.**  
Graduate Education Champion Award

**Grant Holloway (B.A. '24)**  
Gold Medal Men's 110m Hurdles, Paris 2024

**Corinne Huggins-Manley, Ph.D.**  
Graduate Education Champion Award

**Holly Lane, Ph.D.**  
Faculty Doctoral Mentoring Award

**Wei Li, Ph.D.**  
National Science Foundation CAREER Award

**Tim Vetere, Ph.D.**  
Rose Duhon-Sells Award from the National Association of Multicultural Education

**CEEDAR Center**  
2024 Council for Exceptional Children Impact Award

## INNOVATORS AND EDUCATORS

This year we welcomed 18 dynamic new faculty members. Energized by the forward-thinking research perspectives of this group of scholars, our future looks brighter than ever.



## TRANSFORMATION IS OUR TRAJECTORY WE ARE FORMING NEW PRACTICAL PATHWAYS

Recognizing that educational journeys are unique, we support multiple learning trajectories to meet the needs of our state and beyond. With approaches that include practical training and academic rigor grounded in thoroughly vetted research, we enable all learners to achieve their full potential.

### EMPOWERING EARLY READERS

The **New Worlds Reading Initiative** creates vibrant reading environments in homes across the state, changing the lives of Florida's youth. The program has provided 7 million books to 359,000 VPK-5 students since 2021. By offering an eclectic selection of books in multiple languages along with interactive reading guides, we are using research-backed tools to nurture literacy skills. The **UF Lastinger Center for Learning** administers this unique home literacy program in partnership with **Scholastic** and the **Florida Department of Education**.

### FLEXIBLE LEARNING PATHWAYS

This year, UF graduated the first class of teacher apprentices in Florida. The apprenticeship pathway bridges the gap for experienced paraprofessionals and career changers by offering an "earn-and-learn" model. Initially piloted in three districts, it is now expanding statewide, creating a qualified teaching force to strengthen the future of education.

## STRONGER WHEN WE SHARE SOLUTIONS WITH FLORIDA AND THE WORLD

We prioritize providing knowledge and fostering community engagement to elevate educational outcomes for all. Rooted in our land-grant mission, we share to serve the public good. From data portals to podcasts, we are leveraging a myriad of endeavors to empower caregivers, educators, and legislators.

### ENHANCING SCHOOL SAFETY

The **Education Policy Research Center** offers free training and a professional microcredential to encourage use of the **Florida School Safety Dashboard**. Their microcredential launch event united representatives from 18 school districts and leaders from the **Florida Department of Education**, showcasing a robust commitment to advancing school safety across the state.

### CUTTING-EDGE IMPACT

U.S. veterans are embarking on a new mission: hardware security. **Wanli Xing, Ph.D.**, recognized a critical need for veterans' unique skills – technical aptitude and resilience under pressure. Through a three-year, \$1 million program funded by the **National Science Foundation**, veterans are equipped with in-demand, high-level hardware security skills. Undertaken jointly with the **Herbert Wertheim College of Engineering**, the program also offers mentorship and career development to address challenges they may face transitioning to the civilian workforce.

### FINISH LINE SUPPORT

Led by **Justin Ortagus, Ph.D.**, researchers are aiming to get students who are close to finishing their associate degrees back on track. The team will evaluate the program's effectiveness for up to 3,700 students across four Florida community colleges. To encourage re-enrollment and support service use, the program offers tuition waivers for up to five courses, in addition to personalized advising and degree mapping services. This research is supported by the **Institute of Education Sciences (IES)**, with tuition paid by the **Helios Education Foundation**.

### FOSTERING COLLABORATIVE COMMUNITY

In person and online, the **University of Florida Literacy Institute (UFLI)** champions the science of reading. Through a \$2 million investment in **James Patterson Literacy Classrooms** by the namesake author, hundreds of classrooms nationwide received UFLI curriculum, professional development, and coaching. With 250,000+ members, the **UFLI Foundations Community** Facebook group is a thriving space for educators to engage and collaborate around literacy. Further, the **UFLI Foundations Toolbox's** free, interactive, science of reading-based tools and games received over 13 million views in the last year.

### EDUCATION LAW DEMYSTIFIED

"**Chalk and Gavel**" podcast, co-hosted by **Christopher Thomas, J.D., Ph.D.**, explores how complex legal issues impact the educational landscape. By examining real-world legal cases and challenges, the **Education Policy Research Center** affiliate helps listeners understand the significant impact of legal decisions on schools and educational policies.

### IMPROVING HEALTHCARE OUTCOMES

Staff in the **E-Learning, Technology, and Communications** department are collaborating with **College of Medicine** faculty to create learner-centric Continuing Medical Education for the **Quality and Patient Safety Initiative**. Utilizing an accelerated course development cycle, the team emphasizes rich multimedia and concise lessons for busy professionals that prioritize improving patient safety and healthcare delivery, all with an AI focus.

## INTERWOVEN AI AND TECHNOLOGY ENRICH OUR MISSION TO ELEVATE EDUCATION

Our approach to education is centered on the synergistic relationship between developing technologies and human potential. Beyond harnessing the potential of AI using UF's HiPerGator supercomputer, we continually push the boundaries of research innovation, driving improvements that benefit our community and beyond.

### PERSONALIZED FEEDBACK, FASTER

We are integrating AI throughout our curriculum, including observational assessment of skill mastery. Through a partnership with **GoReact**, students in our teacher apprenticeships, dyslexia graduate certificate program, and more receive real-time, personalized feedback. This student-focused approach to using large language models for asynchronous video assessment supports professional growth, boosts competence, and improves learning outcomes.

### FRESH MATHEMATICAL PERSPECTIVES

Supported by **IES** funding, **Avery Closser, Ph.D.**, is researching how perceptual scaffolding can enhance online elementary math education. By embedding vital visual prompts to elevate efficiency, understanding, and problem-solving, this method has the potential to reshape how digital learning platforms can support the way students learn foundational math skills.

### ANTICIPATING TECHNOLOGICAL HORIZONS

Through his framework and forthcoming professional development for superintendents and school leaders, **Walter Balseer, Ed.D.**, prompts education leaders to move beyond strategic planning and embrace futurist thinking. Helping them cultivate a future-focused mindset, especially in critical policy areas like AI and changing enrollments, Balseer seeks to encourage leaders to anticipate innovations that will shape the future of education.

### AI-POWERED FOSSIL CURRICULUM

**Pasha Antonenko, Ph.D.**, as part of an interdisciplinary team at UF, is helping middle school science teachers integrate AI into their curriculum. Combining ancient shark tooth paleontology and machine learning, more than 50 Florida teachers have participated in a year-long program that equips them with the knowledge and confidence to prepare students for the careers of the future. Seeking to extend the project into an informal learning context, researchers recently implemented the curriculum at a STEM summer camp.

