

Who We Are >

The University of Florida College of Education created the Lastinger Center for Learning in 2002 with the aid of a \$2 million donation by UF alumni Allen and Delores Lastinger—the college's largest-ever single donation. The Center connects more than 250 schools across the state with UF education scholars, forming powerful learning communities in support of school improvement and children's learning and healthy development.

UF "professors-in-residence" actually embed themselves in the classrooms of partnering schools—mostly high-poverty, urban elementary schools—for first-hand observation and collaboration with teachers and school administrators to provide state-of-the-art professional development. Center faculty also instruct in a job-embedded, online graduate degree program for partnering teachers that directly impacts teaching practice and student achievement.

Impact >

"We are rolling up our sleeves and going into high-poverty schools and assuming some accountability for improving student achievement. If a teaching practice proves effective, let's get it off the shelves and into the hands of educators immediately."

— Don Pemberton,
Director, UF Lastinger
Center for Learning

UF's Lastinger Center mobilizes the expertise and resources of the university's interdisciplinary research community to find answers for one of today's major social concerns—improving the quality of teaching and learning in high-poverty and high-needs schools.

The Center serves as a central clearinghouse, identifying the most effective, research-driven instructional strategies and sharing new models of teaching and learning with educators throughout the state. The Center's ever-growing network of partnering schools currently covers five Florida counties—Alachua, Duval, Miami-Dade, Collier and Pinellas. By 2010, the Lastinger network expects to expand to more than 300 schools.

Lastinger Center faculty coordinate joint research projects and conduct several seminars, workshops and summer institute programs throughout the year for partnering educators. Expansion of professional-development offerings is planned to make online support and instructional improvement available to *all* Florida teachers.



Key Initiatives >



Ready Schools Florida

Under a shared \$10 million grant from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, UF early-childhood scholars with the Lastinger Center are working with public school districts and community groups to expand research-proven school readiness programs—first in Miami-Dade County schools and eventually throughout Florida. The program is designed to smooth the transition to the classroom for the state's alarming number of at-risk preschoolers likely to start school unprepared.

UF LASTINGER CENTER FOR LEARNING

Key Initiatives > (cont'd)

Free 'master teacher' degree boosts leadership at high-needs schools

Practicing teachers in several inner-city and rural school districts are taking advantage of an innovative master's degree offering at UF that's free to teachers in partnering Lastinger Center schools. The center's so-called Florida Master Teacher Initiative is a powerful push to help practicing teachers develop as master teachers, leaders, change agents and advocates for children at Florida's most challenging schools. The job-embedded coursework is delivered online and on site by UF education professors to groups of teachers from the same school. Participating teachers must make a five-year commitment to a designated high-needs school.



Preparing career-changers to teach in crisis schools

To address the urgent need for high-quality teachers in Florida's most challenging schools, the yearlong Lastinger Apprenticeship program in Duval County puts talented college graduates and career-changers who have *non-education* degrees on the fast track to teaching jobs and learning the skills they need to thrive at high-poverty elementary schools.

Fast Fact >

Stimulating education and the economy

UF's Lastinger Center for Learning—wielding a statewide focus on improving schools, teacher practice and student learning—is also the College of Education's most prolific generator of external funding. Since its inception in 2002, the Lastinger Center has attracted nearly \$34 million in private gifts, grants and contracts. The center pumps a large portion of those dollars back into the Florida communities it serves by offering free advanced degrees in teacher leadership for educators in partnering school districts, hiring and training master teachers as on-site "professors-in-residence," and mobilizing community and business groups for child wellness and school improvement programs.

Center Leadership >



Dr. Don Pemberton is the founding director of the Lastinger Center. He previously founded and served as president of Take Stock in Children, a statewide organization promoting the academic success and college matriculation of children living in poverty.

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