

PEGASUS



2020

CLASS
of
2020



Brave

After the pandemic forced the UCF campus to move to remote instruction, the staff of Pegasus changed the focus of the summer issue to be a celebration of the Class of 2020 and a tribute to this moment in history — one defined by physical distance rather than the annual end-of-year celebrations, basketball playoffs and commencement ceremonies.

As we worked to wrap up this issue, the national conversation quickly shifted. The killing of Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor and George Floyd embroiled the nation in protests and riots. And UCF was called on to reckon with its own challenges when Associate Professor Charles Negy and comments made on his personal Twitter account became the center of controversy around racism, free speech and what behavior is acceptable — and unacceptable — for tenured faculty.



It shouldn't take a racial injustice to have these kinds of conversations. — GABBY RODRIGUEZ

I am black. I am multiracial. I am a transgender woman. I am currently doing my master's in film. I teach. I work extremely hard to make sure that my students are OK and make sure that my class is a safe space. And I'm doing that for the peanuts you guys pay the MFA grad students. The fact that I put in so much work as a student is not fair. ... So excuse me if what you guys are saying falls on deaf ears. It's not enough. — ALEJANDRO WATSON

Voices of

As we go to print, the university is in the midst of an investigation into Negy for accusations of how he treated students of color in his classroom. In a recent virtual forum, intended as a place for students, faculty and staff to discuss issues ranging from the pandemic to the protests, the conversation quickly shifted to Negy, university administrators, and how UCF could be and do better.

Rather than speak on behalf of the participants, Pegasus presents here what they had to say.

UCF has been receiving complaints alleging bias and unfair treatment and takes every report seriously. If any student, current or former, believes they may have experienced abusive or discriminatory behavior by any faculty or staff member, we want to know about it.

Concerns can be reported to **UCF's IntegrityLine**, which also takes anonymous complaints, at ucfintegrityline.com and **855-877-6049**.

THE BLACK STUDENTS HAVE BEEN HERE. WE'VE BEEN HERE. ... WE JUST NEED EVERYONE ELSE TO JOIN COURT. WE'RE TIRED OF PREACHING TO THE CHOIR.

— DERREASHA JONES

Blanket diversity is not diversity. It is not a celebration of diversity. In fact, it is the suppression of diversity.

— ADRIAN LEE

I START IN THE FALL, AND TO BE COMPLETELY HONEST, THIS SITUATION WITH MR. NEGY HAS MADE ME LOSE A LOT OF FAITH IN THE SCHOOL, AND I HAVEN'T EVEN STARTED YET.

— SAVANNAH DAWSON-HAMILTON

There is something about systemic racism that works a nerve for me. It loves us being divisive and fighting one another because when [we do that] the machine that it is stays afloat. ...

I'm all about difficult dialogue — that is my mission. And I am bringing it full steam ahead to UCF — and not just dialogue but action.

— S. KENT BUTLER, INTERIM CHIEF OF EQUITY, INCLUSION AND DIVERSITY OFFICER

WHEN FACULTY TEACH RACE, RACISM AND ISSUES OF ETHNICITY, IT IS A BIG RESPONSIBILITY. IT IS A LEVEL OF COMPETENCY.

— NESSETTE FALU

Change

I've always been disappointed that between my work at Valencia and my work at UCF, there's never been any kind of mandatory effort to get people to understand the diverse population of students that we're working with, especially in Orlando.

— SAMANTHA RAMOS



One of the issues, even with [anonymous reporting], is that a lot of these students who are impacted by [Negy's] racist words are in minority groups — people of color, black people, queer people — and those are people who are not used to having safe spaces. Some places may claim to be a safe space, but if they aren't taking action to hold [people accountable], how safe can they really be for us?

— COLIN CRABTREE

WE ARE TIRED. — TRINITY JOHNSON

Private companies can in fact fire people for saying things that are offensive and harm the reputation of the company; public universities can't. UCF is a public institution, which means UCF is viewed as though we are an arm of the government. That means all constitutional rights have to be upheld by us. That means what anyone says in their life as a private citizen is protected by law, and the university could not act against me, you, [Charles] Negy or anyone else based on comments in their personal lives, even if offensive, even if terrible. That's a very hard thing for people to hear.

WE SHOULD CONTINUE THESE CONVERSATIONS IN TOWN HALLS, NOT JUST [ORGANIZED] BY CULTURAL [STUDENT] GROUPS BUT SUPPORTED BY UCF AS A WHOLE.

— GABBY RODRIGUEZ

What I want as a student, and a lot of us do, is accountability and transparency from you [the administration].

— DYLAN MUNGAL

On the other hand, if our faculty members are offensive, discriminatory [or] bullies in their work, workplace, classroom or interactions with students and employees, we have the capacity to act. [But] I have to say it will never be immediate because there is a right of due process. Just like every public entity, we have to follow that process in which we look at the facts and accusations and evaluate them [to] make a decision. I think that is both right and [acknowledge] that means nothing that is a serious matter will ever happen overnight.

— MICHAEL D. JOHNSON,
INTERIM PROVOST AND
VICE PRESIDENT FOR
ACADEMIC AFFAIRS

YOUR TEARS WILL NOT BE IN VAIN.

— EDWANNA ANDREWS '99 '05MA '17PHD,
INTERIM ASSISTANT VICE PRESIDENT
FOR COMMUNITY SUPPORT

I'm not saying there aren't teachers [at UCF] that care because I know there are. I know my teachers care. I just would like to see more — more diversity in the administration and the Board [of Trustees]. I would like to know that there is someone that represents a percentage of us on campus.

— KHAYAH PETERS





I want you to know that this is *your* institution. It is not my institution. It is your institution. You're the students. You're the faculty. You're the staff. And we want you to feel that this is your institution. Let's all figure out a way to make that happen. I don't have the answers. These are deep-seated, deep-rooted challenges – systemic challenges we're going to have to fight. And we're going to fight them together.

– PRESIDENT ALEXANDER N. CARTWRIGHT

Inbox

VOLUME 26 • ISSUE 3 • SUMMER 2020



I LOVE THE “MODELS FOR SUCCESS” ISSUE

of *Pegasus* (Spring 2020). As a UCF alum with a daughter who had open-heart surgery as an infant, it was so great to see this edition with a 3D model of the heart! My daughter is now 12 years old, and I showed it to her and was able to explain what parts of her heart were hooked up wrong. Keep up the great work.

» KIM (LACEY) DILL '92

I HAVE TWO SONS — ONE GRADUATED FROM UCF, and one will be starting his third year in the fall. I have to tell you, I love your magazine. I read it cover to cover, as do my sons. It has made me love UCF even more, which is probably why I tend to donate to the university and other fundraisers. My husband gets an alumni magazine from [another university], and it is nowhere near as entertaining as *Pegasus*. Your pictures, your format and the articles are all superior. Thank you for a job well done!

» CHRISTINE WOOD

I RECENTLY RECEIVED MY SPRING 2020 ISSUE

of *Pegasus* magazine and enjoyed it as always. I found the binge-watching article [“The Dangers of Binge-Watching”] interesting because with everything that’s going on and people staying home, I have a feeling binge-watching is increasing. I’m sure the article was written before [the pandemic] started. I know these are very different circumstances as opposed to our normal lifestyles, but when this passes — and I pray that it does very soon — I wonder if the increase in binge-watching will go back down or become a bad habit long-term.

Thank you for all the hard work you do in putting the *Pegasus* magazine together!

» ROBERT LISINSKY '05

TWITTER



Apr 3 @CarolMoravec

When @UCF sends a biology, anatomy and physiology teacher and parent of a @UCF_Volleyball player a magazine with this front cover, it just warmed my heart and absolutely made my day! Everything about this image and story is amazing! Thank you!! @lsehs #KnightPride

FACEBOOK



University of Central Florida
May 6, 2020

Now, more than ever, it is important to take a moment to thank a nurse.

Blake Lynch '14, better known as [Nurse Blake](#), wanted to develop a community of nurses that can relate to one another and laugh — and that’s exactly what he’s been able to do.

[#ThankYouNurses](#)



318 Likes 31 Comments 23 Shares

[Elizabeth Ann](#) Love him! Figures he’s a Knight!

[Nadia Teahan](#) I have been following his social media page for 3 years now and never knew he was an alum. Go Knights 🏹

[Alexandra Louise Barclay](#) Blake Lynch omg look at you boy! 🥰 So proud.

[Grace Lardizabal](#) I’ve met him in person and he is so real!

PEGASUS

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INBOX SUBMISSIONS

Emails to the editor should be sent with the writer’s name, graduation year, address and daytime phone number to pegasus@ucf.edu.

Letters may be edited for length and clarity, and may be published in any medium. Due to volume, we regret that we cannot reply to every letter.

MOVED RECENTLY? NEED TO UPDATE YOUR INFO?

Update your contact information: ucfalumni.com/contactupdates



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TRIED AND TESTED

UCF isn't just in Central Florida. We're an integral part of the community. And when the campus closed due to the pandemic, we partnered with Aventus Biolabs to create two COVID-19 testing sites — one on main campus and one at UCF Lake Nona Cancer Center — to give back to the community that gives us so much. It's just what Knights do.

In Focus

ESSENTIAL EQUIPMENT

When the nation faced a shortage of personal protective equipment, two groups from UCF partnered with 3D printer manufacturer Stratasys to help alleviate the demand. By tweaking designs they found online, UCF's Prototype Development and 3D Print Lab (PD3D) optimized rapid production through Stratasys' 150 printers nationwide. Limbitless Solutions joined Stratasys' national coalition to produce visors for face shields and other items to help keep medical workers safe. Products from both UCF organizations have recently been distributed to local healthcare workers, including more than 5,600 face shields and visors for Orlando Health, AdventHealth and Lakeland Regional Hospital.

"We are honored to be a small part of a network committed to supporting our medical community — the real heroes."

— **Albert Manero '12 '14MS '16PhD,**
CEO and co-founder of Limbitless Solutions

100,000

Face shields distributed nationwide by Stratasys by May 8. Another 150,000 face shields will be shipped in the near future.

1,500

Products that can be printed each day by Stratasys 3D printers after PD3D's redesign — a big boost from the previous average of 600 a week

400+

Ear savers, which are hooks that make wearing surgical and cloth masks more comfortable, that Limbitless has distributed to staff at Orlando Health

30

Minutes to print the slimmer face shields designed by PD3D

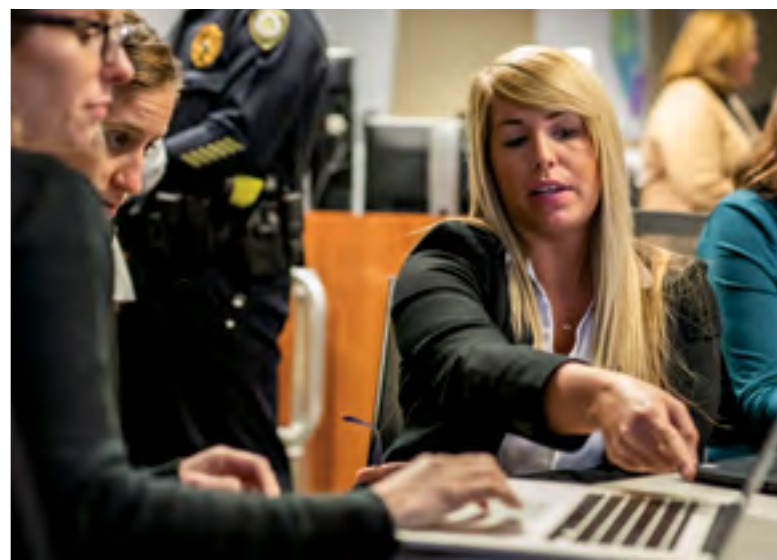
4

Special messages — love, compassion, hope or thank you — included on each of Limbitless' face shields, staying true to the nonprofit's signature personal touch





Love





In Focus

PRIORITIZING SAFETY

Whether it's a hurricane headed for Central Florida or a global pandemic forcing physical distancing, the UCF Emergency Operation Center (EOC) is command central in times of crisis on campus. Located on Perseus Loop near the UCF Police Department, the EOC is home to the Emergency Management team, which spends every waking moment working to prevent, prepare for, manage or recover from critical threats to UCF. On March 10, the team met for a hands-on practical discussion about the coronavirus and campus safety. UCF had been monitoring and preparing for the pandemic since January.

“We know we have a lot of work ahead of us, but I have great confidence in [our team’s] talent and dedication. All of us are committed to keeping our campus safe.”

— UCF Police Department Chief **Carl Metzger '03MS**

74,249

Registered users in UCF Alert, a multimedia communications system that provides timely and accurate information about emergency situations that could impact UCF

885

Employees deemed essential

40

Staff members who slept at the EOC during Hurricane Matthew in 2016

11

Monitors in the EOC that can be tuned to the news, weather, security cameras and hospital wait times, while screen-sharing from any of the building's 47 workstations

10

Years UCF has been designated as a StormReady University by the National Weather Service

7

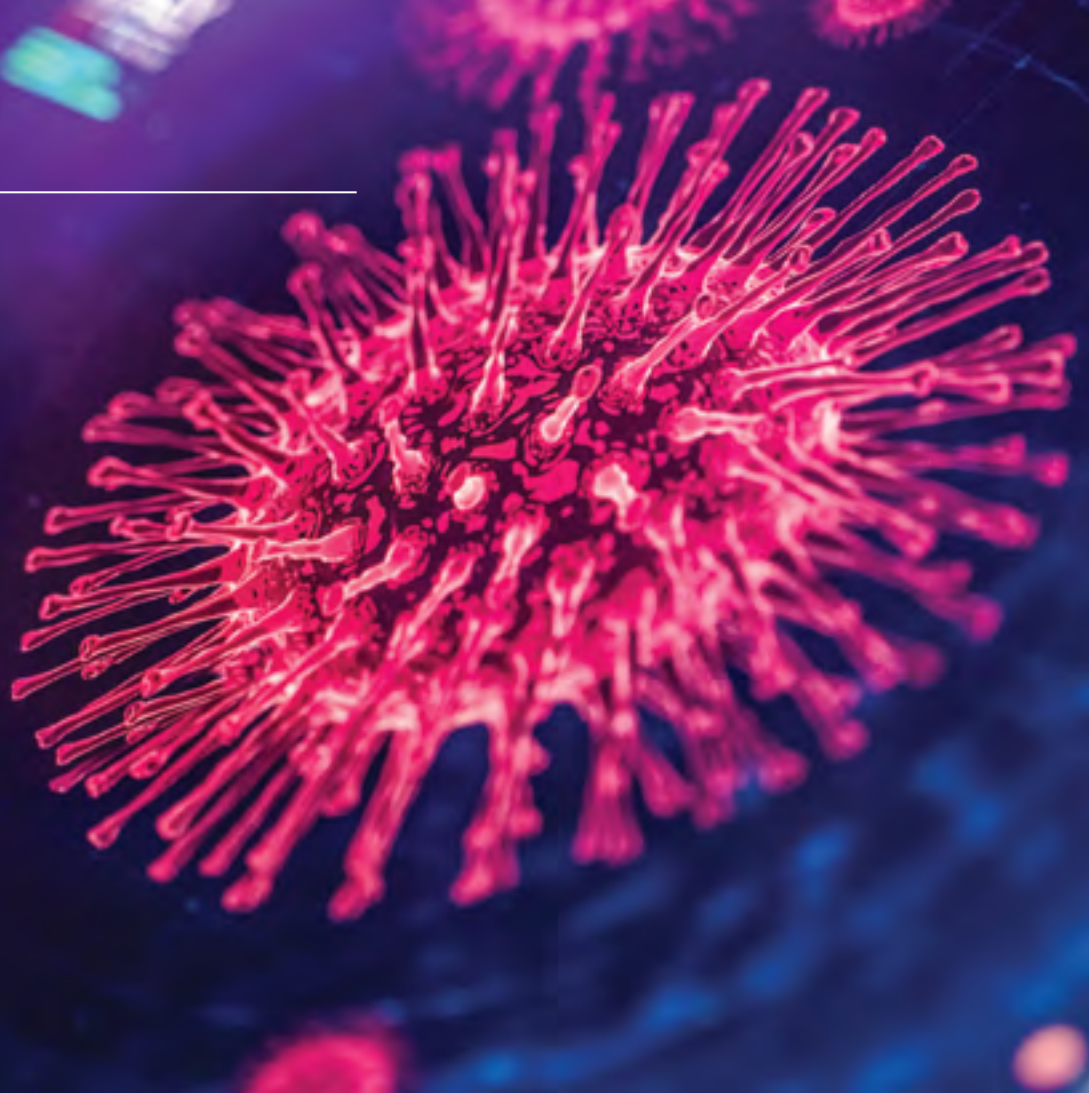
Universities in the nation, including UCF, that are certified by the Emergency Management Accreditation Program



RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS

STOPPING COVID-19

Backed by funding from the National Science Foundation, UCF researchers are working to find ways to stop the spread of coronavirus. One team is developing a nanoparticle film that could be worn on masks to kill the virus within seconds, while another is exploring how to reduce transmission of the virus by making saliva heavier and stickier using cough drops, so particles fall to the ground quickly rather than float in the air after we cough.



“The study presents, for the first time, experimental evidence of a safe and functioning hydrogen and oxygen propellant detonation in a rotating-detonation rocket engine.”

— Assistant Professor Kareem Ahmed on an advanced new rocket-propulsion system he and his team developed that makes upper stage rockets for space missions lighter, travel farther and burn cleaner



KILLER INSTINCT

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration approved a Phase II clinical trial for a technique developed at UCF to fight cancer using the body’s natural defense system. The technique is part of a cell-based cancer immunotherapy that uses a nanoparticle developed in 2016 by Assistant Professor Alicja Copik and her team to stimulate a patient’s natural cancer-killing cells.



ALICJA COPIK



\$7.5 MILLION

Amount the U.S. Department of Defense awarded UCF over the next five years as part of its 2020 multidisciplinary university research initiative. The grants will go toward research projects that will have applications in optical imaging, sensing and communications, as well as the development of new technologies.

LIFESAVER

Current commercial lithium batteries, such as the ones found in smartphones and tablets, are sensitive to extreme temperatures, which can impact not only the life of the battery but also leave them vulnerable to burning or exploding. To combat this, Associate Professor Yang Yang developed a method to manufacture the batteries that will protect their internal integrity in temperatures ranging from -4 to 104 degrees, providing a longer life span for both the battery — and potentially its users.



YANG YANG

RECOGNITION OF PUBLIC SERVICE



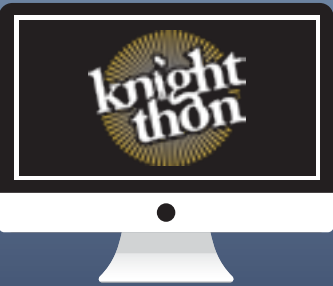
Michael Schwirtz '03 won a Pulitzer Prize for International Reporting, along with *New York Times* colleagues Dionne Searcey and David Kirkpatrick, for their investigation of Russian President Vladimir Putin's regime. He has been nominated twice before for the Pulitzer Prize and has been a reporter for the *Times* for nearly 14 years.

“This prize is particularly meaningful to me because I've been chasing (or running from) Russian spies and their proxies since the very beginning of my career.” — MICHAEL SCHWIRTZ '03

“WITH THE NEED FOR MORE COMPUTING TALENT ACROSS THE COUNTRY, IT IS OUR RESPONSIBILITY TO GROOM THE LEADERS OF TOMORROW IN COMPUTER SCIENCE AND RELATED AREAS.”

— UCF Board of Trustees Chair Beverly Seay on the inaugural North America Programming Camp, which was hosted virtually by UCF this spring to prepare more than 100 students for the International Collegiate Programming Contest World Finals





\$865,598.60

Amount raised to benefit Orlando Health Arnold Palmer Hospital for Children during this year's student-led fundraiser Knight-Thon, which was held virtually



UCF Continuing Education is offering free online professional development courses to the public for a limited time. Courses include:

- *Twelve Steps to a Successful Job Search*
- *Fundamentals of Supervision and Management*
- *Personal Finance*
- *Creating Web Pages*
- *Marketing Your Business on the Internet*

The deadline to enroll for free is June 30. ce.ucf.edu

KNIGHTS ON TOP

#1 Game design graduate program in North America (The Princeton Review and *PC Gamer* magazine)

#2



Cybersecurity team in the nation (National Collegiate Cyber Defense Competition)

2

Goldwater Scholarship recipients

#2

Emergency and crisis management graduate program in the nation (*U.S. News & World Report*)



#4

Best hospitality and hotel management school in the world (*CEOWorld* magazine)

#5

Nonprofit management graduate program in the nation (*U.S. News & World Report*)



#12

Optics and photonics graduate program in the nation (*U.S. News & World Report*)



9

Fulbright recipients, including four English teaching assistant awards and five study/research awards

#13

Counselor education graduate program in the nation (*U.S. News & World Report*)



15

National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowship recipients

#14

Video game undergraduate program in North America (The Princeton Review and *PC Gamer* magazine)

#17

Local government management graduate program in the nation (*U.S. News & World Report*)



97.5%

Match rate of UCF medical students — compared to 93.7 percent nationally



#23

Public management and leadership graduate program in the nation (*U.S. News & World Report*)



Sudipta Seal

Professor and Chair for the Department of Materials Science and Engineering

"We're working to research if a nanoparticle coating can be applied to protective equipment to safely reuse supplies."



Michael Deichen

Associate Vice President for Student Health Services

"One week we were doing our care in person, and the next [week] all our clinical providers had to transition to telehealth. We've completed thousands of visits virtually."

On CAMPUS

Here are a few of the people at UCF who are holding everything together — even during a pandemic.



Jasmine Kettenacker

Videographer

"I've been here to document this historic time as UCF is working to help those affected by the coronavirus, as well as capture the first days of our new president."

A young man with long, curly hair and glasses is crouching in a garden, smiling as he works with plants. He is wearing a dark green t-shirt and shorts. The garden is filled with various plants, including large-leafed ones and smaller green herbs. The background shows more trees and a clear sky.

Andre Simoes '20

Biology graduate • Greenhouse
Coordinator for UCF Arboretum

"The fresh produce we harvest [at the Arboretum] goes to Knights Pantry, which is still supplying students in need with food."



Crystal Saul

Associate Director of Presidential Events

"We have been putting most of our energy into the virtual commencement and making that a memorable experience for our graduates."



Tony Chronister

UCF Police Department Sergeant

"I helped develop the traffic plan for the on-campus COVID-19 testing site, which is designed to prevent the spread of the virus."



Jon Palmer

Assistant Director of Sports Turf
and Grounds

*"It's tough for student-athletes to be away right now, but we know as soon as they're allowed back they will be — and we need to be ready."**

*Sixty football players have returned for voluntary workouts as of June 1.

Artifact

return item

A library card with a story to tell

BY JENNA MARINA LEE

At first glance, **Kelsey Moscatier '15 '20MBA** wasn't entirely sure what she had discovered tucked away in her worn copy of *War and Peace* this spring.

The index card she unearthed was definitely old. But would a Social Security number really be listed on a library card? Still, the unmistakable 18 punched holes confirmed it: She had just found the Florida Technological University student library card of her late grandfather, **Harold Garrett '75**.

The timing couldn't have been more perfect.

"I cried," says Moscatier, who earned her MBA in May while working as UCF Advancement's assistant director of communication strategy.

1 FORESHADOWING HOPE

"When I found it, I was really stressing about finishing up my last semester of grad school, especially with everything that's happened in the past few months," Moscatier says. "He is the only person in my family besides me with a college degree. He would have understood more than anyone the hard work I put into this. It just felt like a big sign — like he was here with me telling me that everything was going to be OK."

2 BACKSTORY

After serving 24 years in the U.S. Navy, Garrett settled in Winter Springs and earned his degree in accounting from FTU. He worked as an auditor for the Orange County school board while raising four daughters, among them Moscatier's mother. As the youngest of Garrett's six grandchildren, Moscatier says he had a soft spot for her as the baby of the family. "He read to me every day when I was a kid. The *Magic Tree House* series was one of our favorites. He instilled in me a love of books and reading. He was my world," she says.

3 PLOT TWIST

Moscatier received acceptance letters from Florida State University and UCF, but FSU offered a scholarship for four years with all expenses paid. The choice seemed like a no-brainer. But then her grandfather was diagnosed with cancer, and she made the decision to stay closer to home. "I figured out if I took out a loan and continued to work my part-time job as a hostess, I could cover the UCF tuition," she says. "To me, it was worth it because I could pop in for visits on the weekends and talk about my classes and share my experience with him."

4 BOOKENDS

Before her grandfather died during her freshman year, he gave Moscatier a handwritten card that she now keeps with the library card. She says the two seem like the perfect bookends to her college experience. "I love you very much and always will!" he wrote. "I have no doubt that you will be successful in whatever you do."

5 LIFE OF A LIBRARY CARD

UCF library cards have experienced many iterations over the years, and as recently as 2000 they used Social Security numbers as ID numbers. In 1995, student IDs replaced library cards and provided access to services, including the library, long-distance calling, meal plans and athletic events. Today, more than 290,000 items ranging from traditional books to laptops are borrowed annually through UCF Libraries.





Selfless Service

As a nurse in the Air Force, retired colonel and doctoral candidate Paulette Schank has saved countless lives. bit.ly/ucf-selfless-service



Tide Change

A new study by Assistant Professor Thomas Wahl helps predict how many people are at risk due to sea level rise and storm surges. bit.ly/ucf-tide-change

Now Is the Time

Interim Chief Equity, Inclusion and Diversity Officer S. Kent Butler on the need to be actively anti-racist. bit.ly/ucf-actively-anti-racist



ERA Now?

Associate Professor M.C. Santana discusses the Equal Rights Amendment and why you should care about its fate. bit.ly/ucf-era-now



Life in Quarantine

Associate lecturer Nathan Holic '02 '07MFA shares a day in the life of a stay-at-home professor. bit.ly/ucf-quarantine

WHAT'S TRENDING ON...

UCF NEWS

Containing an Outbreak

Frankie Catalfumo '13 is using his expertise as an infection control epidemiologist at Johns Hopkins Hospital to keep patients and hospital staff safe. bit.ly/ucf-hopkins

Duty Bound

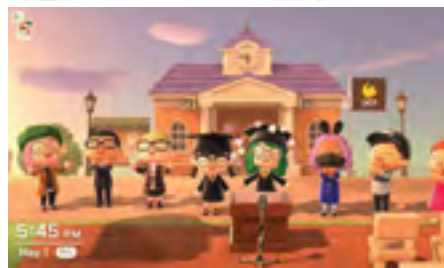
Capt. **Paul Kohler '20MSN** is putting his graduate nursing degree to the test five miles up and 5,000 miles away from home. bit.ly/ucf-duty-bound

Knight for Life

Chuck Dziuban reflects on 50 years of teaching at UCF — and why anyone would ever want to leave. bit.ly/ucf-knight-for-life

TWITTER

May 2 @Graceeface
Make the most of what you are given
#ChargeOn@UCF #ACNH



Mar 18 @NottheCandyBar
Wowww I'm really going to be attending UCF again this fall but as a graduate student

Still speechless tbh

June 3 @UCFCartwright
So many Knights are hurting now, shattered by the horror of George Floyd's murder and our country's history of racial injustices. @UCF looks like the future of America. We must be an example of inclusion for the world. Black Lives Matter. You matter.

LINKEDIN

University of Central Florida
April 11

We have so much ❤️ for our community!

Resident Theatre UCF costume designer and her family are making masks for our UCF Police Department officers stationed at the COVID-19 testing site on campus. lnkd.in/dyvx6v9



447 reactions, 9 comments, 11,196 views

Gabriella Pacetti This IS what Knights do! Thank you, Professor Tollefson + daughters, for sharing your talent! Charge On!

Melissa A. Milliron Awesome contribution!!

TO CAPTURE A MOMENT

An unusual assignment gave history students a chance to reflect on the items that most defined the pandemic.

BY LAURA J. COLE

It's the year 2120, and a museum is putting together an exhibition in memory of the centennial of the COVID-19 pandemic. You have to select an artifact to include in the exhibition that best encapsulates what this moment in time was really like. The only stipulation: You can't choose anything medical, such as a face mask. What do you choose and why?

That is the question instructor **Kevin Mitchell Mercer '12 '17MA** posed to students in two sections of his *U.S. History: 1877 to Present* course as part of an extra credit assignment. The assignment was intended to get students to think about history a little differently: as someone who's actively living through a moment that defines an epoch.

"The results are moving and heartbreaking," Mercer said in a series of tweets about the assignment that went viral. "Collectively, they show young lives in disruption."

Answers ranged from the glass doors through which students were forced to interact with loved ones to things left unfinished, such as half-empty course notebooks and used Scantrons.

We asked students in the course permission to share their answers. Here is a sampling of what they chose and why.



JIGSAW PUZZLES

Emma Cahill
Hospitality Management

Who would've thought that jigsaw puzzles would become a hot commodity? So many people are turning to this almost outdated pastime that places such as Target, Walmart and even Amazon are selling out of them.

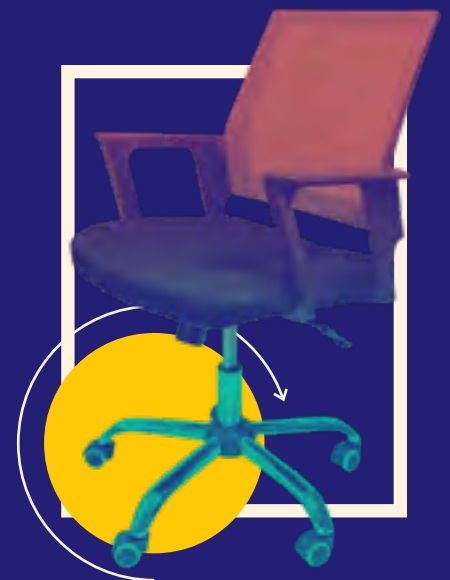
I have always loved doing puzzles, but usually I don't have time to complete them. Now I have all the time in the world, and I've completed about seven puzzles. My mom has been posting the puzzles I complete on Facebook, and her friends are responding with the ones they've completed — even offering to leave some on their porch so I can grab them. It's become a way to connect us while we try and fill our days with something that doesn't always involve a screen.

OFFICE CHAIR

Korinna Perez-Nunez
Entertainment Management

If I had to choose one thing to represent the pandemic, I would pick my office chair. I use it way more than I used to. It's where I spend the entirety of my day while I do my online homework and work. Every time I look at this chair now, I think about turning my laptop on and getting started with my new daily routine.

I think that many others would feel the same way about their home workspaces since they're most likely getting used more now than ever.



ANALOG CLOCK

Narvin Chhay
Sport and Exercise Science

For my artifact, I would probably choose the big analog clock in my living room. This is mostly a symbolic artifact, but I feel like it represents a lot of the feelings I have dealt with over the course of the pandemic.

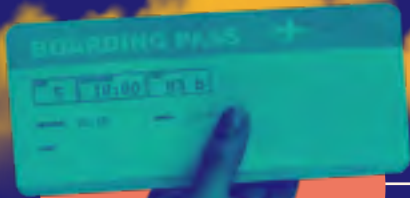
I was having the time of my life my sophomore year. Then, just like that, the clock stopped and everything in our world was put on pause, but we are still losing time. This is the best way I can explain the feeling.

The most valuable thing we have in our lives is time. Most of my questions about the pandemic are in regard to it. When will this end? When can we go back to life as it was before? Will I still be done with college in two more years or will it now take longer? Hopefully, most of us have a long life ahead of us, where we will have countless hours of time to spend learning, growing and experiencing as much in life as we can.

AIRPLANE TICKET

Gibran Khalil
Electrical Engineering

I would include my flight ticket back home. International travel has been suspended, and I can't go back home. The only way I could get back home if I wanted to is to violate my F1 Visa and get deported back to Aruba, my home country. It sucks that I can't physically go to where my family is, and I've struggled to stay motivated.



WALL PHONE

Jan Soto Acevedo
Political Science

I would select an antique, disconnected wall phone. My mom works for a healthcare provider for the elderly and hearing her calls with patients breaks my heart because they are a population that is currently suffering from this pandemic, even if they are not infected with COVID-19. They can't as easily access groceries and medicine, and they are struggling with depression and immense economic debt due to the pandemic. For this reason, the antique, disconnected wall phone signifies the anxiety that's put upon this particular group of people in this time of need.



GRADUATION CAP AND PROM DRESS

Natalie Nguyen
Political Science

The artifacts that I would choose to represent the pandemic are a graduation cap and a prom dress, which represent the celebration of the end of one journey and the beginning of a new one. I was fortunate to experience both my prom and high school graduation, although I have close friends who have lost both opportunities.

My heart goes out to all who have died and to those who are still suffering from this disease. But my heart also goes out to those who have lost experiences, friendships and the close to important chapters in their lives.

BOOKS

Alexis Robinson
English

During this time, I've found myself reading more than usual and I've noticed that other people have been reading more to pass the time as well. Books have been something that most of us have taken for granted and haven't really paid much attention to, as with most of the arts in general. However, with the current state of things, items like books are what are keeping us sane during quarantines and lockdowns. It's also surprising how many books are based around events like this, ones that we all believed would never be realistic. In a way these books are marking our reality through their fictional tales.



TWEET ABOUT NBA SUSPENSION

Javal Brooks
Computer Science

During spring break, my friend and I drove to Miami to watch the Miami Heat play the Charlotte Hornets. Since COVID-19 was in the news, we were able to get great seats for a cheap price. During the fourth quarter of the game, I checked Twitter and saw multiple tweets with the news that NBA commissioner Adam Silver had decided to suspend the season. Seeing those tweets during the middle of the game made me feel like I was in an episode of *The Twilight Zone*. Sadly, the Heat lost that game, but I didn't even care about the outcome after I saw those tweets. I was just stunned that the season was over. I remember driving home and feeling like I was in the middle of history. It was a bittersweet moment for me and truly a moment in history I'd love to share.



HAND SANITIZER

Maliyah Tillman
Health Sciences

Hand sanitizer has become a sacred item for many individuals. The hysteria of the pandemic caused several people to buy it in bulk, hoping that these tiny bottles of hand sanitizer that kill 99.9 percent of germs would protect them from the dangers of this world.

I found myself in the very same situation of desperation, surveilling the stores, hoping to get lucky and score myself some hand sanitizer. I was among the lucky to find a lone bottle, waiting for the last greedy hand to take it off the shelf. That single bottle is now a symbol for this generation — a means of protection, security and consumer desperation. ♦

TRAUMA CHANGES EVERYONE.

For all the trauma that I have witnessed, I never expected a global pandemic resulting in a devastating loss of life, bringing our economy and perhaps our society to their knees.

The world has changed for everyone. The luckiest among us stay in our houses, working and learning from home. In public, we now stand six feet apart wearing masks — eliminating important human behaviors such as hugs, handshakes and smiles. These changes will exist for some time, but they are miniscule compared to this event's overall, long-term impact.

Mental health professionals know that the people likely to suffer the most severe psychological effects of trauma are those who are at its central core. In this pandemic, the myriad of people who have lost jobs and livelihoods, either temporarily or permanently, will be severely affected. There are two other groups who are severely affected: families who have lost or will lose a loved one to COVID-19, and the hospital workers and first responders on the front line of this pandemic.

The death of a family member is always difficult — in this time of contagion, death is particularly cruel. We cannot hold the hand of the dying or have that last private goodbye. FaceTime cannot substitute for physical presence in life's final moments.

Funerals are not for the deceased. They are for the people left behind. Funerals provide a chance to connect — to get or give emotional support and to grieve our loss with others. Funerals provide closure: A loved one is properly laid to rest. COVID-19 has robbed us of this very important ritual, leaving behind a grieving family without an important, timely steppingstone by which to move on.

First responders and healthcare workers have died in the line of duty after contracting COVID-19. For others who test positive, they must quarantine — alone perhaps in a hotel for weeks — to avoid transmission to their families.

Physical separation takes a psychological toll. Additionally, healthcare workers describe apocalyptic working conditions. The emotional cost of repeatedly witnessing death and the dying's intimate last words with family has led some healthcare professionals to depression, despair and even suicide. There are some traumatic events that are just so horrific that no one should expect to walk away unscathed. For all these heroes, this is one of those events.

The most common response to trauma is short-term stress followed by natural recovery.

Typically, a traumatic event occurs and afterward, recovery begins. This pandemic is different. We do not know when it will end. The previous models of recovery may not apply.

Trauma changes you forever, but I believe that we will rise above, stronger and more in touch with what really matters. Stay safe and well, and please, take care of each other.

TRAU RESIL

UCF mental health experts discuss the



Deborah Beidel

Pegasus Professor of psychology and medical education and director of UCF RESTORES

MA & IENCE

impact the pandemic will have on us.

RESILIENCY IS IN OUR DNA.

The COVID-19 pandemic is a crisis that has resulted in significant challenges and detrimental consequences in all aspects of life. Individuals and families across the nation are facing uncertainty, fear, anxiety, physical illness and the unexpected death of loved ones.

Everyone reacts to situations differently, and individual experiences of COVID-19 can range from challenging to traumatic.

Although the timeline for COVID-19 is uncertain, this pandemic will subside and life will continue. We should avoid trying to bounce back to normal, as if these past months never occurred. We may not be the same people, community or nation we were prior to COVID-19. But our experiences have the potential to foster change and increase our resolve.

As a result, COVID-19 may present an opportunity to highlight the resiliency of humankind.

Resilience is a dynamic process that relates to our capacity to recover, adapt and thrive following adverse experiences. While it is natural to dwell on the negative impact and real consequences of COVID-19, there may be a silver lining.

Crisis situations can highlight and strengthen altruism, cohesiveness and growth among individuals, families, communities and our collective society.

There are many factors that can promote and support individuals' resilience in the wake of crises, including having empathy toward others, promoting emotional well-being and stability, fostering a sense of optimism about the future, cultivating creativity, being physically active, encouraging openness to experiences, inspiring humor,

nurturing problem-solving abilities and promoting social competence.

Signs of positive growth following significant adversity may be seen when we view ourselves as survivors as opposed to victims, are aware of our vulnerabilities, maintain positive interpersonal relationships, demonstrate compassion and altruism, change our priorities and develop a gratitude for life. We have the opportunity to emerge on the other side of the COVID-19 pandemic stronger, but it's up to us.

We need to collectively support one another by building on each other's strengths and identifying coping strategies that foster growth and positive outcomes during these challenging times. Some people have access to support and resources that can buffer the negative outcomes of the pandemic more than others. Underserved and vulnerable populations have been hit hardest with the consequences of COVID-19.

The disruption of normal life and lack of access to basic physiological and psychological resources may cause detrimental results. To promote resilience, we need to identify strengths and support interventions that make resources readily available for all.

There is no denying that the COVID-19 pandemic is a crisis that has resulted in many difficult challenges and adverse traumatic experiences. It would be naive to minimize the many negative consequences that have occurred as a result of this devastating pandemic.

Yet when the effects of the pandemic start to subside, we will see that humankind is resilient. We have the ability to not only recover but also to grow stronger and thrive in the wake of this crisis. ♦

Glenn Lambie

*Robert N. Heintzelman Eminent Scholar
Endowed Chair and professor of
counselor education*



THEN & NOW

As UCF senior Brandon Aliberti works toward his fall graduation, he reminisces with his grandfather, Gary Wright '70, a member of UCF's first graduating class 50 years ago.



Brandon Aliberti and his grandfather, Gary Wright '70 (pictured here at the Buffalo game on Oct. 4, 2003).

Brandon Aliberti: What was it like to attend UCF back when you were in school, Papa?

Gary Wright '70: When [then Florida Technological University] opened, I had just graduated from Brevard Junior College. I was working third shift at Kennedy Space Center as a heavy equipment operator, so I could go to school during the daytime. They didn't have night classes then. I would get off at 7 a.m. and drive to Orlando for an 8 a.m. class. It was hard to get classes scheduled back to back, so my favorite place to spend time was sitting in my car under the shade trees outside the library because that's where everyone parked.

BA: With web courses and our schedules now, there's a class time like every 10 minutes for me to choose from.

GW: We obviously didn't have computers back then. I registered for classes in person. You'd schedule a time to register, stand in line and hope your classes were still available by the time you got to the front of the line. Especially when you were close to graduating, and you needed just certain classes — you were always sweating blood.

BA: Did you know immediately that you wanted to go to UCF when it opened?

GW: I played baseball and football in high school, and I had an invitation to try out as a walk-on for the football team for Memphis State [now University of Memphis]. If I made the team, they were going to give me a full scholarship. I was packing my bags to ride a bus all the way to Memphis when I got a call from the Brevard Junior College baseball coach, who offered me a baseball scholarship. I got to thinking maybe that might not be too bad — I could stay close to home, and I planned on getting married to your grandma. I played baseball for two years and then UCF opened up.

BA: What do you remember about your graduation ceremony?

GW: It's been 50 years now, so my memories are not as sharp as they used to be. I remember it was at the Bob Carr Theater [then the Orlando Municipal Auditorium]. I was thankful I was graduating and getting my diploma. When I was working third shift that first year during school, it was really tough trying to balance everything. My grades slid that first quarter. To finally graduate

and make the dean's list the last six quarters — for me, that was amazing. The only way I made it through that was with your grandma's support. I hope I'm around long enough to see all you grandkids graduate.

BA: I'm really looking forward to reaching that peak of the mountain and finally accomplishing my goal of earning my degree. When you chose to go to UCF, did you have any idea you were going to be starting our family legacy of UCF graduates?

GW: No, I really couldn't have predicted this. Your grandma [Ann Wright '84] graduated, and from then on it's been an amazing run of watching the college grow and seeing our two children, Jeff ['96] and Jill [Aliberti '92], graduate. They married UCF graduates, Matt [Aliberti '92] and Natalie [(Malits) '02], and now you're about to graduate. Your sister, Brooke, is registered to start as a freshman this summer. My three other granddaughters have UCF on their radar big time. It's really been a blessing that UCF is our family school. It's given us a lot of wonderful memories.

BA: I think about all our tailgates and the trips we've taken to watch the football team. I've only missed one home game my entire life. Game days are like national holidays for us. What are some of your favorite memories?

GW: You've been going with us to football games pretty much as soon as you were born. Your mom and dad

dressed you up as Charlie Brown for your first game — the Halloween game in 1998 against Youngstown State. We had to cover your ears with everyone screaming. Obviously, all the bowl wins have been a lot of fun. And J.J. Worton ['14]'s catch against Temple happened right in front of us. One of the most memorable games with you was the "Marshall Monsoon" game [in 2011]. [The rain] came straight down in buckets, but we stood there and watched that game and hooted and hollered and laughed. And waking up at 3:30 a.m. to go with you to *College GameDay* on campus, that was a lot of fun.

BA: To be a student during the winning streak and the championships was amazing. What has made it even more special is getting to intern in the athletic department with the content team. They took a chance on me — I came into that with very limited experience. I've learned so much about the inner workings of social media, what type of content to produce, engagement. It's one of the things I'm most proud of during my time as a student, and to get this experience while working for a team I love — it doesn't get better than that.

UCF is the only school I applied to. It was a no-brainer that I wanted to go here. I think we're one of few families with three generations of Knights, and I feel really lucky to have a family like ours who is so passionate about UCF. And I have you to thank for that.

GW: I'm real thankful that you're my grandson. ♦



Wright graduated from then FTU on June 14, 1970.



Aliberti's Halloween costume for his first football game on Oct. 31, 1998, was black and gold inspired.



The Wright-Aliberti family's first UCF bowl game trip was the 2007 Liberty Bowl.



When Aliberti graduates in December, he will be the family's seventh UCF alum.



Wright and wife, Ann '84, have been married for 52 years.

CALLING THE SHOTS

Whether playing eight ball, searching for optical solutions or planning for the future, new **UCF President Alexander N. Cartwright** is hardwired to visualize all possible opportunities.

BY LAURA J. COLE

UCF President Alexander N. Cartwright is used to thinking several steps ahead.

The former chancellor for the University of Missouri describes his thought process as visual, something he's put into practice not only as a researcher and administrator but also as a champion billiards player.

"People don't think about strategy enough," Cartwright says. "I think about it in terms of eight ball. When I'm planning my first shot, I already know how I'm going to get to the eight ball. When you're an administrator, you have to think that way. For every decision you make, there are at least 10 additional things that are going to happen as a result."

That ability to think through possible outcomes has served him well as a leader. After holding administrative positions at The State University of New York and the University at Buffalo, Cartwright joined Mizzou in 2017 — two years after tense racial relations embroiled the Columbia, Missouri, campus in protests and a hunger strike that led to the resignation of both the state university system's president and the campus's chancellor. He is credited with repairing campus relationships, advocating for student success initiatives, and pushing for a more equitable and diverse environment.

A report compiled on the university's recovery that was published a year after Cartwright arrived at UM found that people "expressed confidence in the leadership team."



Part of his success came from being able to visualize what healing a fractured campus community would look like and the many small steps needed to get there.

“A lot of the big steps — the breaking down of anything we’re trying to change — are done [through] small steps,” Cartwright said during a 2018 American Council on Education (ACE) panel on navigating a campus racial crisis. “We need to make sure that we’re doing them every day. That’s how you really make change happen.”

Cartwright realized that what the community needed most to heal was someone who would listen, who would be consistent, who would ensure the impact matched the intent, and who would lead by example.

“You have to recognize this work as a moral imperative and develop a strategic road map,” said Kevin McDonald, then the vice chancellor for inclusion, diversity and equity at UM, during the 2018 ACE panel. “It has to be intentional, pervasive and consistent. Alex recognized the importance of engagement. He was consistent, and he modeled that behavior.”

Cartwright, who started at UCF on April 13 in the midst of the global pandemic, is now working on several new strategies — including how to prioritize the campus community’s health and safety, how to reopen the campus, how to strengthen our national reputation, and how to continue making Knights proud of their alma mater.

Why did you want to come to UCF?

I’ve known about UCF for many years because of CREOL [the College of Optics and Photonics]. Even before UCF became the huge institution that it is today, it was an institution in the optics community that was well respected and well known.

But the more I found out about the university, the more I realized that it was a good match to who I am and what I value. UCF was founded on the technical fields, which are obviously areas that I’m very interested in — I got my degrees in engineering. And UCF is this combination of an institution that has a tremendous number of first-generation and Pell [Grant]-eligible students — I was both of those — and includes a diverse mixture of people. It puts us in a strong position to be a role model.

UCF is also in a great location. It’s close to the Bahamas, where my family is from, and close to Tampa, where my brother lives, so that is certainly appealing.

What appeals to you about UCF’s access mission?

It’s my personal experience. I got a GED. I went to a community college. I had to figure out a way to get my bachelor’s degree.

I didn’t start my degree in engineering until I was 21. When I think about that now, I just can’t believe that I made that change from accounting. I had already worked very hard to get to the point where I was at the University of Iowa. And then to switch and start over, either I really had no clue as to what I was actually doing or I had this optimism that anything is possible. And I think it was a combination of the two.

I’m not in any way unique. The only thing that is different about me is I had access to that opportunity. I had just the right things happen at the right time, and I got lucky. I had different professors reach out to me at certain times. On one of my exams, a professor wrote, “You really should be thinking about going to graduate school.” It’s little things like that that influence who you become.

I know there are a lot of people out there like me. I know there are a lot of people who have even more capability and more talent. We need to ensure that they have that access to opportunity and that they’re able to then achieve their dreams. It benefits not only them but also society.

Can you talk about the role higher education plays in providing access to opportunity? What role do faculty play in fostering a future that students may not otherwise consider?

I think higher education is transformative, but it’s mostly transformative if you’re able to see yourself in the shoes of someone you look up to.

For me, the professors that actually had the biggest impact were the ones who didn’t take themselves very seriously. I could see that they were having a great time. Once you see that, there’s so much possibility for you because you start recognizing that you can do that. It’s why I’m such a big believer in having research experiences and having students work with faculty. The biggest thing that comes out of that is not necessarily that students learn the material — though that’s also important. It’s that students start realizing that they can do it too, and that they can probably even do it better. That’s so important.

What do you think is the role of a university?

I’ve thought a lot about what universities could be.

Universities started off as ivory towers. The commonly held vision of a university was something private, elite, where few were admitted. Then we transitioned to public universities that were shown to have an impact on society. But still, universities were pretty elite; not everybody could get into them. Then maybe 30 years ago, people started talking a lot more about the engaged university, where universities were working with the community. But in all of those scenarios, it’s always that the university is this beacon of light that is shining knowledge on others but isn’t learning *from* them.

I think that the next phase is that universities will be completely integrated within our communities. When there are no boundaries and no borders — then you really can do so much more.

Many people are focusing on how bleak the future could be for higher education, but you have an optimistic outlook. Why? Where does your optimism come from?

Honestly, I think it’s just because I believe in people. I believe that we actually do want to become better, and that we’re trying to do the right things.

The great thing about working at a research university is that you are trained to look at all sorts of different challenges and to think about how you might solve them. Believing that people are always trying to do the right thing allows one to push forward. You have to feel very good about what your collaborators are trying to do.

When I became a vice president for research, one of the things that I had the opportunity to do was work with some of the best and brightest at the University at Buffalo. What I learned was that as long as someone is committed to it, things can and do become better. For example, some of the work we did with biomedical researchers included using technology to implant stents in the brains of stroke victims. That, to me, is just remarkable. When the researchers started, we weren’t



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sure it could work, and now it's saving lives. Those are the things that make you optimistic.

I also look at the journey I went on, and then I look at my children. They've had completely different opportunities than I did. And it's because I was given those chances. It's because I was able to move to the U.S. that I've been able to get where I am.

Every day that I wake up, I think about how lucky I am, and that can't help but give you optimism for what's possible.

What are you most looking forward to once campus reopens?

I'm a little terrified of Spirit Splash, but I am interested in seeing that for the first time. I get it, I love all the spirit, and I understand why it's important — every institution has a tradition. Plus, I'm fascinated by the ducks.

Tell me a little more about your children.

What makes you most proud of them?

My wife and I are very lucky. We have two incredibly bright children. Of course, we're biased, but that's OK. Our daughter, Alyssa, went to undergraduate at MIT, and she's now a graduate student at Stanford studying electrical engineering — which is what I studied. She thinks a lot like I do, and the way she solves problems is very similar. She loves the same math that I do — I mean, not everybody loves vector-based calculus, but we do.

Our son, Andrew, is interested in the social sciences. His

degree is in industry and labor relations from Cornell. He's thinking about going to law school. A different area, but again, it's about the logic and mapping.

They've both done a really great job, but they were fortunate. They lived in a great school district, got to go to a great high school, did very well — both were National Merit finalists — and had perfect ACT scores. They've taken advantage of opportunities that my wife and I didn't have.

Tell me a little bit about your wife. How did you meet?

Melinda and I met at the University of Iowa. At the time, she was a music education major, and we met in a pool hall at the student union. That's where I spent most of my time.

From the first time I saw her, I knew she was the person I wanted to be with. We got engaged a few months after we started dating and were married a year and a half later.

She majored in music education, taught middle school band for three years and then went back to school for a computer science degree. She had a long career in IT, at the University at Buffalo and then at the University at Albany.

When I got the job at Missouri, she stopped working because the spouses in these roles have a significant job. They attend and work lots of events, and they do a lot of behind-the-scenes work. She enjoys that, and she enjoys being around people.

And who is better at pool now?

Well, I'm still pretty good... ♦



Hometown: Nassau, Bahamas

Wife: Melinda

Children: Alyssa and Andrew

Education:

Ph.D. in electrical and computer engineering, University of Iowa, 1995

B.S. in electrical and computer engineering, University of Iowa, 1989

Did you know?

Cartwright is the first in his family to graduate from college and is an internationally recognized scholar in optics. But he almost never got his start in engineering. When he began at the University of Iowa, he planned to become an accountant. While a student, he worked the second shift at a factory, and his boss suggested he consider changing his major.

"I didn't know what engineering was," Cartwright said in an article in *Mizzou* magazine. "I didn't know what engineers did. ... Not everybody is privileged to be exposed to multiple careers at a young age and be able to say, 'This is what I like or don't like.' We might have Einsteins out there who should go into physics, but they may not know what physics is. We need to provide them with access to opportunities to explore and learn."

After exploring engineering and talking to people in the department, Cartwright switched his major and never looked back.





REMOTE

7 DAYS 69,525 STUDENTS 6,600 NEW COURSES

How UCF leaned on more than two decades of online learning expertise to shift the entire university to remote learning.

BY MAUREEN HARMON

On Jan. 21, 2020, the state of Washington identified “patient zero” — the first confirmed case of COVID-19 in the United States. By early March, Washington claimed the most cases in the country, and the University of Washington moved all its classes online after a staff member off campus tested positive.

Tom Cavanagh was paying attention. The vice provost for digital learning at UCF had begun monitoring early on what UW — a public research university similar to

UCF but with nearly 20,000 fewer students — would do.

“They were the first university to make that decision,” says Cavanagh. “And that’s the one that got our attention.”

Cavanagh could see the coming tide. Should COVID-19 begin an eastward creep — and there was no reason to believe it wouldn’t, having first been identified in China before moving through Europe and into the states — more than 69,500 UCF students would be finishing the



POSSIBILITY

“ Clearly, we’ve had to scramble, but we had all the pieces in place. We knew you had to have student support. We knew you had to put in place, immediately, all kinds of support mechanisms for a large population of faculty to make this rapid transition.”

— Charles Dziuban, director of UCF’s Research Initiative for Teaching Effectiveness

semester from home. He gathered his team, and they worked to create a website with resources for faculty should UCF need to follow UW’s lead as the virus spread through the U.S. “The plan was to build a website and just keep it offline,” says Cavanagh. “And then should something happen, we would press the button and make it go live.”

But the tide came quickly. “By the time we finished the website, we were already pushing it live — maybe a little sooner than we would have

been comfortable with — because the Board of Governors had made a decision while we were on spring break to go into a remote instructional mode,” Cavanagh says.

The Board of Governors’ announcement came on March 11, only five days after UW made its decision. Remote learning at UCF was set to begin on March 18. That meant the team that usually supports 200,000 credit hours for online learners had to be ready to support 700,000 credit hours — or an



additional 6,600 courses — in about a week. The website couldn't launch soon enough.

But Cavanagh and his group had history in their corner. With more than two decades of embracing online learning, and 87 percent of UCF students having taken at least one online or blended course in 2019–20, moving students out of the classroom and onto the internet wasn't uncharted territory. UCF dove headfirst into an area it had been perfecting for 24 years.

That website quickly became two: "Keep Teaching," a website for faculty with workshops, lectures and tips for getting a traditional class off the ground online; and "Keep Learning" for students, with links to information about proctored exams, announcements and notifications, and guides to Zoom.

UCF was simply better prepared than schools that have bucked the online learning movement, says Charles Dziuban, director of UCF's Research Initiative for Teaching Effectiveness.

"Clearly, we've had to scramble," Dziuban says, "but we had all the pieces in place. We knew you had to have student support. We knew you had to put in place, immediately, all kinds of support mechanisms for a large population of faculty to make this rapid transition."

Imagine, he says, trying to pull this feat together with no online learning background or data — information that UCF has been collecting for years. "The trauma of it — of really coming to terms with the fact that you have to do this from scratch, and you really do not have the infrastructure in place. That's the difference between what UCF has done and what other institutions are

90 employees — ready to bring the rest of the university on board this ship that had no choice but to sail.

Throughout March and April, the center handled 692 individual faculty consultations; nearly 1,400 faculty tuned in for Zoom training; more than 2,500 watched YouTube training videos created to assist them in converting their traditional courses to an online learning environment; and

Remote learning at UCF was set to begin on March 18. That meant the team that usually supports 200,000 credit hours for online learners had to be ready to support 700,000 credit hours — or an additional 6,600 courses — in about a week.

grappling with," says Dziuban. "To be sure, other schools have done a phenomenal piece of work in getting this done. But it's not the same."

That's not to say it was easy. Or that UCF's faculty, students and staff didn't face challenges. But UCF knew, from experience, that it could be done and that it could be done well. After all, UCF had seasoned online faculty, online course designers, tech experts and an entire center — the Center for Distributed Learning with its nearly

the Keep Teaching website brought in nearly 10,000 views.

Faculty members were encouraged to be flexible and creative. And the professors took that to heart. Dissection of a honeybee over Zoom. Kitchen-safe lab experiments next to the home microwave. A faculty member tackling complex data and statistical problems on her glass shower door with a dry-erase marker. Young entrepreneurs pitching ideas to corporate partners in video calls.

Dance performances in the garage. It all just kept moving forward.

For Serena Rojas, a student in the Rosen College of Hospitality Management, being at home in her own kitchen worked just fine for her. Rojas, who lives two hours from campus, isn't new to online learning. She is a typical UCF mixed mode — or blended — learner, taking about four courses online each year so she can work while earning her degree.

"I have the comfort of cooking in my own home with my tools," says Rojas. "I also got to cook what I enjoy eating." Rojas coordinated her cooking assignments with her parents, so they wouldn't overlap in the kitchen. She even incorporated her father's fried rice recipe into an assignment, uploading images of her dish to show the final product and creative plating.

The toughest part? Self-evaluation. Without a chef at her side, Rojas had to get real honest about what she did right and where she could have been better. "I had to understand this is what I did well, and this is what I didn't do well," says Rojas. The perks? Mom's input. "When I was plating some of the stuff, my mom was like, 'Let me get out the nice plates.'"

...

Cavanagh wants to be clear here: There is a big difference between the online learning models that UCF has embraced over the last 24 years and remote learning — courses that were originally scheduled to be classroom, hybrid or primarily distance learning but were provided remotely due to the coronavirus. UCF's structured online learning model requires faculty to participate in 10 weeks — or a minimum of 80 hours — of training and to work with course designers and instructional designers who help them create a valuable online learning experience for their students. Remote learning? That's a different beast built out of necessity. That's where shower-door dry-erase boards and Zoom lectures come in.

FACULTY CREATIVITY

Dissection of a honeybee over Zoom • Kitchen-safe lab experiments next to the home microwave • Tackling complex data and statistical problems on the glass shower door with a dry-erase marker • Young entrepreneurs pitching ideas to corporate partners in video calls • Dance performances in the garage

“Students have told us, time and time again, of this online learning environment, ‘You’re making education more convenient. You’re reducing the logistical demands for getting an education. You’re increasing my learning flexibility’ ... We’re committed to that.”

— Charles Dziuban

One thing the two have in common is access. That’s how the online model blossomed at UCF, now considered an expert institution when it comes to online learning. *U.S. News & World Report* ranks UCF among the top 20 schools for an online degree, and the Center for Distributed Learning has been racking up awards for its work since 2003, including a Digital Learning Innovation Award from the Online Learning Consortium in 2018.

“UCF leadership has been committed to extending this opportunity for students to continue their education outside the purview of the traditional university,” says Dziuban of the move to embrace online learning back in 1996. “They were responding to the needs of new lifestyles of students who are working; students who are underserved; students who have all kinds of demands on them, for whom it would be burdensome to make that commitment to be full time on campus.”

Right now, access is defined by terms mandated by state governments, but Cavanagh also points to students with families and full-time jobs who want to further their education. And there’s also a generation of upcoming students who

are used to interacting, socializing and working online. And as he looks to the future, access may quickly encompass students who want to be close to home or who want the option of avoiding crowded spaces in a post-pandemic world.

For people like Dziuban, it will be fascinating to watch COVID-19’s impact on the online learning space — even after a vaccine is created to combat the coronavirus. “Students have told us, time and time again, of this online learning environment, ‘You’re making education more convenient,’” says Dziuban.

“You’re reducing the logistical demands for getting an education. You’re increasing my learning flexibility, and you’re creating for me online technology to enhance learning. You’re creating an extended learning environment for me.’ We’re committed to that.”

That commitment means resources put toward course development and structure (it takes much more than a Zoom account to deliver a course specifically designed for the online environment) and consistent evaluation and assessment. All these tools were put in place at UCF through the Division of Digital Learning as well as the Research Initiative for Teaching Effectiveness. Since 1996, Dziuban says that students at UCF have consistently reported that they experience increased interaction in their online classes and that the quality of that interaction empowers their learning. Students who engage in blended learning classes (a combination of face to face and online) achieve success (a grade of C or higher) at a 3 to 4 percent increased rate over other course modalities. And digital courses produce success rates comparable to face-to-face offerings for women and minorities.

Cavanagh predicts that faculty members’ experience over the last several months will increase their interest in teaching online — even for those who once believed a quality education could only take place in a

physical classroom or lab. Through remote learning, they now have seen only a glimpse of what’s possible in a true, fully designed online course.

“We have seen demand for training of faculty to teach our regular online courses just explode,” says Cavanagh. “Typically, our training courses hold about 40 people, and we do that three times a year through our flagship faculty preparation program. We have almost 200 requests for this summer alone already.”

Data from UCF has long supported students’ demand for online

them to some of these educational tools and technologies — and they get used to using them — it fundamentally changes the way they teach face to face. They don’t abandon those electronic tools in a face-to-face environment completely,” says Cavanagh. “So I can see faculty that go back to being face-to-face instructors, still incorporating methods of online learning in their courses where they might use the learning management system to post announcements or share their

syllabus or use Zoom to bring in a guest speaker. We may have had kind of a high watermark in demand for online learning, but I don’t think the water level is going to settle back to where it was before.”

As has been the case for years in the online learning world, UCF will watch, learn and grow from the remote learning experience — already continuing

through the summer.

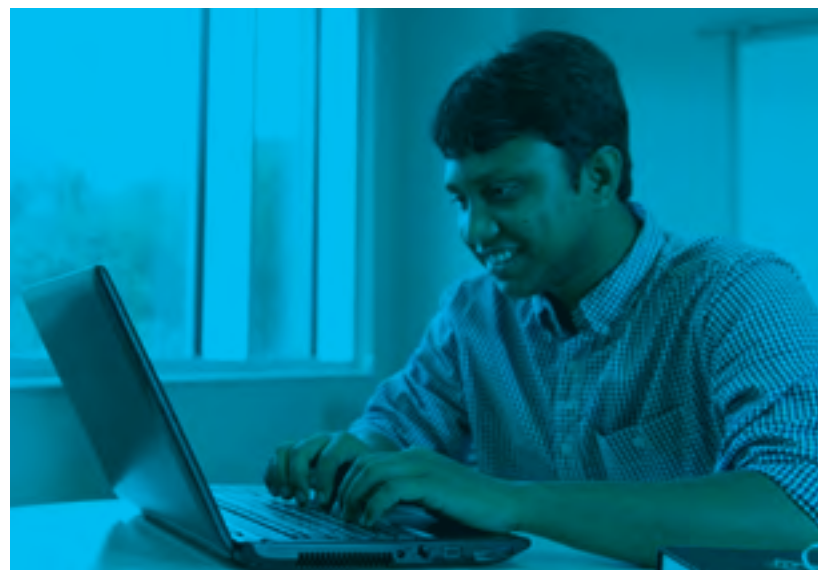
“We have been surveying both faculty and students through this period, asking faculty members, ‘How did it go? What were the pain points? What were the positives? What is needed for you to ramp up and make your instructional and learning lives better? Having done this, what can we learn?’” says Dziuban. “Because the reality is, we have no idea what’s coming — but we’ll be ready for it.” ♦

Demand for faculty training in online instruction has risen

150%

opportunities even before the public health crisis. Distance learning has fueled UCF’s growth over the past several years with online and blended courses accounting for half of all student credit hours during the 2019–20 academic year.

In addition, the exposure to new online learning tools — though necessary right now — will likely stick around. “Whenever we’ve put faculty through faculty development, have them teach online, and expose



CLASS OF 2020

BY NICOLE DUDENHOEFER '17
AND JENNA MARINA LEE

You work your whole life toward this moment. With every paper turned in, every presentation completed, every cram session and final passed, you inch a little closer to that looming goal: the cap and gown. *Pomp and Circumstance*. The smiles and tears. The diploma.

On paper, the big milestone still happened for the Class of 2020. In reality, it wasn't what anyone pictured. Last embraces with friends, goodbyes to teachers and long-awaited celebrations were swapped for a life-altering event that will likely define a generation.

Each of the 8,600 graduates in this year's spring class has a story worth telling. These are some of those stories.



DARWINS OLCIMA '20

DEGREE: B.S. IN PSYCHOLOGY
NEXT: PURSUING A MASTER'S DEGREE IN
 COLLEGE STUDENT PERSONNEL AT BOWLING
 GREEN STATE UNIVERSITY

I've been a resident advisor at Neptune since I was a freshman, and it wasn't until the world started ending that I found this place. I've passed it every day for the last four years, but I was always too busy to notice and appreciate how nice it is. I can just sit here and look out at the lake. It's been the one location that has become an oasis these last few months. I'm the second youngest of six kids so I am very family and community oriented. It has been really isolating and lonely to be on campus this entire time because there's nobody here.

I've done a lot of self-reflection. I keep a list of my thoughts in my phone. One of the things I wrote down is how the quarantine is essentially asking us to adapt and evolve. I think a lot of it is uncomfortable, and people don't like change because change can seem unsafe. I've had to reevaluate who I want to be. How do I want to define myself? What makes me happy? What's my plan? I think that's what I've taken from this experience — it's important to take a break from the busy and stop to think.

For me, I know I'm a person who wants to make things better. I want to reach more people and help them be the best version of themselves. I'm moving to Ohio, and I don't know what my grad degree program is going to hold. I'm excited. I'm afraid. It's my next journey. I want to get my Ph.D. and then possibly become a faculty member or work on a college campus. Who knows? I just know my future will involve helping others. My philosophy on life is to be close to people and take care of those around you.





DARIA KUDRYASHEVA '20

**DEGREE: BFA IN EMERGING MEDIA, WITH A FOCUS IN
EXPERIMENTAL ANIMATION
NEXT: CONSIDERING GRADUATE SCHOOL**

I was a teenager when I first realized that art could be a job. I watched behind-the-scenes videos on Pixar and DreamWorks, and that sparked a big interest for me. But in Russia, we don't have art classes in high school, so I never really had that art education. I remember thinking, if I do something else, I'm not going to feel as satisfied with my life. America is this dream country for a lot of people, so I was excited when I got into the UCF Global program.

My time here has made me more mature, more responsible. I want to make a copy of my diploma and mail it back home to my parents. I think for me it symbolizes my passion. You have to do a lot of hard work to get that degree, and it validates all that I had to go through. I'm still planning to attend the ceremony whenever they reschedule it. When I think about

the coronavirus canceling graduation, I realize that this is just one moment. It really doesn't compare to all of the years I spent here. That's what really matters the most.

While I was interning at Universal, I met a person who worked in animation for a long time. His advice was there's only so much you can control and not to stress out about getting that next big thing — that I should keep developing my skills and focus on my own talent. Whenever the next opportunity comes, I will be ready for it because I will have spent all this time developing myself. I'm trying to be more patient with life and not stress if I don't have that perfect job right now. We have certain things we think we have to achieve by a certain time. But life doesn't work like that. Everybody has their own journey.

The summer before my sophomore year at UCF, I felt a lump. I waited about half a week, and then I told my mom. She said, “You definitely need to go to the doctor.” I had testicular cancer. They removed the testicle, but the cancer had spread already. I had to get my kidney and 28 lymph nodes removed and do four cycles of chemotherapy.

My first doctor didn’t think I should keep going to school and should just focus on my treatment. But I was already through my first year, and things were going great. I wasn’t going to mess it up. My chemo sessions were five hours a day, five days a week with two weeks of recovery. A major reason I continued my education was so I would have something to do in the chemo room and not just sit there and think about death. I did homework and studied. I told all my professors immediately, and everyone was very caring — they wanted to

make sure I had someone to talk to. The only classes I missed were during my chemo treatments. I wore a face mask to classes. I got three Bs and one C that semester. Now I’m in remission.

As far as the future and job prospects, I’m scared just like everyone else in this industry. But I’ve learned that no matter how terrible things look, no matter how bad the cards are that are dealt to you, as long as you stay courageous and positive, you can get through almost anything.

Throughout this whole experience I realized I want to be the courage for others who may not have that. If I didn’t have the support from my family and friends, I don’t think I’d be alive right now. Telling my story is the best way to make a good thing out of a bad thing.

TOMMY DALLENBACH '20

DEGREE: B.S. IN HOSPITALITY MANAGEMENT
NEXT: PENDING CUSTOMER SERVICE POSITION AT
WALT DISNEY WORLD RESORT





GEORGE WALTERS- MARRAH '20

DEGREE: B.S. IN BIOMEDICAL SCIENCES
NEXT: PURSUING A DOCTORATE AT STANFORD

When the pandemic happened, I wasn't devastated. I wasn't angry. But I was bummed. It was something out of our control, and I knew stressing about it wasn't going to do anything. But I couldn't help but to feel bummed. I don't know a better word to explain it.

One of the things I was most looking forward to this last semester was the McNair Scholars Program end-of-year banquet where we can invite our family to celebrate with us. Usually, the seniors get up and talk about how the program helped them get to where they are today, and they give advice to the first-years in the program. We all get to say goodbye. We are doing the celebration online, which isn't completely the same but is still meaningful.

When I think about this last year, I'll remember the community I built with the other McNair scholars. We traveled to conferences in Hawaii and California. I got to snorkel for the first time in my life. I've also really enjoyed the group chat we started with alumni. We've been helping each other out with advice. Whenever someone gets a scholarship or accepted to a program, everyone comments on it and hypes them up.

Eventually I want to help underrepresented, first-generation students find what they're passionate about and go do it — much in the way that people have helped me.

JAYLYN WHITEHEAD '20

DEGREE: B.S. IN FINANCE

**NEXT: FINANCIAL REPRESENTATIVE FOR
NORTHWESTERN MUTUAL**

Sitting down next to my brothers and learning that our season was being postponed, and ultimately canceled, completely ripped me apart. It wasn't because my career as a baseball player had just ended, it was because of how special this team was. I have never been part of a team that had wanted to win for each other as much as this team. Whether it was practice or a game, we gave it our all. What I miss most is just being with them day in and day out. The potential is still there for the returning Knights when baseball starts up again.

I think there is this big misconception that student-athletes think they're better than other students or get special treatment. That's simply not true. We have to be present in our classes, take tests and write papers. And when we do play our games, we want to win for you. We want you to be proud. I'll always remember what it felt like to represent nearly 70,000 students out at John Euliano Park.

It's been hard adjusting to having much more free time, but during quarantine I've had several job interviews over Zoom. I'm blessed to have a job in the financial industry lined up. I've always been interested in the stock market, and I've seen how athletes go pro and lose all their money. I hope to bridge the gap with athletes to make sure that those who have a kid, wife or husband are able to provide and don't have to worry about money. I've had to overcome a lot as a student-athlete, transferring from a couple schools and taking five years to earn my degree, but I did it.





ZAINEB SAIED '20

DEGREE: B.S. IN NONPROFIT MANAGEMENT
NEXT: APPLYING FOR JOBS WITH NONPROFITS
DEDICATED TO CHILDREN'S HEALTH

During spring break, I got the call that Knight-Thon's main event — a 20-hour dance marathon — was canceled. As executive director, I was devastated because everyone works so hard all year long for that fundraising event, which benefits Children's Miracle Network Hospitals. We have a special ceremony for fourth-year dancers, and I was really upset that after years of hard work and waiting our seniors wouldn't be able to experience that moment. But I switched gears, and in 10 days we put together a virtual event that helped us reach more people than our traditional in-person event.

Before college, I was the kind of student who let extracurriculars take over and would do just well enough to get by in my classes. When I got to UCF, I started trying

really hard to balance the two and do well in both, so making the dean's list a couple of times is something I'm really proud of. Recently I was awarded the Miracle Network Dance Marathon Distinguished Leadership Award, which is an honor only 25 students receive out of hundreds of applicants across the country. The fact that I was able to earn that and represent UCF means a lot.

I'm the oldest of five and the first to graduate from college. I'm really proud of the fact that I earned my degree from UCF and am excited for what's next. In tough times having good people around me at the university has really helped. I'll always appreciate how much my alma mater has given me [in terms of] a community, and I look forward to cheering on UCF forever.



CARLY MCCARTHY HOLLOWELL '14 '20 MA

DEGREE: M.A. IN INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES, WITH FOCUSES IN CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS AND DIGITAL MEDIA

NEXT: CONTINUING FULL-TIME ROLE AS UCF'S SOCIAL MEDIA MANAGER

It was really special to see how social media was where family, friends and graduates celebrated their achievements for the virtual commencement. You don't get to see as much of those personal tributes during traditional ceremonies, so I enjoyed seeing how people let us into their homes and celebrations.

I was taking two classes and doing my capstone project on top of working through the pandemic. We get tons of messages daily, and during a crisis that's tenfold. At the start of it all I was really overwhelmed, but I get the most joy out of my job when there is something I can do to help my community, so I didn't mind the extra work and late nights. I feel like it's especially imperative to listen to what students and parents want and need at this time. And I try to be timely in responding, which means I'm constantly on my laptop and phone. Working from home makes it harder to disconnect from the screens, but if this is how I can provide comfort and support for our community when they might not have it elsewhere, that's what matters to me.

At the same time, it's a lot of pressure because if something doesn't go right, it's on me. Although I was one of the graduates, I didn't get to enjoy the virtual commencement the same way as others because I was sharing content all day and monitoring the streams. But it was nice to see my friends and family in the comments and know they were watching, and I was celebrated in my own way with my them and my husband — offline.

This isn't how any of us wanted our academic journey to end, but what I've learned is that we can't take for granted the moments we had at UCF, and coming back as alums will be even more special. If you can get through finishing your degree in a quarantine with all of its stressors, then I think you'll have the determination— as Knights do — to get through anything.

NASEEKA DIXON '20

**DEGREE: B.S. IN LEGAL STUDIES AND POLITICAL SCIENCE
WITH A MINOR IN NONPROFIT MANAGEMENT**

**NEXT: CONTINUING TO COMBAT FOOD INSECURITY
AND HOMELESSNESS IN ORLANDO AS A COORDINATOR
FOR THE STRAIGHT STREET NONPROFIT**

At the beginning, I was a little taken aback when everything went remote, thinking about all the missed award ceremonies, banquets and goodbyes that wouldn't happen. But during this time, I've also seen there are new ways of celebrating and supporting each other.

I'm a first-generation student who did dual enrollment and planned to earn my bachelor's degree in two years. I ended up studying at UCF for five years because I loved the environment and all of the resources available to me. All of my experiences and time here allowed me to learn more about myself, my values and what I want out of life — which is really to help others.

During my two years of working at Knights Pantry, we've gone through hurricanes, a government shutdown and now a pandemic, all of which are reminders of why providing free food and necessities for students is so important. When I became manager, I had several goals that were successfully met. One of the biggest was getting students to use the pantry as a resource as much as they would use others, like the print lab or library. It's unfortunate that in my final months here, we had to revert to being a limited emergency service, but for me it's all about what was accomplished along the journey and the fact that students are still getting help.

When I think about my last year, Spirit Splash is my favorite moment because that was my first time attending and watching the whole event. With so many different people there it was an amazing reminder of how diverse our school is. I saw friends from high school and other Knights I've become friends with, so it's really cool to look back and know we at least had that celebration in person together. ✨



STILL TURNING

In 1970, the Vietnam War raged on, the Beatles broke up, the first gay pride parade took place in New York City, the first Earth Day inspired a national conversation about environmental issues, and UCF (then Florida Technological University) saw its first graduating class earn their degrees.

Lifted from the university's first yearbook, *Pegasus*, the lyrics to The Byrds' "Turn! Turn! Turn! (To Everything There Is a Season)" prove to be timeless.

Life reveals the best and worst of humanity. And at times, like now, life can be incomprehensible and heartbreaking. Some of the lyrics in the following pages are hard to read because we're still battling oppression, hate and injustice. We still mourn lives lost to senseless violence. And we're still demanding change because we will always endeavor to do what's right. And we endure with our persistent hope that peace and love will prevail.

As a tribute to the first and most recent class of graduates, here's a look at life during their eras as Knights.

**TO
EVERYTHING
THERE IS
A SEASON.
AND
A TIME
TO EVERY
PURPOSE,
UNDER
HEAVEN.**



**1970
—
2020**



CLASS OF 1970
1970

A TIME TO BE BORN. A TIME TO DIE.

Students have always been drawn to the Reflecting Pond near the library as a place to study, relax and enjoy time with friends since the university's first days in 1968.



CLASS OF 2020
2016

A TIME TO PLANT. A TIME TO REAP.

Established nearly 40 years ago, the UCF Arboretum has expanded to 82 acres, which include a community garden, honeybee hives and this greenhouse (opened in March 2016).

A TIME TO LAUGH. A TIME TO WEEP.



Chelsea Velez and Vanessa Alvarez play in faux snow at Light Up UCF, an annual winter festival held at Addition Financial Arena.

CLASS OF 2020
2019



CLASS OF 1970
1969

A TIME TO BUILD UP. A TIME TO BREAK DOWN.

The university's first president, Charles Millican, built a culture that embraces individuality and inclusivity. "We do have an interest in each student and each person who comes to this campus," he said at a 40th anniversary event. "I'm deeply proud of the way [UCF] has continued to work to preserve that basic idea."

Graduate music student **Aramis Ruiz-Ruiz '19** played the cello as part of UCF Celebrates the Arts, the annual creative showcase that's been sharing UCF's talent with the community since 2015.

CLASS OF 2020
2019



A TIME TO KILL. A TIME TO HEAL.

Bonded by their shared experiences as teammates who continue to heal from devastating injuries, Brandon Moore and **McKenzie Milton '19** embrace during Senior Knight.



CLASS OF 2020
2019

A TIME TO DANCE.
A TIME TO MOURN.

For more than 20 years, students have showed off their moves during Knight-Thon's annual 20-hour dance marathon, which raises funds for Children's Miracle Network Hospitals.

A TIME TO CAST AWAY STONES.
A TIME TO GATHER STONES TOGETHER.

Two geodesic domes once housed the art department and a foundry for sculpture classes on campus.



CLASS OF 1970
1970



CLASS OF 2020
2019



CLASS OF 2020
2016

A TIME OF LOVE.
A TIME OF HATE.

The campus community filled the Student Union in 2016 to grieve together for 49 people killed during the June 12 shooting at Pulse, an LGBTQ+ nightclub, including Knights Juan Ramon Guerrero and Christopher Andrew "Drew" Leinonen '07 '09MS.

A TIME OF WAR. A TIME OF PEACE.

Since its inception in 2016, the War On I-4 rivalry series with USF has been a three-peat for UCF. Although COVID-19 interrupted this year's series, the Knights held a commanding lead prior to the cancellation of spring competitions.



CLASS OF 2020
2017

CLASS OF 2020
2016

Knighthro crowd-surfs among thousands of students who rushed into the Reflecting Pond for Spirit Splash, an annual homecoming tradition since 1995.



A TIME YOU MAY EMBRACE. A TIME TO REFRAIN FROM EMBRACING.

Six feet apart became a new standard of daily life during the COVID-19 pandemic. As employees started to return to campus in June, signs emphasized the importance of physical distancing and hygiene practices to prevent the spread of the virus.



CLASS OF 2020
2020

A TIME TO GAIN. A TIME TO LOSE.

A graduate tosses his cap in front of the campus library to celebrate the end of one chapter and the start of the next.



CLASS OF 1970
1970



**A TIME TO REND.
A TIME TO SEW.**

A student sews a garment with the letters "FTU."



CLASS OF 1970
1969

**A TIME FOR LOVE.
A TIME FOR HATE.**

Since joining Knight Nation in 2018, Knugget the mini-horse has been a special addition that brings smiles, kisses and nuzzles to campus events.

CLASS OF 2020
2016



Two students sing during a Black Lives Matter vigil in 2016 that commemorated the lives of Philando Castile and Alton Sterling.



CLASS OF 2020
2020

**A TIME TO KEEP SILENCE.
A TIME TO SPEAK.**



Protests against the Vietnam War were held on campus.

CLASS OF 1970
1969

**A TIME FOR PEACE.
I SWEAR IT'S NOT TOO LATE.**

Rabia Zubair and Angelina Hernandez share what community means to them at the Gather Luncheon, an annual celebration of good food, friends and community building. ✦



CLASS OF 2020
2019

Why I FIGHT ON THE FRONT LINES

BY STEPHEN BRENNAN '15

This past February I was celebrating a birthday with a few friends and our pack of dogs in a snow-covered cabin in the North Carolina mountains with few cares. We were all happy, healthy, employed and living in a time when the coronavirus was still a somewhat small news story in the United States.

If someone told me that fewer than two months later I would quit my job, drive from Orlando to New York, and start working as a nurse in a pandemic-ravaged state, I would have brushed it off with an eye roll and a dismissive laugh. But here I am, months later, working in the worst-hit state in our country.

After graduating from UCF with my nursing degree, I was able to land my dream job at Orlando Regional Medical Center, which has Central Florida's only Level I trauma center. During those five years, I was exposed to all types of patient care, including severe medical and traumatic cases. With each patient that came through our doors, I learned to work without fear and to be ready with little or no warning.

Little did I know that I soon would use these skills outside of the trauma room — when I felt the call to go to New York.

I resigned from my position and accepted a traveling nurse position as an intensive care unit nurse. I was experiencing every emotion from paralyzing fear to what-could-possibly-happen-next excitement, but fortunately what made this transition easier is that I didn't do it alone. Two other nurses also decided to serve in New York. About 17 hours and nearly 1,100 miles later, we arrived ready for duty.

We walked into the hospital with no idea what to expect. Normally we are ER nurses, but we were assigned to work in an ICU because of the desperate need for capable nurses. I walked in and read my first assignment — in the basement. After a split second of fear, I pushed my mind back to my ER training: Don't be scared, just be ready.

After going down a series of stairs and dimly lit hallways, I arrived in the basement, where a research library had been converted to an ICU to accommodate the rapidly growing intake of critical patients. This basement wasn't the only reconfigured space. Nearly all possible areas were converted in a similar fashion to provide the best care possible.

At that instant, there are few words that could accurately describe what I felt.

In a moment when I didn't know exactly what to do, I went through the routine of donning my personal

protective equipment: gown, double gloves, mask, goggles, face shield and hair cap. This familiar uniform helped calm my thoughts as I walked through the basement doors into the ICU to begin my first shift. I had to force myself not to drop my jaw and break the seal on my treasured N95 mask.

But I had less control over my eyes. They grew bigger and bigger as I scanned the unit. I had to fight back tears as I saw firsthand the seriousness of this pandemic and the fight these patients were experiencing. There were 14 patients lined up around a temporary wall that housed medical oxygen and suction supply. Patients were positioned about 3 feet apart and connected to different ventilators, medication pumps, blood transfusion pumps, and everything else you would expect to see in a large ICU but crammed in a small area the size of a conference room. Patients I had only read about now had faces, names and families.

As I felt a tear form, my mind flashed back to a great nurse mentor of mine who chanted words of encouragement using a favorite movie reference: "Brennan, ain't no crying in baseball!" She said this as a reminder to stay strong — for these patients and my fellow nurses. With that, I blinked my tear away and got to work.

Whether it was suctioning airways, repositioning patients in bed, frequent medication administrating and titrating, and continuous monitoring, there wasn't a moment that went by in that first 13-hour shift when something wasn't alarming and in need of immediate attention.

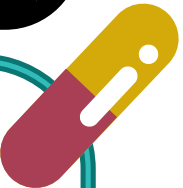
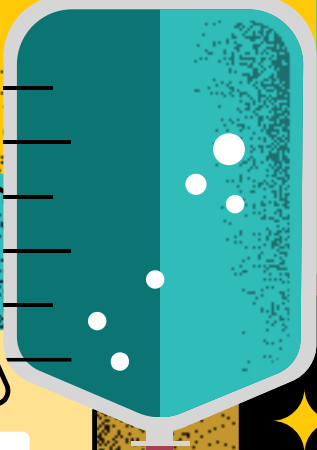
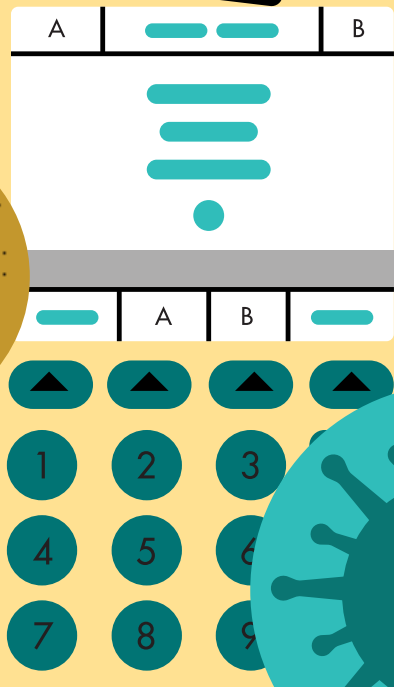
That 13-hour day became the norm, four days a week.

No two patients have the same symptoms. No two patients have the same course of treatment. Every patient responds differently as this disease progresses. Because of the inability to predict the virus, the plan of care is a reaction to what symptoms arise, which makes it a difficult battle to fight. Nevertheless, we continue to fight our best for our patients' recovery.

Only a few months ago, I was sitting at my house with my dogs and knew what to expect each day. Today, I'm sitting in an Airbnb in Jamaica, Queens, with two friends — and I have no idea what to expect when my contract ends in June.

However, amid the uncertainty and unknown, I absolutely love what I do. And I know that I will continue to work the front line wherever I'm needed most.

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Stephen Brennan '15 spent five years working at Orlando Regional Medical Center, where he received his certification in emergency nursing as well as a national Daisy Award for extraordinary nurses.





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Don't let
ADVERSITY
dictate
WHO YOU'RE
going to BE!

— **SHAQUEM GRIFFIN '16**, who addressed this spring's graduating class during a virtual commencement ceremony along with his brother, **Shaquill Griffin '16**