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Pictured: UFF-UF and UF-GAU leaders and members

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UFF Fights for Academic Freedom!

In late October, the University of Florida infringed upon the academic freedom and First Amendment rights of three political science professors and UFF members—Drs. Sharon Austin, Dan Smith, and Michael McDonald—by denying their requests to participate as expert witnesses in a voting rights lawsuit against the State of Florida. Your union sprang into action immediately by coordinating protests, contacting local and national press, and securing state and national affiliate support in the struggle.

After UFF-UF hosted a press conference on the issue on November 5th, the University of Florida backed down and reinstated our three members' rights. This was a huge victory for us all, but the fight is not yet over. Since then, other faculty members have come forward to say that their rights were also violated. In response, UFF's affected members have filed a lawsuit against the university to ensure that no other faculty at UF will suffer under the same undue political influence. In addition, another local member has filed a grievance against the university, claiming that his course curriculum was influenced for political reasons.

You can keep up with the developing story by reading UFF's ongoing [**press releases**](#) and [**news coverage**](#).



UFF Receives Major NEA Grant

We are thrilled to announce that the National Education Association has approved another major grant for the United Faculty of Florida! With this grant, UFF will be able to continue the UFF Organizing Fellows program, as well as hire two full-time organizing recruiters and a campaign data/tech support staffer for one year. Both the National Education Association (NEA) and the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) have invested in our Fellows program since its pilot year in 2018.

The upcoming campaign funded by this grant is called "10K Membership, Majority Status, & Building Political Power." We will need all of UFF to come together as we build a movement that can win the higher education system Florida's students deserve. That means we must grow our membership and leadership to build political power, so we can proactively set the statewide agenda rather than only playing defense against bad bills and policies.

This campaign will focus on—

- Hiring two full-time organizing recruiters and a part-time campaign data/tech support staffer, all focused on major Research 1 university faculty chapters under 50% membership density.
- Placing UFF Organizing Fellows at four Research 1 university faculty chapters under 50% membership (UFF @ FSU, UCF, UF, & USF), in order to gain 500 new members and to build strong local organizing teams.
- Placing UFF Organizing Fellows at four Graduate Assistants United chapters under 30% membership (UFF @ FAMU, FSU, UF, & USF GAUs), in order to build a strong local organizing teams and steward/rep structures.
- Increasing voter registration efforts and political organizing around higher education issues on campus to emphasize our issues in the 2022 elections.
- Reaching 10,000 members by growing membership in every chapter through expanded training and ongoing support.

Your statewide officers, staff, local chapter leaders, and senators are serious about making real change in Florida for our members, students and communities. Join in today, and help redefine higher education in Florida now and into the future!



Pictured: The first class of UFF Organizing Fellows, trained by UFF staff and leaders in Fall 2018.



Pictured: FSU-GAU swag drop off in Spring 2021, with an honorary member assistant.

Chapter Victories

Despite the challenges we have faced these past few months—COVID re-openings, attacks on academic freedom, and the new restrictions imposed by HB 233, Florida's "Viewpoint Discrimination" Law, to name only a few—UFF's chapters have continued to win incredible victories all over the state. With this being the last newsletter of the semester, we'd like to highlight just some of these victories, so we can all celebrate the power of collective action as we close out 2021:

- **Lake-Sumter State College** - Still bargaining their first contract, the UFF-LSSC chapter has been able to tentatively agree to three memoranda of understanding (MOUs) relating to stipends and a one-time bonus, including a non-recurring bonus of 3% for all full time faculty before salary has even been discussed at the table.
- **University of Florida** - After a drawn-out bargaining struggle, UFF-UF won eight weeks of paid parental leave for all faculty and successfully pushed back against attacks on academic freedom.
- **Florida Atlantic University** - Over the summer and fall, the UFF-FAU chapter successfully organized against anti-tenure policies proposed by their Board of Trustees and maintained the integrity of the tenure process.
- **The College of the Florida Keys** - After negotiating their first contract in less than a year, the UFF-CFK chapter ratified their first collective bargaining agreement (CBA) with 100% voting in favor.
- **Saint Leo University** - The UFF-SLU chapter gained a favorable ruling from the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) in their fight to reclaim their CBA, when the NLRB General Counsel directed NLRB Region 12 to hold hearings on the Unfair Labor Practices filed by UFF.
- **University of North Florida** - UFF-UNF's bargaining team successfully shifted a one-time bonus—for navigating the challenges of the pandemic in 2020–2021—from a proposed salary article revision to an MOU, which got the money to faculty sooner and avoided an attempt by the Board of Trustees to preclude any further salary negotiations during full book. They also successfully included visiting faculty in this wage action for the first time in our bargaining history.
- **Saint Petersburg College** - UFF-SPC became UFF's newest chapter in September 2021, with a 78% vote in favor of unionization, despite pandemic organizing conditions.

Press Coverage

During November and early December, UFF's leaders and members were featured in dozens of local, national, and international publications, including *The New York Times*, *The Washing Post*, *CNN*, *NPR*, *NEA Today*, *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, *Inside Higher Ed*, *The Miami Herald*, *The Orlando Sentinel*, and more! Some of the topics covered include the fight for academic freedom at the University of Florida and UFF's HB 233 lawsuit.

Be sure to visit UFF's website to keep up with all of our [news coverage](#) and [press releases](#). If we missed a story in our collection, please send a link to uff@floridaea.org, and we'll be sure to upload it. You can also follow UFF's press coverage using our social media pages on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#).

Legislative Updates

The Florida Legislature has concluded its final committee week in preparation for the full legislative session in January. UFF is continuing to track the bills that we support and those we oppose, both of which are listed to the right. We also have two of our own bills in the Florida Legislature this year! The "State University Student Fee Waiver" bill seeks to exempt GTAs from oppressive pay-to-work fees on our State University System campuses. The "Intellectual Freedom" bill seeks to repeal the student recording, anti-shielding, and viewpoint diversity survey measures from Florida's "Viewpoint Discrimination" law, passed last year as HB 233.

SB 666 and **SB 810** have both been assigned to the **Senate Education Committee**, while **HB 6077** has been assigned to the **Postsecondary Education & Lifelong Learning Subcommittee**. This is a great start, but it is only the beginning.

Contact the committee members today and ask to have SB 666, SB 810, and HB 6077 placed on the agenda for their next committee meeting.

The FEA makes it easy to find and contact your legislators about these and other bills. Just enter your street address and ZIP code [here](#).

Bills We Support

SB 666 (Cruz) / HB 769 (Goff Marcil) - State University Student Fee Waivers

HB 6077 (Hinson) / SB 810 (Polsky) - Postsecondary Intellectual Freedom and Viewpoint Diversity

SJR 192 (Cruz/Polsky) / HJR 77 (Driskell) - Election of the Commissioner of Education

Bills We Oppose

SB 242 (Gruters/Perry) / HB 57 (Fine/Fisher) - Racial and Sexual Discrimination

HB 6007 (Sabatini) - Licenses to Carry Concealed Weapons or Firearms

SB 520 (Brandes) / HB 703 (Garrison) - Public Records and Public Meetings

"Viewpoint Discrimination" Lawsuit Update

UFF's lawsuit against the State of Florida regarding HB 233, the "Viewpoint Discrimination" law, has continued into the "discovery" phase, though we have yet to receive a ruling on the State's motion to dismiss. In the meantime, we are continuing to seek further witnesses who can show that the bill has negatively influenced your teaching and working conditions in a concrete manner. To learn more about whether you would be eligible to serve as a witness in the suit, read [here](#).

Interested witnesses should contact **UFF President Andrew Gothard** and share your story about how HB 233 has impacted you.

You can read the original filing of our suit, as well as our rebuttal to the motion to dismiss, [here](#).



Pictured: New UFF hire, Cami Aceus

Meet the New Service Unit Director!

UFF's newest Service Unit Director is Cami Aceus. Cami has been passionate about the labor movement and social justice since she witnessed the positive impact that labor organizing had on her family. She has worked previously for the United Federation of Teachers and the American Federation of Teachers, and she comes to us now from the Broward Teacher's Union, where she has been serving local members since 2014. Her responsibilities at BTU included contract maintenance, solving issues, representing workers in grievance and administrative investigation proceedings, training stewards, advocacy, and building worksite leadership structure. With over 12 years of union experience, Cami looks forward to bringing her expertise to the United Faculty of Florida and to making a positive contribution to the union's mission.

Please send Cami a welcome message at uff@floridaea.org.



State Committee Updates

Leadership, Equity, Inclusion, and Diversity

The LEID Committee is asking for your help:

- Do you or a colleague have direct access to an author, podcaster, or person advocating for higher education? You can help to organize our next event.
- Are you interested in exploring the comparison of survey outcomes reported by minority faculty caregivers at different Florida institutions during COVID-19 pandemic?

Submit inquiries to Committee Chairs Krystal Williams and Yovanna Pineda and join our email list at LEIDCommittee.UFF@gmail.com.

Government Relations

To begin, we are continuing to expand our HERO (Higher Education Regional Outreach) Teams for each of the five regions created across the state. This program will help our members and leaders target legislators in their own geographical areas and streamline the way in which we contact them even before specific bills are heard in committee. These teams, as well as leaders in individual chapters, have been reaching out to legislators on both sides of the aisle to meet, discuss our issues, and seek points of agreement. We have had excellent response from many legislators, even some who have not been friendly to union issues in the past.

UFF has taken the lead and has identified sponsors in both chambers for two pieces of legislation. One (SB666/HB769), will significantly reduce fees required from graduate assistants. This bill has had bipartisan support in the past, but it has not succeeded in making it through the required committees in time to be considered on the floor. Another (SB810/HB6077), would repeal many of the provisions imposed by last year's HB233, which requires a "diversity" survey and allows students to secretly record lectures. This bill is paralleling the UFF-filed lawsuit against HB233. We are also tracking the progress of and developing strategy to oppose bills limiting academic freedom, hiding upper level administrative searches in the shadows, allowing guns on campus, and other matters affecting higher education and the union.

UFF's government relations efforts have, working together with our allies—particularly our union siblings—produced results. While our HERO Teams are expanding, we still need to identify leaders from a number of chapters. Our goal is to keep our colleagues informed so that when we need a rapid response to legislation being proposed, we will be primed and ready. We urge all faculty to stay informed, stay tuned, and stay involved. If we don't speak for ourselves, no one will. Sign up for a HERO Team [here](#), and join your colleagues today as we advocate for higher education in the Florida Legislature.



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As your UFF statewide officers, we thank you for being a member of UFF. Every day, because of members and leaders like you, our union is able to advocate for faculty rights across the state, from campus offices all the way to the Florida Legislature. What we achieve, we achieve together through the power of collective action and the unshakable conviction of member solidarity.

Please feel free to contact us at any time.
We are here to serve and support you.



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