



# UNITED FACULTY OF FLORIDA

## FEBRUARY - MARCH RECAP NEWSLETTER

APRIL 12 2022



Pictured: UFF President Andrew Gothard testifying before the Senate Appropriations committee regarding SB 7044

## UFF at the Capitol!

Throughout the legislative session, UFF's members and leaders lobbied legislators and testified before multiple committees, all to support Florida's higher education system.

During the nine weeks of session, UFF President Andrew Gothard distributed a Friday Legislative Update to all UFF members, which contained pictures of our members in Tallahassee, summaries of how various bills moved through committees, and calls to action all members could take to influence the Florida Legislature. Each Friday Legislative Update can be viewed [here](#).

See the next page for pictures of our leaders doing the important work of representing UFF's members!

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Pictured: UFF-FAU leader Nicole Morse testifying before the Education & Employment committee regarding HB 7051



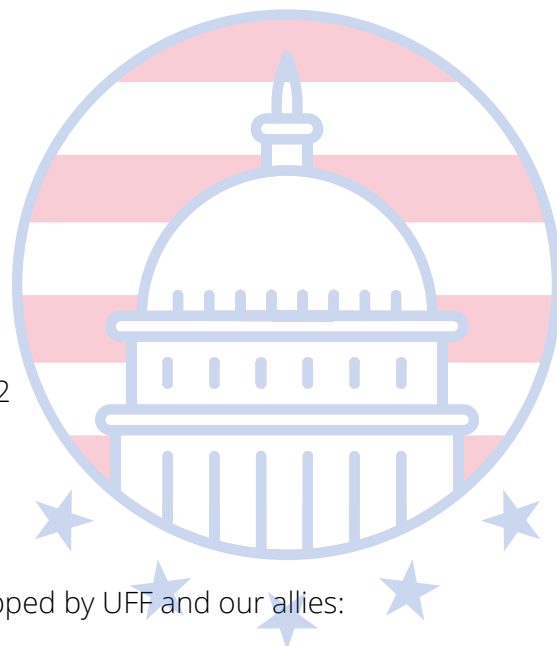


# 2022 Legislative Session Recap

As retired UFF Director Marshall Ogletree noted in his recent [letter to the editor of the Tallahassee Democrat](#), this legislative session was arguably the worst example of Florida political leadership in over forty years. Instead of solving real problems facing Floridians, conservative legislators focused instead on culture wars and punishing those whose beliefs, lifestyles, and backgrounds differed from their own. In [an op-ed for The Gainesville Sun](#), UFF President Andrew Gothard also pointed out the ways lawmakers undermined the democratic process, especially pertaining to higher education issues. In short, the session was an embarrassment for Florida in many ways, and public education endured a number of assaults as a result.

The following higher education bills passed the Florida Legislature this Session:

- **SB 7044 – “Post-Secondary Education”**
  - Key provisions:
    - Post-tenure review: lines 65-75
    - Accreditation: lines 295-340
- **HB 7 – “Individual Freedom”**
  - Key provisions:
    - Teaching practices: lines 222-262
- **SB 2524 – Higher Education Conforming Bill**
  - Key provisions:
    - Violations of HB 7 and university funding: lines 666 - 672
- **SB 520 – “Public Records and Public Meetings”**
  - Key provisions:
    - Timeline to reveal applicant pool: lines 39-57



The following higher education bills died in committee or were stopped by UFF and our allies:

- SB 666 / HB 769 – “State University Student Fee Waivers”
- HB 203 / SB 304 – “Student Fee Exemptions”
- HB 6077 / SB 810 – “Postsecondary Intellectual Freedom and Viewpoint Diversity”
- SB 242 / HB 57 – “Racial and Sexual Discrimination”
- HB 6007 – “Licenses to Carry Concealed Weapons or Firearms”
- HB 6055 – “Postsecondary Out-of-State Fee Waivers”
- SB 1458 / HB 1197 - “Employee Organizations”

Spreadsheets containing budgetary increases for all of Florida's colleges and universities can be found [here](#).

During this session, UFF leaders testified 28 times before six legislative committees, while hundreds of members statewide made phone calls, sent emails, and posted on social media to support Florida's higher education community.

Thank you to every member who worked to make a difference this session, but our fight is not yet over. Now, we turn our attention to the midterm elections. If you would like to become involved in efforts to register voters on your campus and to ensure that strong higher education advocates are elected to public office, please contact [uff@floridaea.org](mailto:uff@floridaea.org) and ask to get plugged in to your regional HERO team.

## February 2022 UFF Virtual Senate

On Saturday, February 19th, the United Faculty of Florida held our Spring UFF Senate meeting, where over 100 Senators met virtually to adopt important new policies and resolutions to guide UFF in the coming months.

Of note, the Senate voted nearly unanimously to hold the September 2022 Senate meeting in person in Orlando, FL. To accommodate requests from many of our members regarding the difficulty of traveling for Senate, it was also agreed that future Senate meetings will be held in alternating virtual to in-person modalities, meaning the UFF Senate session in February 2023 will be virtual.

You can read more about the Senate modality policy and the other resolutions and motions adopted by the Senate on the [UFF Resolutions webpage](#). If you have not yet done so, please be sure to respond to [the survey](#) from the UFF Values Committee. Your feedback as members and leaders of UFF is vital to our work.

In addition, the week leading up to the February Senate Session contained a number of grievance and bargaining trainings hosted by UFF staff. Materials from these trainings can be accessed [here](#) in the "Training Materials" folder.

## NEA Higher Education Conference



Pictured: UFF Service Unit Director Lauren Byers and UFF SPC President Jessica Magnani

The National Education Association (NEA) hosted its annual NEA Higher Education Conference in Baltimore from March 18-20. As a key part of this year's conference, UFF was invited to present a plenary session on defending academic freedom. UFF President Andrew Gothard, UFF-UF Membership Chair Sean Trainor, and FAMU GAU leader and UFF Leadership, Equity, Inclusion, and Diversity Chair Krystal Williams all spoke to the struggles UFF has faced over the last year, but they also spoke of the hope and power of our union's ongoing organizing and activism efforts.

Jessica Magnani, President of the newly formed UFF chapter at Saint Petersburg College, also presented with UFF Service Unit Director Lauren Byers on the challenges of organizing a new chapter using a virtual campaign, a feat that many thought impossible until UFF proved otherwise. In addition, two UFF-FAMU members, Jian Jones and Jenelle Robinson, presented a workshop called "The Blueprint: Using Spoken Word Poetry and Hip-Hop as Culturally Relevant Poetry". Some attendees called it the best workshop they had ever attended!

Overall, UFF made a national impact at this conference, and we look forward to future opportunities to speak with our union siblings all over the country. Higher ed is uniting, and UFF is leading the way!



Pictured: UFF FAMU GAU leader Krystal Williams and NEA National Vice President Princess Moss

## Unjust Discipline Overturned at State College of Florida

"You don't think this will happen to you until it does. The signs are everywhere in the current academic environment of our state that it might."

That's how State College of Florida, Manatee-Sarasota (SCF) art history professor Katherine Bzura summarized her reaction to being issued a letter of reprimand and removed her from her position as the Director of the College's art gallery for—as she thought—simply doing her job.

In the fall of 2020, Ms. Bzura was asked to prepare works of art for exhibition in a renovated building on the SCF Bradenton campus. But when another employee complained about the content of the art, the administration reacted by using her as a scapegoat. It claimed she violated established policies for exhibiting works of art and used poor judgment in selecting challenging works of art in a space that would be used by minor children and their parents, among others.

In reality, Ms. Bzura selected art that had been exhibited in public spaces in the past, and followed all the same steps she had for similar projects. She was never told who would be using the space or for what purpose. There were no guidelines or policies in place for what kind of works of art should be displayed or whose approval should be sought to display them. She had no budget or other resources to procure works of art to serve more varied purposes at the College.

Matthew Thomas, president of the UFF chapter at SCF, filed a grievance on Ms. Bzura's behalf and served as her union representative during the grievance process. When the administration refused to yield, UFF pursued arbitration. Roger I. Abrams, a former law school Dean at Rutgers University and Northeastern University and nationally respected arbitrator, was chosen by the parties to rule on the disciplinary issue. Arbitrator Abrams sustained the grievance and cleared Ms. Bzura's record, writing that the administration "did not have just cause to discipline [Ms. Bzura], and she must be returned to her prior position and made whole for her lost stipend."

**Ms. Bzura has a message for her colleagues across the state who are unsure whether they should join or form a UFF chapter: "This was a turning point in my life, not just my career. I am stronger in my convictions about my purpose and integrity. When I teach now, I feel like a fighter and a model for students who feel underestimated and misunderstood. I have been reminded of all of the reasons we need unity and each other every single day."**

**"Without the UFF chapter at SCF, without the CBA," Mr. Thomas said, "a faculty colleague would have been unjustly disciplined with little or no recourse."** He went on to connect this case to the reasons faculty at SCF sought union representation in the first place: "If you wait to stand together in this day and age, with all the examples of what has gone on across the state, it might be too late. The possibility of losing things at the core of education are all too real. And at the end of the day, our profession is about educating the next generation and ensuring they have access to quality education. That ideal is part of being an academic union member that we should be able to support."



## NEA Interview with UFF Member Shantel Buggs

On Tuesday, March 29th, NEA President Becky Pringle interviewed UFF-FSU member Dr. Shantel Buggs on the importance of teaching about race, diversity, and institutional racism on our college and university campuses. All members of the higher education community can and should view the interview [here](#).

In an [NEA article](#) on the same subject, Buggs says "If we're trying to make the law more equitable, if we're trying to make workplaces and other kinds of institutions function more fairly, then we have to consider the ways that racial inequality is literally embedded into how these things were designed in terms of who was recognized as having rights."

The United Faculty of Florida remains committed to defending the rights of all faculty to teach honestly and accurately about race, history, and diversity in all of their forms, and we will fight any attempts to restrict the right to academic freedom that is central to the success of Florida's higher education system. We are thrilled that Dr. Buggs was able to bring this issue to the forefront of NEA's mission, and we encourage all UFF members to watch this interview.

If you would like to support UFF's fight for academic freedom, please contact [uff@floridaea.org](mailto:uff@floridaea.org), and we will connect you with the appropriate local or statewide leader. Only you can make a difference in Florida!

## Press Coverage

In February and March, UFF's leaders and members were featured in statewide and national publications, including *The Tampa Bay Times*, *The Washington Post*, *The Miami Herald*, the *Sun Sentinel*, *NPR*, *The Associated Press*, and more!

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](mailto: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](#).



## Get Involved!

If we know and believe one principle at the United Faculty of Florida, it is that we are stronger together. Through collective action, we can improve not only the working and learning conditions on our local campuses but also the overall status of higher education around our state and across our country. However, these goals can only be achieved through the action and dedication of local members like you. In short, UFF needs you!

Right now, you can become involved with the work of your local chapter by running for elected office or working on a committee. Or, you can support UFF's statewide efforts by joining one of our statewide committees on membership growth, diversity, contract enforcement, and legislative influence.

In particular, throughout the coming months, UFF will be turning our attention to influencing the midterm elections in November. We will be counting on local member and leaders to assist with establishing early polling sites on your campuses, registering voters, holding tablings about important higher ed issues, and more.

The choice is yours, and we can't do this work without you! To get involved, please contact [uff@floridaea.org](mailto:uff@floridaea.org), and we will connect you with the team that best reflects your interests.



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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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