



UNITED FACULTY OF FLORIDA

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RECAP NEWSLETTER

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Pictured: UFF President Andrew Gothard and UFF First Vice-President Caitlin Gille accepting the NEA Human and Civil Rights Award in Chicago, IL.

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NEA Human and Civil Rights Award

This summer, UFF was awarded the prestigious Rosena J. Willis Human and Civil Rights Award by the NEA's Human and Civil Rights Committee for our union's ongoing fights to preserve the freedoms of all Floridians. Special thanks go to UFF First Vice-President Caitlin Gille for submitting the award application and to both Robert Cassanello (UFF-UCF) and Paul Ortiz (UFF-UF) for submitting supporting letters.

[Click here](#) to view the introductory video created by Devotive Media as part of the award ceremony.



Pictured: The Rosena J. Willis Human and Civil Rights Award Medal

UFF on the Road!

This summer, elected and appointed UFF delegates attended the National Education Association (NEA) Representative Assembly in Chicago, IL, the national American Federation of Teachers (AFT) Convention in Boston, MA, and the Florida AFL-CIO COPE and Biennial Conventions in Orlando, FL.



Pictured: UFF's delegates to the NEA Representative Assembly in Chicago, IL

Conferences like these are excellent opportunities for UFF's leaders to connect with our state and national affiliates on important issues and to seek support for local initiatives. During these events, UFF's officers and statewide leaders were able to influence the positions of our national unions on issues as diverse as Palestinian rights, abortion, classroom freedoms, and more.



Pictured (left to right): Martin Balinsky (TCC), Michael Buchler (FSU), Caitlin Gille (PHSC), Andrew Gothard (FAU), and Matthew Lata (FSU), as delegates to the national AFT Convention in Boston, MA.

Closer to home, every two years the Florida AFL-CIO holds an endorsing convention (called COPE), during which all of Florida's unions send representatives to decide on campaign endorsements for upcoming statewide and local elections. This summer's COPE Convention was held in Orlando, FL, where UFF President Andrew Gothard was elected as a statewide Vice-President to serve on the AFL-CIO Executive Board.

UFF Senate in Orlando

On the weekend of September 17th and 18th, the UFF Senate will meet in Orlando for its first in-person session in three years! We are very excited about this opportunity for UFF's elected chapter representatives to come together and take action on major issues affecting our union siblings around the state.

The most important duties of the UFF Senate include passing the annual budget, approving state committee appointments, and passing resolutions that benefit our union now and into the future. If you are an elected chapter Senator—or if you'd simply like to learn about the UFF Senate—be sure to review **the UFF Senate Packet** in advance of this year's meeting.

Most chapters hold Senator elections every year, so if you'd like to represent your fellow members and colleagues on the state level, contact your local chapter leadership before the next election and nominate yourself to become a UFF Senator. Don't be shy; reach out and get involved today!

#UFFVotes!

There is no doubt that the midterm elections are a historical, watershed moment in the history of Florida's higher education system. Governor DeSantis and his supporters have made abundantly clear their plans to dismantle public education from kindergarten through graduate school, while the Democratic challenger Charlie Crist believes so deeply in both unions and public education that he has selected Karla Hernandez, the local President of FEA's Miami-Dade chapter, to be his Lieutenant Governor running mate. If we can shift the Governor's office to Charlie and Karla, we can not only protect union and teacher rights across the state for years to come, but we can also reconstitute local Boards of Trustees and other governing bodies in ways that will have an immediate beneficial impact on the teaching and learning conditions of Florida's entire higher education community. For these reasons, it is incredibly important that UFF's leaders and members around the state vote and encourage others to vote in the upcoming November elections.

To facilitate this effort, UFF has undertaken #UFFVotes, the largest Get Out the Vote (GOTV) campaign in our union's history, and we have secured over \$100,000 from our state and national affiliates to support this program. To learn more about this program and how to become involved, please visit [the #UFFVotes page on the UFF website](#). In addition, you can take the following actions today:

- **Register to Vote and Remind your Community: Colleagues, Friends, and Family!**
 - Make sure your friends and family are registered and have a plan to vote in the General Election
 - The deadline to register to vote is October 11th! [Check your Registration Status Now!](#)
- **Remind your students to Register to Vote!**
 - As long as you stay nonpartisan, you can make class announcements and utilize school resources (email, your online course site, office hours, etc.) to remind students about the registration deadline and election day
- **Mobilize your colleagues to turn out to the polls**
 - Tell three colleagues about the campaign and invite them to join the September 1st training. Click [HERE](#) to register.
 - Weekly #UFFVotes Office Hours are Wednesdays at 6pm if you would like additional general support and brainstorming! [REGISTER HERE](#)
- **Join our Monthly UFFVotes Call!**
 - Each first Friday of the month #UFFVotes will host a Get Out the Vote (GOTV) zoom call to learn about the campaign, strategize, and build actionable steps to bring back to your chapter: [Register HERE](#)



Pictured: President Andrew Gothard with Representative Anna Eskamani, of House District 47.

Local Chapter Victories

A number of UFF's chapters had incredible victories over the past few months at the bargaining table and beyond. Below is a summary of some of those wins. As a chapter leader, if you would like to feature your chapter victories in future newsletters, be sure to send them to uff@florideaea.org.



Pictured (left to right): Deandre Poole, Justin White, and Chris Robé

In June, UFF's Florida Atlantic University chapter closed contract negotiations after a grueling 14 month effort, the outcome of which provided salary increases to all faculty, raised the salary floor for Instructors, expanded access to tuition waiver programs for faculty dependents, established stronger protections for tenure and promotion processes, and more!

Here, we can see FAU leaders and members at an end-of-the-year celebration in May. Great job, UFF-FAU!

In other bargaining news, UFF's Graduate Assistant's United (GAU) chapter at the University Florida recently agreed to university's stipend package offer, securing the highest funding agreement the UF-GAU has ever negotiated. This agreement includes--

- the first increase to the minimum stipend in 5 years, raising it to \$17,000 for 9 month employees and \$22,753.85 for 12 month employees.
- a 3% raise for all graduate employees, with an additional retroactive lump sum of 3% of wages earned between January 1 and July 1 of 2022.
- a one-time payment of \$1140 for GAs making less than \$18,500.

As UFF has made clear to the Florida Legislature for many years now, our GAU members often live under the poverty line because of administrations who prioritize funding away from living wages for graduate employees. This agreement represents an incredible win for the UF GAU chapter!

UFF's chapter at the University of South Florida also closed contract after almost two years of negotiations and ratified the final language in June! In honor of the ratification vote, the chapter held a reception with USF's new President Law and the UFF-USF leadership team (pictured right). They have also been quite active enforcing their contract this summer, getting ready for upcoming elections, and recruiting with members of the UFF's Fellows program.



Pictured (left to right): Greg McColm (Secretary), Sonia Wolmuth (Treasurer), Karin Braunsberger (Grievance Chair), Steve Lang (President), Bob Welker (Chief Negotiator), President Law (USF), Debbie Sinclair (Membership Chair).

In a sign of regional solidarity, the chapter also held an end-of-the-year celebration with members from the new chapter of UFF at St. Petersburg College. Great work, UFF-USF!



Pictured: UFF-USF leaders and members at a Tampa Bay Rowdies professional soccer game in St. Petersburg.

Finally, UFF's chapter at Pasco-Hernando State College reached agreement on an MOU for compensation! The MOU addresses compression issues by adjusting individual salaries to reflect degrees and experience, which led to some faculty receiving raises of over \$10,000! The average of this year's raise for full-time faculty was 5.56%, which is added on top of a 5.5% retroactive raise bargained in April. Combined together, the average increase to faculty salary since April is \$5,762, which after taxes is about \$375 a month in take-home pay. The college also agreed to a 15% increase in overload pay. These financial gains were won despite currently unresolved ULP's.

These victories came about only through the solidarity of local leaders and members. According to one local leader, UFF-PHSC learned that the union can say "no", too, and found that waiting put pressure on the administration. Congratulations on this incredible victory, and UFF looks forward to seeing the full contract signed and ratified!

UFF Meets with the DOE

In mid-July, UFF leaders (pictured right) met with US Department Education Under Secretary James Kvaal to discuss important issues in Florida's higher education system, including academic freedom, freedom of speech for students and faculty, student debt relief, and accreditation. Representing UFF were leaders from across central and south Florida, including UCF, LSSC, UF, and FAU. Our leaders were also assisted by NEA staff member Valerie Wilk.

In response to earlier concerns shared by the UFF and other educational leaders across the state, the Department of Education created updated guidance for higher education institutions regarding "accreditation shopping," which the federal government strongly discourages. You can read this guidance [here](#).

Opportunities like these indicate the growing presence UFF has as a national force in higher education. The more we fight for what is good and right and noble in this world, the more others see us, hear us, and want to join us on the front lines of the struggle. This conversation gave UFF the opportunity to have a national impact on higher education policy, and we are extremely grateful to the Under Secretary for making time to join us in Orlando.



Pictured (left to right): Meera Sitharam (UF), Under Secretary James Kvaal, Michelle Dusseau (UCF), Andrew Gothard (FAU), Rachel Hartnett (UF GAU), Valerie Wilk (NEA), Eric Fiske (HCC), Robert Cassanello (UCF), and Jeremy Norton (LSSC).

Events and Opportunities

Pre-UniServ Academy - The NEA believes that a diverse, skilled workforce is the key to the growth of our union. NEA's Pre-UniServ Academy is a "grow our own" strategy intentionally developed to meet the recruitment needs of NEA's state affiliates and build a pathway for diverse, entry-level candidates. This Academy is designed for active members—recognized and recommended by their UniServ Director, a UniServ Manager, and state affiliate Executive Director—who are interested in exploring a possible career as a union staffer. No promises are made as to future employment. The Academy provides a cohort experience that is project-based, rigorous in nature, and provides skill development in core competencies required for an entry level position in union work.



UFF is often contacted by local leaders who are seeking opportunities to become full-time union employees. This academy is one of the best ways to acquire the necessary training to pursue such a career path.

The full Academy includes three on-site experiences. Two of these are three-day, weekend classroom experiences, and the third is a five-day, field-based experience. In addition, participants also attend online sessions, agree to regular phone check-ins, and complete a member focused, worksite campaign project. The total timeline for the completion of these experiences is three months. The program is rigorous, graduate level work. The candidates are responsible for securing any time off with their employers that is needed to attend this program. 40 Professional Contact Hours can be provided upon request.

Interested leaders can learn more about this program by reading [this linked pdf](#) and contacting uff@floridaaea.org for a recommendation. The deadline to apply is Tuesday, September 20th.



Andrew Gothard,
UFF President (UFF-FAU)
andrew.gothard@floridaaea.org

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.



Caitlin Gille, UFF First Vice President (UFF-PHSC)
caitlin.gille@floridaaea.org