



# UNITED FACULTY OF FLORIDA

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RECAP NEWSLETTER

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Pictured: UFF-FIU member Thomas Breslin with UFF Staff members Cami Acceus and Allison Clarke

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## "Speak Out" at FIU

On Wednesday, January 25th, the UFF-FIU chapter hosted a tenure "Speak Out" event to build greater awareness about **the Board of Governors' pending post-tenure review regulation**. FEA President Andrew Spar and UFF President Andrew Gothard (the two Andrews!) attended to support the chapter, and many productive conversations were had between leaders and members.

Due to UFF's advocacy, the Board of Governors did **not** hear the post-tenure review regulation at their January meeting. It is important, however, that we keep up the pressure to stop this regulation in its tracks. If you haven't already, **sign UFF's petition**, and stay in touch with your local leaders for updates.



Pictured: FEA President Andrew Spar speaking with local members about our state affiliate's ongoing support for UFF and academic freedom.

# HB 233 in Court



Pictured: Robin Goodman (FSU), Shayna Rich, Candi Churchill, and J. Maggio (SJRSC) outside the courtroom.



Pictured: Courthouse for the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Florida. Credit: Michael Moline, Florida Phoenix

From January 9th - 18th, UFF's case against HB 233, Florida's "Viewpoint Discrimination Law," was heard in federal court in Tallahassee. Since August of 2021, UFF's leaders have been powering through every step of the litigation process, and all of those efforts led to this moment, when Judge Mark Walker, who is also ruling on the lawsuit against HB 7, heard one witness after another testify on court record that HB 233 actively harms UFF's members and undermines the constitutional rights of the entire higher education community. UFF President Andrew Gothard, as well as local members from Florida State University, the University of Central Florida, St. John's River State College, and more did our union proud by speaking truth to power through hours of grueling testimony and cross-examination. Across seven days of hearings, UFF's leaders showed the state of Florida that there are still those among us who will fight for what is good, noble, and right in this world. We will not stop until this unjust law is struck from the records of Florida statute and history itself.

Currently, UFF's legal team is in the post-trial stage, with another round of oral arguments scheduled in early March. Judge Walker is expected to make a final ruling in March-April of this year, out of which he could strike down the entire law, rule specific provisions as unconstitutional, or uphold the law as constitutionally valid. UFF members can access the legal filings in this case **on the UFF website**.

## AAUP Calls for Investigation

Earlier this month, the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) announced a formal investigation into the "pattern of politically and racially motivated attacks on higher education" in Florida. Members can read the full press release on the **AAUP website**. UFF looks forward to supporting this investigation on whatever ways we can.

AAUP's historical defense of tenure and academic freedom includes investigations by the Association's Committee A on Academic Freedom and Tenure. As an example of the kinds of reports this committee has produced in the past, please see **this linked April 2022 report** regarding "Governance, Academic Freedom, and Institutional Racism in the University of North Carolina System."

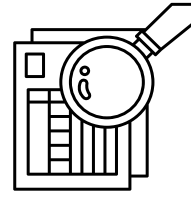
# Legislative Updates

This year, the Florida Legislative Session convenes on March 7th and adjourns May 7th, with various legislative committees meeting since the start of the year. Although the gavel-in is still almost a month away, Gov. DeSantis has already been active in laying out attacks on teacher/ faculty unions and a so-called "reform agenda" for higher education. At the same time, our allies in the legislature have also been filing bills that support academic freedom in our colleges and universities. From now until May 7th, keep an eye out for ongoing communications from UFF regarding actions you can take to support higher education and to ensure that we get a fair shake in the legislature this year.

First up, we have "Bills to Watch," which are bills the union is observing to see if they will directly impact our members. **HB 515**, filed by Rep. Silvers, would provide the Office of the Inspector General attached to the Board of Governors to issue limited subpoenas when seeking information about financial malfeasance by a higher education institution in the state. Additionally, we are watching **HB 453**, aka the "Permitless Carry" bill, which would allow all Florida gun owners to carry a concealed gun without an additional permit. UFF will be closely watching these bills to determine if we should ultimately oppose them during session.

Next up, under bills we support, there is **HB 311 and its Senate counterpart SB 324**, filed Rep. Hinson and Sen. Polsky! Collectively known as "Postsecondary Intellectual Freedom and Viewpoint Diversity," HB 311 is currently assigned to the **"Postsecondary Education & Workforce Subcommittee."** We encourage all members to contact the committee chairs and ask for this bill to be placed on the agenda.

Finally, as mentioned above, Gov. DeSantis has shared two press releases regarding his aggressive agenda to **harm teacher/faculty unions** and to **"reform" higher education**. While none of these bills have yet appeared in the legislature, we encourage all UFF members to stay in touch with your local chapter leaders about ways to organize against these attacks.



## Bills to Watch

**HB 515: Office of Inspector General of the Board of Governors of the State University System (Rep. Silvers)**

**HB 543: Concealed Carry of Weapons and Firearms Without a License (Reps. Brannan and Payne)**



## Bills We Support

**HB 311 (Rep. Hinson) / SB 324 (Sen. Polsky) - Postsecondary Intellectual Freedom and Viewpoint Diversity**



# New College Under Assault

Throughout January, Gov. DeSantis announced the appointment of seven new Board of Trustees members at New College of Florida, many of whom are conservative ideological extremists. This list includes Christopher Rufo, who has led the charge in manufacturing false understandings of DEI and CRT in order to undermine higher education and democracy across the country.

In their January meeting, these new board members ousted the university president, replacing her with former Commissioner of Education Richard Corcoran, and they have discussed taking illegal actions to undermine the local collective bargaining agreement.



Pictured: New College students gathering to protest outside of the Board of Trustees meeting

True to form, UFF's local chapter leaders and members, like UFF-NCF President Steve Shipman, have risen to the challenge and—by joining with students, community allies, and elected legislators such as Anna Eskamani—are pushing back against this hostile takeover of a beloved institution. Rest assured that UFF will take every action in our power to preserve the rights of the entire NCF community!

## HERO Teams and WFLC

As we all know too well, we're in the middle of a challenging time for higher education in Florida. In the midst of political attacks like most of us have never experienced before, we need to be as strong as possible in our advocacy for ourselves, our working conditions, and our students.

To that end, the UFF Government Relations Committee is looking for members to join our HERO Teams—Higher Educational Regional Outreach—to lobby legislators to support the bills that will make Florida better and oppose the bills that would do so much harm to our State. Along with our partners at the Florida Education Association (FEA) and the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO), UFF will provide training, support, and guidance to ensure that you're able to effectively advocate for yourself, your students, and your community.

If you're interested in getting involved, please complete [\*\*this linked form\*\*](#).

Additionally, we are working in coordination with the Florida AFL-CIO and the Working Family Lobby Corps (WFLC) to bring people to Tallahassee throughout the legislative session. You can fill out the Working Family Lobby Corps form [\*\*here\*\*](#) if you are interested in joining the WFLC this year. There are scholarships available for first time member lobbyists!



## UFF News and Opinion

January was a busy month for UFF's press efforts. Statewide and local leaders were covered in the *New York Times*, *NPR*, *ABC News*, *BET*, *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, *Inside Higher Ed*, the *Tampa Bay Times*, the *Florida Phoenix*, and more. Be sure to visit UFF's website to keep up with all of our [news coverage](#).

On January 25th, UFF leaders from across the state spoke out in [a press release](#) that affirmed our union's commitment to the rights of all Floridians to learn without authoritarian control. Less than a week later, President Gothard also shared [a written statement](#) in response to Gov. DeSantis's so-called "reform" agenda for higher education, proclaiming that "the Constitutional rights promised to all Americans do not come with an asterisk that says 'unless Gov. DeSantis disagrees with you.'"

Various UFF leaders also published op-eds in defense of tenure and academic freedom, such as Liz Brown and Parvan Ahmed (UFF-UNF) in [The Florida Times-Union](#), Anna Peterson (UFF-UF) in [the Independent Florida Alligator](#), Andrew Gothard (UFF President) in [Inside Higher Ed](#), Mike Budd (UFF Retired) in the [Sun Sentinel](#), and more.

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](#).

## Events and Opportunities

### STUDENT WALKOUT

On Thursday, February 23rd, from 12:00 – 1:00 pm, students across the state of Florida (and potentially the country) will be participating in a walk out event to protest Gov. DeSantis's racist and attacks on DEI in higher education.

UFF is fully in support of this non-violent student protest! To learn more, UFF members can:

- Fill out [this interest form](#), hosted by Dream Defenders, to receive event updates.
- Follow [StandforFreedomFL](#) on Instagram. There are also good flyers here for locals to use/distribute.

Faculty can support the walkout by—

- Sharing information about the walkout with all of your students.
- Informing your students that they will not be penalized for walking out as part of this event.
- Having supportive conversations with students who participate in the walkout.



**STAND FOR FREEDOM!**

Join the statewide movement and walk out hosted by Florida College Democrats & Dream Defenders to stop the DeSantis administration's attacks on LGBTQ+ and BIPOC students, faculty, & staff!

**SIGN THE PLEDGE:**

**February 23rd**  
**12:00 - 1:00 pm**  
**Wear Black!**

A QR code is located to the left of the 'SIGN THE PLEDGE' text. The background of the poster features a collage of protest signs, including 'IMPOSTOR', 'WASSE', 'IN THE SWAMP', and 'WEL'.



## UFF VIRTUAL SUPER WEEK

UFF will hold a Virtual Super Week from February 12-17, 2023, leading up the UFF Senate meeting that weekend. Any UFF member can attend a Super Week event, which includes collective bargaining and grievance trainings, state committee meetings, organizing events, and more. Each of these meetings represents a great opportunity for UFF leaders—both new and old—to plug into ongoing efforts that will strengthen our union for years to come.

Check out the entire **Super Week schedule** here! If you are unsure of where your skills might best fit, feel free to attend more than one meeting, and if you need help joining a meeting, please reach out to your local chapter officers.



## NEA HIGHER EDUCATION CONFERENCE

This year's NEA Higher Education Conference will be held in San José, California, March 17-19th. The conference features workshops on topics such as eliminating your student debt, uncovering your institution's finances, uncomplicating your collectively bargained contract, and effectively using social media, with specific sessions for academic staff, HBCU faculty, graduate assistants, and contingent faculty. Previous iterations of this conference have featured UFF leaders as panelists and general session moderators.

Members interested in attending should contact their local chapter to discuss funding before **registering at this link**.



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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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