Director’s Note

As the University of Florida continues to rise in the rankings of public research universities (currently #7), the UF Innovation Academy is honored to serve and support our students in obtaining an outstanding education and experience that prepares them for the 21st-century workplace. This past year we partnered with the Loss Prevention Research Council (LPRC) to allow our students to work side-by-side on product loss and crime solutions, we implemented our Amicon management engagement program where our students benefitted learning first-hand the need for critical problem solvers (innovators) in construction management, and we enlisted many of our alumni to expand the network of robust student engagement opportunities including internships, permanent positions, and financial resources. We remain committed to our mission and our students by continuing to enhance the curricular and co-curricular experience so they can develop into great innovators, creative thinkers, and problem solvers.

Our results this year continue to reflect the growing need for undergraduate students to enter the workplace with skills such as creativity, problem-solving, verbal communication, & multidisciplinary collaboration. Most notably, our students produced over 50 prototypes in partnership with the UF College of Education focused on optimizing early childhood development. We sent IA students to competitive internships all over Florida and around the country. Additionally, we added the College of Education’s Education Sciences major to the list of available majors, we graduated 194 students with the Innovation minor and we sent IA students into the local community to share entrepreneurship and innovation basics with elementary children.

We continue to refine our curriculum to provide the foundation on which our students can utilize their skills and specific knowledge to bring new ideas to life. To support this effort we are continuing to seek resources from UF alumni and corporate partnerships aimed at providing state-of-the-art teaching and learning classrooms, a student business incubator, high impact engagement experiences for students, and sophisticated and modern prototyping equipment and training.

We are excited to expand on the momentum gained this year in anticipation of making the future of the IA program brighter. I invite you to read more about these accomplishments in the following pages and help us celebrate our students, faculty, and staff. I hope you enjoy learning about our many additions & endeavors over the past year.

Go Gators,

Jeff Citty, Ed.D.
Director, Innovation Academy
IA BY THE NUMBERS

1160 IA STUDENTS

1295 INDIVIDUAL ADVISING SESSIONS

194 STUDENTS EARNED THE IA MINOR

155 AVERAGE NUMBER OF STUDENTS IN LLC RESIDENCE

35 STUDENTS IN THE INAUGURAL “THE INNOVATION MINDSET” COURSE

59 STUDENTS AND THEIR FAMILIES ATTENDED DISCOVER IA

53 PROTOTYPES BUILT & PITCHED

180 LOCAL ELEMENTARY STUDENTS IMPACTED BY IA REACH

30 DIFFERENT MAJORS OFFERED

+2,500 COMBINED IA AMBASSADOR SERVICE HOURS

$118K DONATIONS PLEDGED TO IA
The IA Catalyst Innovation Challenge, our innovation summer showcase, centers on students moving their ideas beyond classroom learning. It serves as a launching point for students to apply their innovative solutions to communities, even after its corresponding course – Creativity in Action – ends. So, what does Catalyst look like? Throughout the length of the course, students team up to develop ideas & solutions to alleviate intricate, real-world problems. Through prototypes, informational posters, and persuasive pitches, they communicate their projects at Catalyst, which showcases their solutions to the community, family, friends, faculty, and fellow innovators in attendance.

This year’s seventh annual IA Catalyst Challenge took place in June and August. Fifty-three teams rose to the challenge by developing their prototypes to answer the guiding question, “How might we optimize early childhood development for children in Florida?” The two cohorts – Summer A (June) and Summer B (August) – strove for excellence and competed for six different awards. A new award this year was for Best Prototype.

The winners from the Summer A cohort were Rebecca Neal, Juan Carlos Miranda, Mac Gilroy, Erika Rodriguez, and Miranda Harris with “Welko,” a language-learning tool that aids children in developing multiple languages to increase cognitive function and long-term development. The winners from the Summer B cohort were Natalie Cabral, Danielle Christian, Ian Gonzalez, Ilana Rodriguez, and Jamie Venezia with “ToiletlyNormal!,” a redesigned plastic children’s toilet equipped with a pressure-activated Arduino kit that eliminates a child’s access to the contents.

“Receiving the best prototype award was one of the most satisfying moments of Catalyst,” said Best Prototype winner Danielle Christian. “At that moment we realized that all of our hard work and long hours spent designing ToiletlyNormal! in our innovation class had finally paid off!”

When I first applied to my internship, I did not expect to hear back. But [after going through three rounds], I received an email saying that I had moved onto the fourth and final round, which were in-person interviews.

I flew out to New York to interview. I took advantage of being an IA student to emphasize my skills in teamwork, leadership, creative thinking, and entrepreneurship – using them in everyday life while other applicants were still in the process of honing that craft. Something very interesting happened towards the end: She pulled my resume and pointed out my “interests” section: “Interests: boba, hiking, French bread, reverse parking.”

She asked, “So why reverse parking?” That is when I took the opportunity to show the comedic side of myself. As I spoke more about my expertise in the field of reverse parking, the recruiter couldn’t stop laughing for a good 5 minutes. That is when I knew that I killed the interview, giving every detail of myself, my experiences, and my knowledge and ending it with my classic comedic sass.

I was ‘TAing’ [Teaching] for a class when I got the email. I saw the first word, “Congratulations” and I couldn’t scream in front of my students, so I laid on the floor and quietly whispered to myself, “I did it.”
IA Ambassadors
The Innovation Academy Student Ambassadors act as liaisons between IA and IA students, families, and guests. They are involved in a wide range of activities, including conducting information sessions, coordinating IA visitation days, and serving on IA committees, all while enhancing their leadership abilities, teamwork and communication skills, and networking with professionals, potential employers, UF faculty and staff.
Facebook: @IAambassadors

LEAD by IA
IA’s Leadership Enhancement and Development (LEAD) is the first student-run organization under the IA umbrella. IA LEAD takes pride in offering students a platform to become leaders on campus and in the general Gainesville community, establishing an internal culture that calls for togetherness and success, promoting networking at every level, and encouraging members to utilize important resources and opportunities at their reach. This way, members become pioneers in their communities and successful leaders of tomorrow.
Facebook: @ufialead

Iota Alpha
Iota Alpha is the first innovation-focused sorority at UF that caters to IA students by following the Spring/Summer calendar. The organization incorporates the traditional sisterhood elements of service, friendship, and socials with themes like entrepreneurship and guest speakers. Iota Alpha hopes for a diverse enrollment of women to represent the sorority while maintaining an inclusive, productive, and fun atmosphere.
Facebook: @iotaalphauf

IA Health
IA Health’s mission is to help and enrich all members of tomorrow’s healthcare by developing professionally in their respective fields. Like other IA student organizations, they build experience through a Spring/Summer term with events ranging from speaker panels, research and resumes workshops, and service events at non-profits in the community.
Facebook: @UFIAHealth

H.I.R.E. IA
The newest organization in Innovation Academy, H.I.R.E. IA, is designed in a way that prepares students for their careers and expands a network of professionals from different businesses in different industries. H.I.R.E. IA promotes confidence in students while presenting to the world who IA is, and the definitive edge that IA students bring to the field. Meetings focus on the eight career competencies, holding forums, and conducting outreach to employers.
Facebook: @hireia

STUDENT INVOLVEMENT
in Innovation Academy

ADVISING SNAPSHOT
Top Reasons Why Students Come to IA Advisors

Academic Concerns/General Advising
Prospective Freshman Inquiry
Major Change/Exploration
Innovation Minor

Advising Traffic

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Appointments & Walk-Ins

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Transfer Activity

25 TRANSFER STUDENTS WERE ADMITTED INTO IA FROM
2 DIFFERENT COLLEGES

ADVISING HOURS AT SANTA FE
IA faculty members have developed a partnership with LPRC (housed in UF Innovate: The Hub) in alignment with the student learning outcomes for IDS4950: IA Senior Project. Students are required to demonstrate the knowledge and tools characteristic of innovators by creating a novel business idea, incorporating leadership & ethical theories, and applying entrepreneurial strategies to real-life problems that are pre-determined by the 70+ retailers and 75 solution partners of the LPRC, who collaborate to develop effective loss and crime control solutions through extensive research.

IA students essentially become research partners as well and present final ideas and prototypes to retail representatives and other solution partners. In Spring 2019, through the process of design thinking, five student teams tackled the issue of self-check-out theft and five teams addressed retail parking lot safety. In Summer 2019, four teams iterated around self-check-out theft, focusing equally on innovative ideas to address the issue, as well as implementation and employee training and development.

Faculty and staff from LPRC serve as mentors to students, helping them navigate the research process, connecting them with relevant personnel and resources, and providing feedback at key intervals throughout the design thinking process. The LPRC Ideation and Simulation Lab, and the Innovation Lab can be utilized by students at any point in the process to gain a better understanding, or a broader view of the issues they are addressing. Beyond IDS4950, this partnership has connected IA faculty, staff, and students to The Hub itself, to local internship opportunities, and opened doors for further collaboration with LPRC partners who share the same innovative values as Innovation Academy.
Sierra Pollard, IA class of 2016, has grown from an IA student with an interest in communications, to a successful marketing specialist, small-business owner, and entrepreneur, to CEO of her own company and staunch supporter of IA. Her firm, Ginger Media Marketing, works with local businesses searching for a stronger social media presence through brand awareness and online engagement.

So, how did graduating from IA help Pollard’s current business? Quite naturally and simply: “I have a better understanding of meeting a variety of needs,” said Pollard. “Being in IA and taking every creativity course taught me how to think outside of the box when problem-solving with each client on an individual basis.”

In fact, Innovation Academy helped launch Pollard’s career. In a sort of domino effect, IA helped Pollard get hands-on experience with a fall internship, which gave her the experience needed to kick-start great opportunity and gathering enough confidence to launch Ginger Media Marketing. Like IA, her company is based on creativity and innovation – “[it] gave me the positive encouragement that I needed to create a platform for my own company.”

An alumna of reference, Sierra joined our Director’s Circle and participated in the European Innovation Academy (EIA) in Turin, Italy. At EIA, Pollard and her team won the Quinones Spark Award, a $15,000 IP Scholarship.

The inaugural Amicon Management Engagement Program took place at the end of May 2019, connecting interdisci- plinary young professionals to the bustling construction and construction management industry of South Florida. Over the three-day trip, students met and mingled with Amicon professionals, toured projects around the city, and got to know the personality of the city of Miami.

Among the activities enjoyed by students were a welcome dinner with Amicon leadership at River Oyster Bar, visiting local businesses and construction projects across the city, including the newly-managed Jungle Island park, which allowed students to see behind the scenes of animal enclosures. Students also toured Wynwood Walls, an art-centric development district in downtown Miami, shopped in the Brickell neighborhood, visited Calle Ocho, watched games at Little Havana’s Domino Park, and enjoyed lunch at Versailles Restaurant before heading back home to Gainesville.
Special Thanks

Our accomplishments this year would not have been possible without the generous support of our partners, and all of the Innovation Academy students and their families.

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IA Curriculum & Advisory Committees

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