



2024-2025

ANNUAL REPORT

UF | Innovation Academy
UNIVERSITY of FLORIDA



Message *from the* Director

Dear Friends of the UF Innovation Academy,

I am pleased to share the 2024–2025 Innovation Academy Annual Report and to celebrate another remarkable year of growth, creativity, and collaboration across our community. This year marked a milestone as the Innovation Academy officially moved into its new home on the third floor of the Computer Science and Engineering (CSE) building. The new McGrogan Active Learning Center, Startup Springs, and our state-of-the-art Prototyping Studio now provide dynamic spaces for our students to dream, design, and build. These spaces reflect the very essence of our mission, empowering innovative students to bring their ideas to life.

Our academic programs continued to expand in both depth and reach. From the study abroad program in Maynooth, Ireland, to growing partnerships with the Cade Museum, San Felasco Tech City, the City of Alachua, and Space Florida, our students engaged in over 260 design thinking projects across all IA courses this year. We also saw a record number of students participating in internships, with 28 students collaborating on local projects that made a measurable impact on our Gainesville community.

The IA faculty continued innovating in their classrooms by integrating artificial intelligence tools for ideation, design, and feedback while contributing to research, publications, and professional development initiatives. Their dedication ensures our curriculum remains at the cutting edge of innovation in higher education. Our advising team guided more than 5,200 student interactions through appointments, email advising, and workshops, achieving an outstanding 99% retention rate for the most recent cohort. These numbers reflect our commitment to student success and cultivating a culture of curiosity, support and student success.

Beyond the classroom, our community continues to inspire innovation. Each month, the Trailblazers student recognition program highlights exceptional student innovators, and our Summit ceremonies brought alumni back to share their journeys, reminding our students that innovation is not just an academic pursuit but a lifelong mindset.

As we look ahead, the Innovation Academy remains grounded in its mission to prepare innovative leaders. The partnerships we've built, the projects we've launched, and the spaces we've designed all reinforce that innovation is thriving at the University of Florida. Thank you to our faculty, staff, students, and partners who make this community what it is. Together, we continue to ideate, create, iterate and innovate.

Warm regards,

Jeff Citty, Ed.D.
Director, Innovation Academy
University of Florida

Academic Achievements

During the 2024–2025 academic year, the University of Florida’s Innovation Academy advanced its hands-on, design thinking–based curriculum through expanded use of AI tools, strong local and global partnerships, and enhanced student engagement. Over 1,000 innovation projects were completed across core courses including Innovation Mindset, Creativity & Design Thinking for Innovation, Innovation in Action, and Senior Project, with students collaborating on real-world challenges alongside partners such as the Cade Museum, City of Alachua, San Felasco Tech City, and Space Florida. Technical Assistants supported more than 2,500 student consultations, strengthening prototype development and technical skills. Faculty achievements included advanced degrees, research publications, and participation in AI-focused professional development. Through innovative teaching strategies, feedback systems, and community collaboration, the Innovation Academy continued to foster creativity, interdisciplinary learning, and professional readiness among its students.

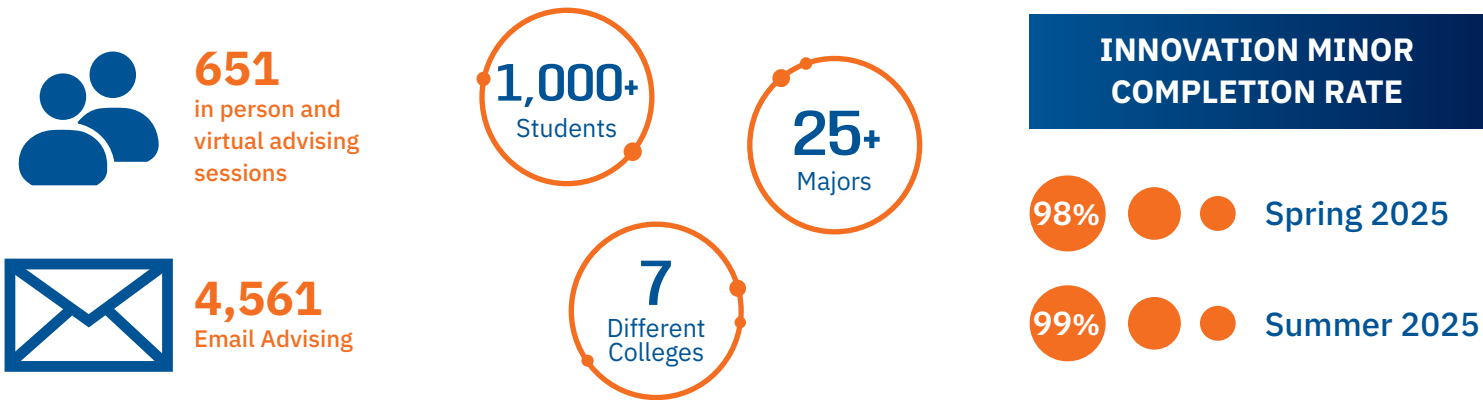


Design Thinking Projects

Technical Assistant Office Hours



Advising Data



Fundraising & Development

Elizabeth (“Liz”) Catherine McGrogan was a visionary leader and trailblazer in clinical documentation. As the founder of Medical Dictation, she revolutionized medical recordkeeping, building a trusted, innovative company that was later acquired by Transcend Services and then Nuance Communications. Her legacy extends beyond business success—she believed deeply in the power of education, innovation, and collaboration. That belief lives on in the McGrogan Active Learning Center she envisioned: a dynamic space designed to empower future generations of thinkers, creators, and entrepreneurs.



Year in Review

2024-2025



Maynooth Study Abroad

During the fall, 16 students traveled to Maynooth, Ireland, for a six-week, faculty-led program that blends cultural immersion with innovation.

Suss Scholarship

Awardee: Tiffany Steinke.
The Suss Family Endowment has been established to support students in IA who are pursuing a degree in the Warrington College of Business or the College of Journalism and Communications.



IA Local Internship

Partners for Fall included The Loss Prevention Research Council, The Cade Museum, and ThemeWorks. Thirty students participated in the internship program.

Senior Showcase

IA Senior Project course partnered with the City of Alachua and with Space Florida. Judges selected the winning team for the Top Innovator Award.



Speaker Series

In the Spring and Summer, Students heard inspiring stories from Mitch Glaeser, CEO of Emory Group, and Thomas Hørdam, founder of We Love Mentors. Pitch Competition winners pictured.

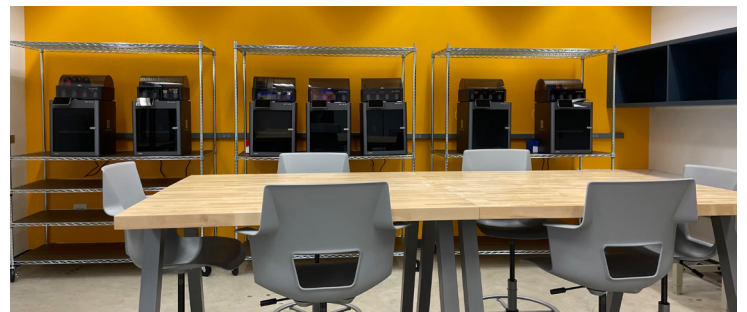
Info Lit Scholars

Twelve IA students participated in a new program facilitated by UF librarians to acquire valuable research skills. They learned important strategies on how to ethically find and use information as stewards of knowledge.



IA Move

In 2025, the Innovation Academy officially moved from the Infirmary building to its new home on the third floor of the Computer Science and Engineering building (CSE), right next to Marston Science Library and near the Century Tower. The CSE has been undergoing major renovations to create new spaces, one of them now a dedicated suite for the Innovation Academy. Highlights of the redesign include new classrooms like the McGrogan Active Learning Center, the Startup Springs student business incubator, and the Prototyping Studio equipped with brand new 3D printers. The new space is meant to inspire creativity and collaboration, encouraging IA students to bring their ideas to life.





Launch into IA

At the beginning of each Spring semester, IA invites its newest cohort of students to campus with a prestigious convocation ceremony. All first-year IA students, along with their guests, are welcomed by university leadership, the IA team, college advisors and fellow Gator innovators. The newest cohort began their IA journey with encouraging messages from the IA sophomore speaker, Jordan Im, and keynote, Bradley Gamble—CEO of the Cade Museum for Creativity and Invention. The warm welcome continued with a friends and family reception while IA students met with their college advisors.



Catalyst

After five weeks of preparation, first-year IA Students in the Innovation in Action course presented their ideas, prototypes, informational posters, and persuasive pitches at Catalyst in either a summer A or summer B semester. Members of the community, family, friends, fellow innovators, and people passionate about innovation attended this momentous event. Unlike previous years, each semester had a unique challenge. Summer A's challenge was developed in partnership with San Felasco Tech City: "How might we design a dynamic pedestrian friendly roundabout in Tech Town that invites exploration, highlights emerging technologies and artwork, and captivates visitors through engaging and active experiences?" And Summer B's statement engaged the nearby city of Alachua: "How might we reimagine a downtown Alachua city block to celebrate its unique history and charm, while creating a vibrant, modern hub where residents, merchants, and visitors can live, work, and play?" Awards for six categories at each semester were given to winning teams, including a cash prize for the overall Judges' Choice awardees, donated by Mitch Glaeser from Emory Group.



Summit

Every spring and summer, the Innovation Academy celebrates and honors graduating students for their dedication to driving change through innovation. Summit is the Innovation Academy's Award Ceremony, in which eligible IA seniors receive their Innovation Medallion; a symbol of commitment to their professional development that highlights their unique academic achievement.

Student Trailblazers

Trailblazing starts here. IA students are at the front of innovation, using design thinking, collaboration, and creativity to tackle real-world challenges before graduation. Their stories of impact and growth serve as inspiration for prospective students and highlight the strength of the IA community. They're not waiting for the future—they're creating it. Visit the IA website to read these students' blogs.



Angelina Rose

Class of 2025
Media Production,
Management, and
Technology



Samantha Fink

Class of 2024
Marketing



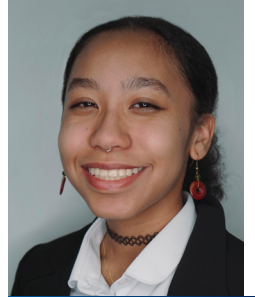
**Cynthia Castro
Gonzalez**

Class of 2026
Advertising



Ava Rathet

Class of 2027
Business Administration



Mya Ramsey

Class of 2026
Digital Arts and
Sciences



Allison Tivvis

Class of 2027
Computer Science



Kieran Boodram

Class of 2027
Business Management



Alisha Gandhi

Class of 2026
Information Systems



Meghan Haile

Class of 2027
Anthropology



Erika Burst

Class of 2026
Business administration



Sabrina Lopez

Class of 2028
Accounting



Meenakshi Nalla

Class of 2027
Information Systems



Daejah Carlisle

Class of 2025
Business Administration



Archit Namboodiri

Class of 2028
Computer Science

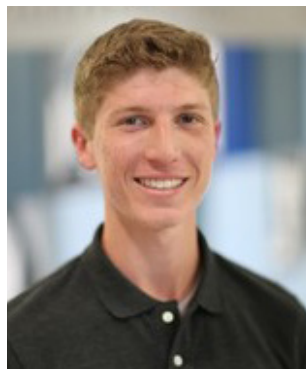


Rachel Ferri

Class of 2028
Advertising

Alumni Highlights

Our alumni contribute immensely to their industries. Taking full advantage of their innovation minor and all the skills gained at the Innovation Academy, they have grown into creative problem solvers and strategic thinkers who continue to pave the way for success. Full story features may be found on the Innovation Academy website.



Dakota Diaz

Class of 2018

**Bachelor's in Business Administration,
Master's in International Business**

Dakota has worked at Lockheed Martin since 2020 as a Project Engineer and spoke alongside Brooke Garrison-Diaz at the IA Summit ceremony in Spring 2025.



Alan Ivory

Class of 2019

**Bachelor's and Master's in Wildlife
Ecology and Conservation**

Alan is now a Ph.D. candidate at UF in Forest Resources and Conservation. His research on wildlife behavior in stormwater sewer systems, including alligators, was published in Urban Naturalist and earned him an interview with *The New York Times*.



Alexandria Egues

Class of 2022

Bachelor's in Political Science

Alexandria now works as a Product Growth and Analytics Analyst at TD Bank. Her next step is to pursue an MBA at Cornell and hopes to transition into venture capital.

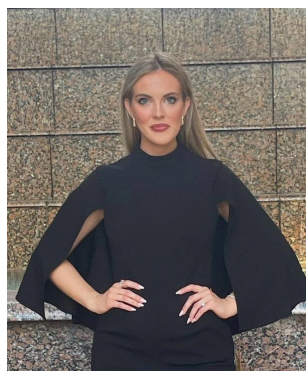


Olivia Stultz

Class of 2019

**Bachelor's in Science in Agricultural
Education and Communication**

Olivia now works as an Associate Project Manager at the Hershey Company. She was the keynote speaker for the IA Summit ceremony in Summer 2025. She shared how she used the Innovation Minor to advance her career path.



Madison Ford

Class of 2021

Bachelor's in Business Administration

Madison started at Keller Williams as a front desk associate and quickly rose through the ranks. She now leads a team of 136 agents as the brokerage leader and business consultant at Keller Williams Portfolio Collection in Largo, Florida.



Benjamin Thompson

Class of 2021

**Bachelor's in Industrial and Systems
Engineering, Master's of Science in
Architectural Studies**

Benjamin works as a Senior Associate Engineer for ATI with Universal Creative. He came back to IA as a judge for Catalyst summer 2025.



Brooke Garrison-Diaz

Class of 2019

**Bachelor's in Journalism and
Communications**

Brooke works in Tampa Bay as an Account Executive at TEGNA, crafting multimedia marketing campaigns. She said her experience in IA taught her adaptability, solution-building, and the confidence to thrive in dynamic, shifting environments.



Coleman Tubbs

Class of 2024

Bachelor's in Business Administration

Coleman discovered his passion for creating immersive guest experiences during an internship at Universal Destinations and Experiences and now works as an Operational Alignment and Compliance Coordinator at Universal.

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.

Dr. Donald Landry
Interim President

Dr. Kent Fuchs
Interim President

Dr. Joseph Glover
*Interim Provost and Senior Vice
President, Academic Affairs*

Dr. Angela Lindner
Vice Provost, Undergraduate Affairs

Dr. Brian Harfe
*Interim Associate Provost,
Teaching and Technology*

Dr. Matt Jacobs
*Interim Associate Provost for
Undergraduate Education and
Student Success*

Dr. Heather White
Vice President, Student Life

Dr. Mary Parker
*Vice President, Enrollment Management
and Associate Provost*

Dr. Sierra Calhoun-Pollard
Ms. Megan Cantrell
Ms. Amy Freeman
Mr. Jamie Kraft
Dr. James Simpson
Mr. Daniel Stepp
Mr. Parker Van Hart

Dr. Elizabeth Gadsby
Mr. James Gadsby
Mr. Kurt Gardner
Mr. Mitch Glaeser
Ms. Michele Lee
Ms. Bethany Taylor
Mr. Benjamin Thompson
Mr. Elliot Welker

Mr. Walt Adams
Mr. Bradley Gamble
Ms. Caitlin Gardner
Mr. Adam Grossman
Mr. Thomas Hørdam
Mr. Michael Okwusogu
Ms. Jeanne Zucker

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UF Advancement
UF Counseling and Wellness Center
UF Department of Housing and
Residence Life
UF Division of Enrollment Management
UF Division of Student Life
UF Innovate
UF International Center
UF Libraries
UF Office of Technology Licensing
IA Curriculum and Advisory Committees

Cade Museum for Creativity
and Invention
Citi Tampa
Loss Prevention Research
Council
San Felasco Tech City
Slice Engineering
Themeworks, Inc.

College of Agriculture and Life Sciences
College of Design, Construction and Planning
College of Education
College of Journalism and Communications
College of Liberal Arts and Sciences
Herbert Wertheim College of Engineering
Warrington College of Business

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON GIVING TO IA

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