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## LAUNCH INTO IA 2026 WELCOMES NEW STUDENTS TO THE UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA

GAINESVILLE, Fla. [January 8, 2026] – The University of Florida Innovation Academy (IA) is set to welcome 218 undergraduate students, alongside friends, family, and faculty, to the UF campus and into the IA program at the 2026 “Launch into IA,” our distinctive convocation event for the incoming IA class. We are thrilled to receive the new cohort of IA Gators as we prepare for a semester full of innovation and growth.

The event will take place on January 10<sup>th</sup>, from 9:30 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. in the Grand Ballroom at the Reitz Union. Doors open at 8:30 a.m. Attendance is mandatory for all first-year IA students and business professional attire is required. Students will have the opportunity to meet and connect with IA faculty, advisors, and their upcoming cohort. As part of the event experience, attendees will also receive exclusive IA merchandise, curated swag bags, and enjoy light refreshments.

The Innovation Academy is also honored to welcome Rob Jones, retired U.S. Marine, Paralympian, and leadership instructor at Echelon Front, as the 2026 Launch into IA keynote speaker. Jones was challenged to redefine leadership beyond military service, which led him to the world of sports. He brought home a bronze medal in rowing in the 2012 Paralympic Games in London, England, became the first double above-knee amputee to ride a bicycle across the United States, and later completed 31 marathons in 31 days across 31 cities. Jones now relies on his experiences to inspire and help people embrace Extreme Ownership and overcome challenges in both business and life.

“We are excited to welcome our incoming class of 218 students to the Innovation Academy community,” said Dr. Jeff Citty, Director of the University of Florida Innovation Academy. “Launch into IA marks the beginning of their journey as innovative thinkers, collaborators, and leaders. We look forward to getting to know each of our new students and supporting them as they engage in a learning experience designed to challenge assumptions, spark creativity, and prepare them to make meaningful impact at UF and beyond.”

Other speakers include Dr. Donald Landry, UF interim president; Dr. Chris Summerlin, UF dean of students; Blake Cox, UF student body president; and Gabby Zreibi, IA student and sophomore speaker.

For more information about the event, please visit our website.

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The Innovation Academy (UF IA) is one of the nation's most forward-looking undergraduate programs – at one of its most dynamic research universities. UF IA gives motivated students a small-college experience focused on innovation, creativity, entrepreneurship, ethics and leadership on a unique spring-summer schedule. UF IA enrolls and supports academically talented students focused on developing knowledge to grow new business opportunities, services and products through curricular and co-curricular experiences.

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For more information, please visit the UF IA website at <https://innovationacademy.ufl.edu/>