

# Connection

UNIVERSITY of WEST FLORIDA

Spring 2026 | Alumni & Friends Magazine

## MANNY DIAZ JR.

WRITING THE NEXT  
CHAPTER OF UWF  
15



ARGOS IN  
AEROSPACE  
MEDICINE

07

RESEARCH  
ON THE RISE

09

CHAMPIONSHIPS,  
RECORDS AND  
RECOGNITION

21

# Connection

## CONNECTION MAGAZINE

Spring 2026

### PRESIDENT

*Manny Diaz Jr.*

### VICE PRESIDENT, UNIVERSITY ADVANCEMENT

*Tori Bennett '12, '16*

### ADVANCEMENT AND ALUMNI RELATIONS

*Catrina Burks*

*Katie Schutts*

*Robin Zimmern*

### EXECUTIVE EDITOR

*Brittany Sherwood '14, '25*

### MANAGING EDITOR

*Zachary Farrington '14*

### CREATIVE DIRECTOR

*Jennifer Peck '08, '25*

### DESIGN

*Hannah Bledsoe '21*

*Carly Richards '25*

### PHOTO DIRECTION & PHOTOGRAPHY

*Brian Butler*

*Conlan Taylor '23*

*Joe Vinson '23*

### WRITERS & EDITORS

*Savannah Guilford*

*Will Kennedy '93, '21, '25*

*Paige Hennessy Spradlin '24*

*Micayla Yates*

### CONTACT US

Web [uwf.edu/alumni](http://uwf.edu/alumni)

Email [alumni@uwf.edu](mailto:alumni@uwf.edu)

Phone 800.226.1893

Mail UWF Alumni Association,  
11000 University Pkwy., Building 12,  
Pensacola, FL 32514

### TO GIVE

Online [uwf.edu/give](http://uwf.edu/give)

UWF Connection is published semi-annually by Alumni Relations and University Marketing and Communications. The purpose of Connection is to communicate and engage with UWF alumni, donors, friends and others interested in the activities of UWF.

## Inside

- 2 LETTER FROM THE VICE PRESIDENT
- 3 NEWS & NOTES
- 7 ARGO-AEROSPACE MEDICINE PIPELINE
- 9 GROWTH IN RESEARCH
- 13 FACULTY SPOTLIGHT: NYE GRANT
- 15 MANNY DIAZ JR.
- 21 FALL 2025 ATHLETIC ACHIEVEMENTS
- 26 ALUMNI EVENTS
- 27 ALUMNI PROFILE: LATIYA ROBINSON
- 28 ALUMNI PROFILE: JODIE RUMMER
- 29 SNAPSHOTS
- 31 CLASS NOTES

## 15

**MANNY DIAZ JR.** is guiding UWF into its next chapter as the University's eighth president. Read more about how President Diaz is leaning into UWF's momentum and putting students first.



07



09



21





## *Letter from the Vice President*

### **Alumni and Friends,**

It is an exciting time of transition at the University of West Florida. As a two-time UWF graduate, stepping in as interim vice president for University Advancement feels deeply personal and meaningful. The people and the institution that shaped my path continue to inspire my commitment to UWF's future, and it is an honor to help guide the institution that has long felt like home.

We are also celebrating an important milestone for the University: the completion of our presidential search. Congratulations to President Diaz on his official appointment. Having worked closely with him, I have found that we share a deep desire to engage more closely with our alumni and our community. You represent both our history and our future, and we encourage you to connect with us at upcoming events.

These exciting changes show how UWF continues to evolve while staying grounded in the community that shaped it. Thank you for your ongoing support. You are an essential part of UWF's story.

Sincerely,

*Tori Bennett*

Tori Bennett '12, '16  
Interim Vice President  
University Advancement

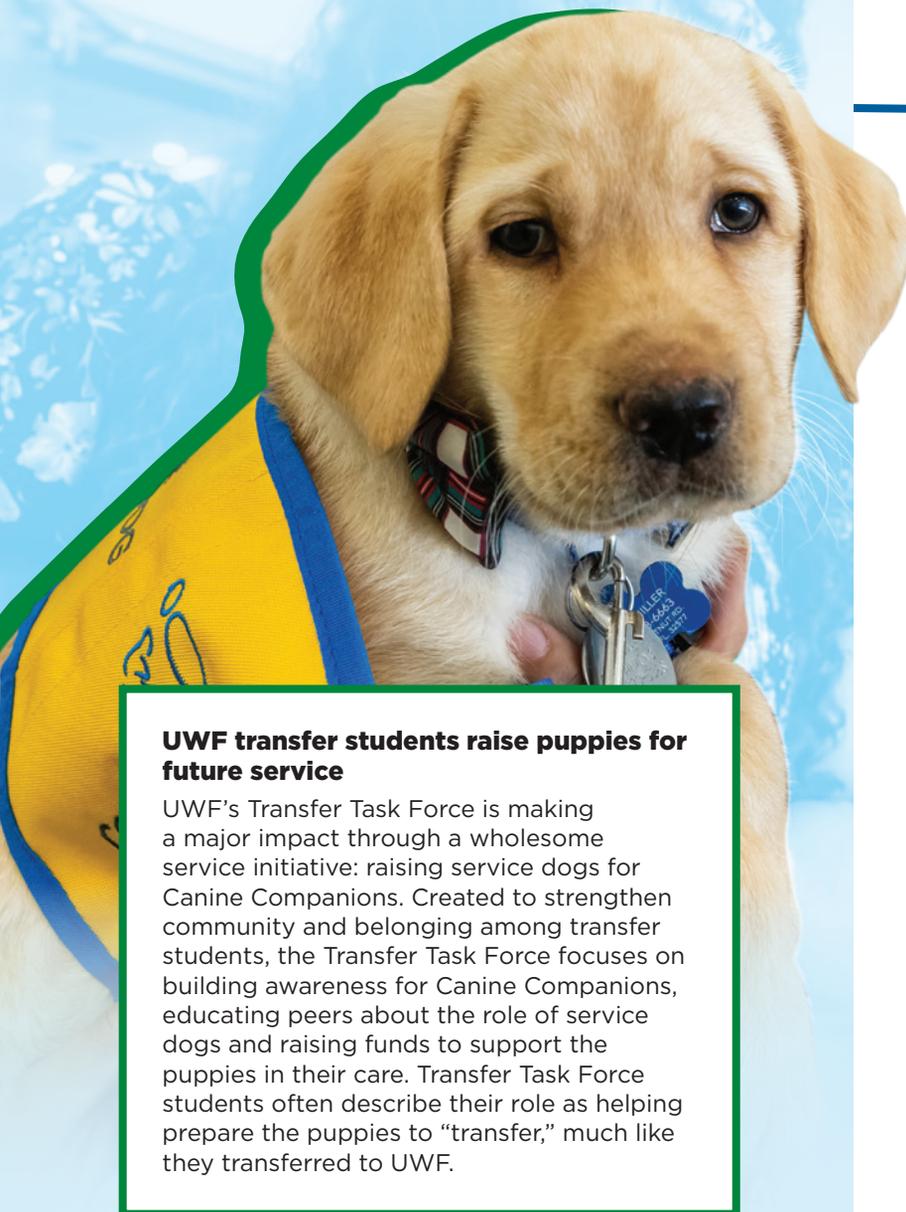


GO ARGOS

# News & Notes

Recent news from the  
University of West Florida

BY PAIGE HENNESSY SPRADLIN '24

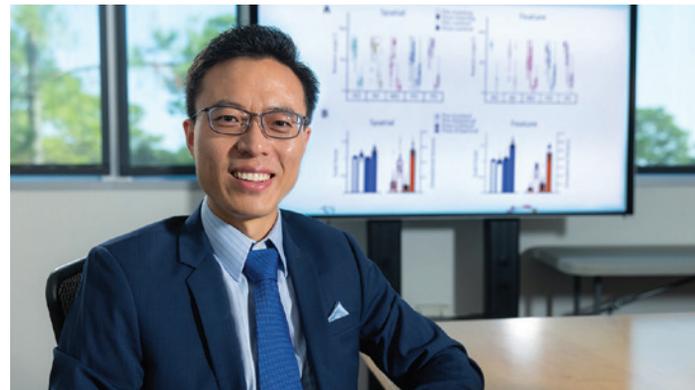


## **UWF transfer students raise puppies for future service**

UWF's Transfer Task Force is making a major impact through a wholesome service initiative: raising service dogs for Canine Companions. Created to strengthen community and belonging among transfer students, the Transfer Task Force focuses on building awareness for Canine Companions, educating peers about the role of service dogs and raising funds to support the puppies in their care. Transfer Task Force students often describe their role as helping prepare the puppies to "transfer," much like they transferred to UWF.

## **UWF earns highest ranking to date**

In the U.S. News and World Report's 2026 Best College rankings, UWF placed No. 6 among Top Public Schools Regional South. This is the University's fourth consecutive year among the top 10 public institutions in the region. These rankings are a direct reflection of UWF's renowned programs, outstanding graduate and undergraduate students, and faculty and staff who go above and beyond daily.



## **First UWF professor to earn national honor**

Dr. Shusen Pu is the first UWF faculty member to receive the Mathematical and Computing Sciences Early Career Faculty Mentor Award from the Council on Undergraduate Research. Pu joined the University in 2022 as an assistant professor in the Department of Mathematics and Statistics. Over the past three years, Pu has mentored more than 40 undergraduate students who have presented at national and international conferences and co-authored multiple peer-reviewed publications. His mentorship and unwavering dedication to his students have earned him this national honor.

## Accreditations rolling in

UWF received a reaffirmation of accreditation through 2035 by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges to award associate, baccalaureate, master's, educational specialist and doctoral degrees, as well as certificates and diplomas at approved degree levels. The UWF School of Education received accreditation for its educator preparation programs from the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation through Spring 2030. The undergraduate programs in computer engineering, electrical engineering, mechanical engineering, computer science, cybersecurity and information technology have earned reaccreditation from the Computing and Engineering Accreditation Commissions of ABET through 2031.



## UWF student received prestigious DoW scholarship

Lousindy Mitton was selected as a U.S. Department of War DoD Cyber Service Academy Scholar. Nationwide, only 7.5% of the 662 applications from institutions were chosen for this award. Beyond grateful, Mitton was nominated for this award by the UWF Center for Cybersecurity, which annually nominates its top students. The scholarship covered Mitton's annual tuition, the cost of books and a stipend of \$34,000 until her Ph.D. in intelligent systems and robotics at UWF with a specialization in cybersecurity is completed. After graduation, she will receive an immediate offer to work at the DoW. Mitton is excited about this new opportunity and eager to begin a new chapter of her life.



## Pensacola Children's Museum reopens with new exhibit

The Pensacola Children's Museum, part of the UWF Historic Trust properties and sites, has reopened with a new exhibit and first-of-its-kind accessible sensory space, thanks to a grant from IMPACT 100. The new exhibit, "Our Town: A Space for All," features a variety of historic businesses and sites, all inspired by historic Pensacola landmarks. On the second floor, the "Calming Seas Sensory Space" serves as a quiet space for guests to center themselves amongst the activity and bustle of the Children's Museum. These new additions allow the community to learn more about Pensacola's rich history and provide a fun, engaging learning experience for children.





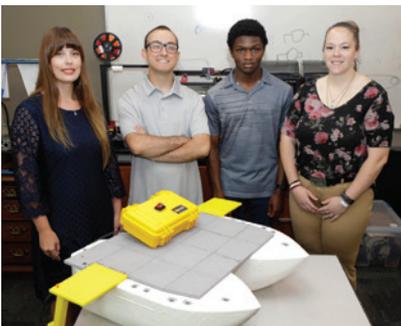
### UWF researchers reach the top globally

Dr. Wade Jeffrey was ranked in the top 0.05% of researchers by ScholarGPS. He is an oceanographer who has worked around the globe studying bacterial function and diversity in the ocean, examining the effects of oil on microbial communities in the Gulf of Mexico following the 2010 BP oil spill. He has also raised more than \$8 million in outside funding for research projects that involved him, other faculty members and students.

Two additional UWF professors have earned global recognition as a top 0.5% researcher in their respective fields with a ranking by ScholarGPS. Dr. Sikha Bagui established the Cyber Analytics Research Group, publishing peer-reviewed journal articles in database design, machine learning and AI alongside graduate students. Dr. Matthew Crow's primary research interests focus on criminal sentencing, policing issues and offender reentry, and his work has appeared in numerous peer-reviewed publications.

### UWF RoboBoat creates valuable opportunities for others

Four UWF electrical and computer engineering students worked closely with the Naval Surface Warfare Center in Panama City, Florida, to create a RoboBoat kit for the purpose of encouraging more high school students to dive into marine robotics. The team 3D-printed a RoboBoat using PLA filament and multiple layers of Flex Seal to ensure it was waterproof. They ran all the necessary tests, added a waterproof case for the battery, microcontroller and wires. Once completed, the UWF team handed the project off to Dr. Damion Dunlap, a STEM Outreach Manager at the Naval Surface Warfare Center Panama City Division, who will use it to teach and guide high school students to build a new RoboBoat.

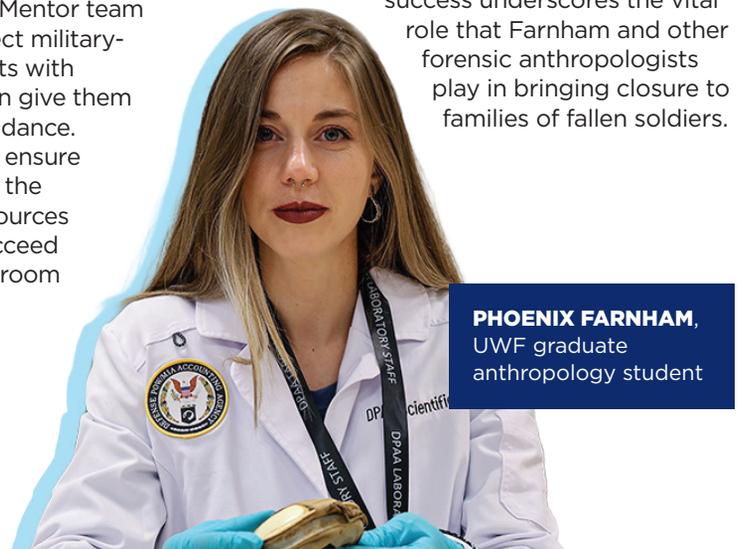


### UWF is best for veterans

UWF was ranked No. 1 on the Best for Vets: Education Employers list released by Military Times, coming in at No. 1 in the State University System of Florida and No. 3 among all Florida institutions. The University also ranked No. 15 on the national Best for Vets: Colleges list. UWF's VetSuccess program, in partnership with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs and Students Who Intern and Mentor team all help to connect military-affiliated students with mentors who can give them personalized guidance. These programs ensure veterans receive the support and resources they need to succeed both in the classroom and beyond.

### UWF student helps bring closure to families of fallen military

A graduate student in the UWF Department of Anthropology, Phoenix Farnham, was chosen for a highly competitive paid internship focused on forensic anthropology with the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency. One of only six students nationwide to receive this honor, Farnham said she feels incredibly blessed by the opportunity to blend her goals and interests in the lab. She spent her summer collecting data for her master's thesis in the DPAA's laboratory at Offutt Air Force Base in Omaha, Nebraska, while contributing to the agency's ongoing missions to recover and identify fallen U.S. service members. This success underscores the vital role that Farnham and other forensic anthropologists play in bringing closure to families of fallen soldiers.



**PHOENIX FARNHAM,**  
UWF graduate  
anthropology student



### Sparking a new understanding of robotics

The Hal Marcus College of Science and Engineering hosted the inaugural Florida Power & Light Robotics Summer Camp to help spark a passion for engineering, math, science and technology among younger generations. Thanks to a \$50,000 gift from the NextEra Energy Foundation, a corporate foundation of NextEra Energy Inc. and Florida Power & Light Company, 16 local high school and middle school students spent the day learning to put robots to work by having them grab blocks and play football. The gift will help fund the camps' consumable kits, robot control systems and other event materials until 2027.

### New civil engineering degree comes to UWF

The Hal Marcus College of Science and Engineering welcomed a new B.S. in Civil Engineering degree to its program catalog. The program is housed in the newly renovated Building 80 along with the Tyler Chase Norwood Construction Management Program. Construction management and civil engineering students are now able to gain hands-on experience with a wide range of construction materials, facilitating a new way for students to gain experience with real-world techniques. Through the one-on-one experience, tailoring the program to their exact needs and ensuring they are set up for future success, UWF furthers its hands-on learning initiatives.

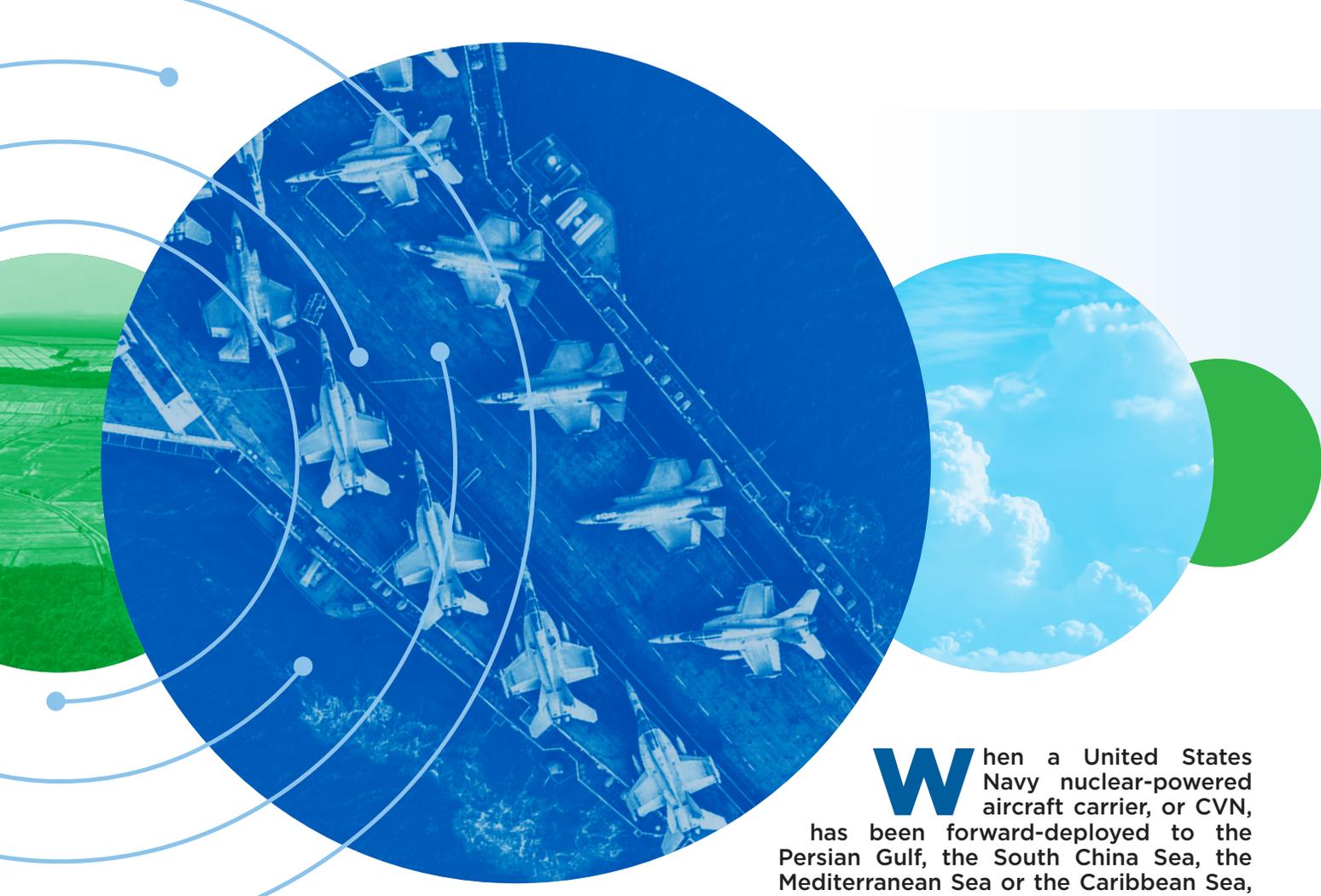
### Creating a safer community

Dr. Nicholas Hasan Buker, chair and professor in the Department of Criminology, Criminal Justice and Legal Studies at UWF, in partnership with the Pensacola Police Department, created an applied research project that produced a new evidence-based approach to designing police patrol beat borders. Funded by the City of Pensacola, the research found that there is a need for an updated Patrol Presence Score. Unlike traditional models, it uses computer-assisted dispatch data to aid in call-type classification and assess high-risk locations, creating a safer community.



### Rhodes Scholar finalist makes UWF history

Ambrea Hobbs made history by becoming UWF's first-ever Rhodes Scholarship finalist. She competed at the highest academic levels, all in the hope of receiving a fully funded postgraduate scholarship to the University of Oxford. The Rhodes Scholarship is the world's oldest and most prestigious international fellowship, and this achievement coincides with the launch of the John W. Merting Family Office of National Fellowships. Although she was ultimately not selected, Hobbs said she was honored to represent UWF and learned much about herself through the process.



**ARGOS IN**

# *Aerospace* **MEDICINE**

**BY SAVANNAH GUILFORD**

**W**hen a United States Navy nuclear-powered aircraft carrier, or CVN, has been forward-deployed to the Persian Gulf, the South China Sea, the Mediterranean Sea or the Caribbean Sea, there is a high probability that a University of West Florida graduate is serving on board in a leadership role as the carrier's senior medical officer.

Twelve UWF graduates who graduated between the years of 2017 and 2023 have served aboard all twelve U.S. Navy aircraft carriers. These carriers include USS Nimitz (CVN-68), USS Dwight D. Eisenhower (CVN-69), USS Carl Vinson (CVN-70), USS Theodore Roosevelt (CVN-71), USS Abraham Lincoln (CVN-72), USS George Washington (CVN-73), USS John C. Stennis (CVN-74), USS Harry S. Truman (CVN-75), USS Ronald Reagan (CVN-76), USS George H.W. Bush (CVN-77), USS Gerald R. Ford (CVN-78) and USS John F. Kennedy (CVN-79).

One of those graduates is Capt. Jon Elliot '17, former senior medical officer on the USS Gerald R. Ford, who credits his UWF education with preparing him to excel in this role.

"There was not a single day of my two years as senior medical officer aboard the USS Gerald R. Ford that I did not draw upon training in public health through UWF," Elliot said. "The competency I displayed in the multiple areas of public health made me a trusted advisor throughout the CVN leadership team, opening the door for greater discussions and progress toward a healthier and higher performing crew, more adaptable and able to complete the mission of the ship."

With only one senior medical officer aboard a ship, it is vital that officers have a mastery of all elements that



**“In nearly two decades of its existence, UWF Public Health has gained national and international recognition, drawing students and graduates from all over the world.”**

— Dr. Justice Mbizo, professor in the Department of Public Health



**HEALTH  
CARE**



**FOOD  
SANITATION**



**OPERATIONAL  
HAZARD  
MITIGATION**

impact the people on board including health care, food sanitation and operational hazard mitigation. To prepare students for future leadership roles, UWF has focused on building a strong Argo-Aerospace Medicine pipeline through the UWF Master of Public Health program and the Navy Aerospace Medicine Residency at the Naval Aerospace Medicine Institute at NAS Pensacola.

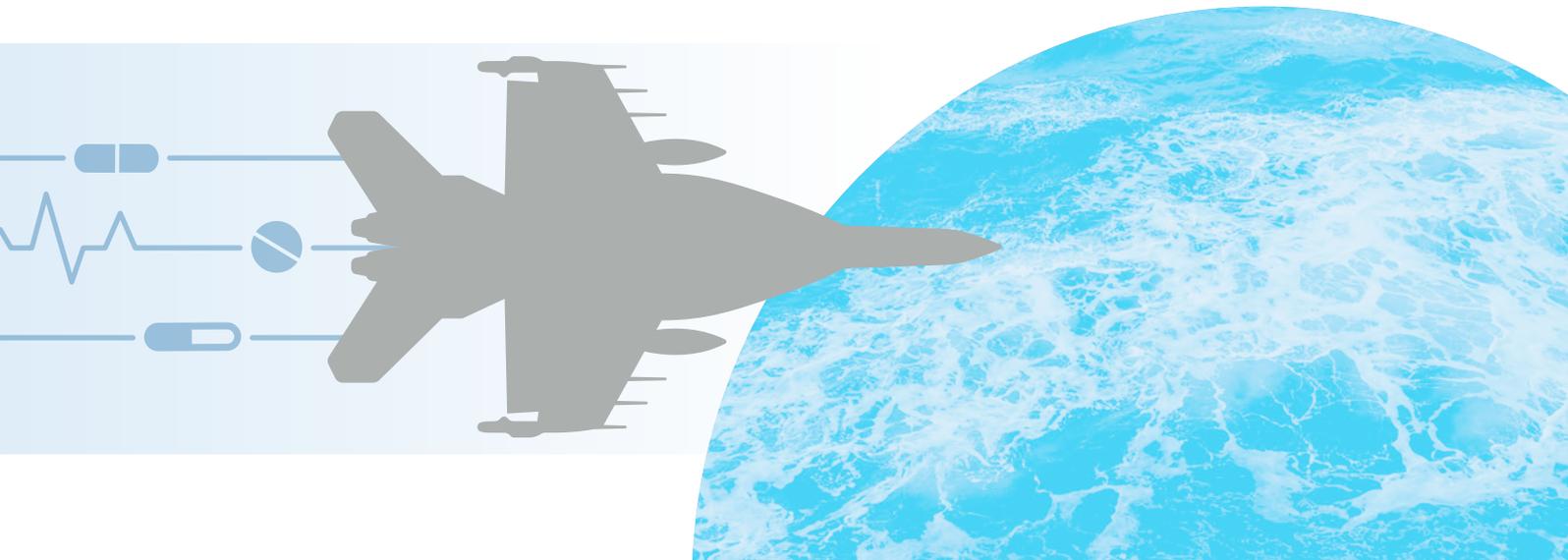
“As an experienced primary care physician, I was surprised at how much I needed fundamental training in public health to be effective in the role of CVN SMO,” Elliot said. “The public health needs of the CVN are formidable and require a diligent professional with a solid understanding of public health principles in order to adapt to the unique CVN environment and the unique needs of its crew. I felt well prepared for this role. The dedication of the UWF public health team to ensuring that this training is possible is nothing short of inspiring.”

Under the visionary leadership of Dr. Justice Mbizo, professor in the Department of Public Health who instituted the current pipelines for MPH students coming in from the military, UWF has become the site of MPH training for most residents in aerospace medicine. The MPH program trains military physicians with both military and civil medical organizations, as well as participation in research.

“Students learn competencies that include disease prevention, health promotion, disaster preparedness and program implementation,” Mbizo said. “Public health is a team science, so it is also important that our students develop core interpersonal relationship skills.”

Since the partnership with the UWF MPH program and the Army and Navy began, 58 Army residents in aerospace medicine and 114 Navy residents in aerospace medicine have received their MPH training at UWF. Mbizo says this is only the beginning of a flourishing program.

“The future for UWF’s MPH program is bright and will sustain because it is a vibrant and catalytic force for greater social good,” Mbizo said. “In nearly two decades of its existence, UWF Public Health has gained national and international recognition, drawing students and graduates from all over the world whose diverse perspectives, experiences and cultures enrich the learning environment for everyone. The cardinal rule of the program remains the same – we build bridges, interpersonal relationships and value all people while we prepare them for a career in helping others.”



# Research on the **RISE**

BY MICAYLA YATES

**K**nown for its beautiful natural campus and strong military support, UWF has also made a name for itself as a research leader this year, securing more than \$64.3 million in new grant awards in the Fall 2025 semester alone. This reflects the institution's growing emphasis on research and innovation as a driver of workforce development, student success and regional impact. For alumni watching their alma mater evolve, this progress tells a powerful story: UWF is stepping onto a larger stage, fueled by bold ideas and a growing research enterprise that is shaping the region and beyond.



These new awards build on the momentum sparked by Triumph Gulf Coast's approval of UWF's \$32.5 million "Research for Tomorrow" project, which is serving as a catalyst for expanding UWF's research portfolio and impact across Northwest Florida. Additional major funding, including a \$7.5 million award from the Office of Naval Research, underscores the University's rising profile as a hub for discovery and applied innovation.

For Dr. Jerry Lin, associate vice president of Research Administration and Engagement, the momentum reflects a clear strategic focus: building UWF's reputation as a research powerhouse while maintaining its commitment to student success.

"Securing this level of grant awards in a single semester is a direct reflection of the expertise and ambition of our faculty, and a historic milestone demonstrating UWF's commitment to research," Lin said. "Through these projects, we are not only advancing knowledge and developing solutions but also providing our students with cutting-edge training and hands-on experience necessary to thrive in tomorrow's workforce."



**ABOVE** Dr. Jacob Tracy, assistant professor in the Department of Chemistry, was awarded two grants totaling nearly \$90,000 to advance energy storage research and strengthen workforce development in Northwest Florida.

## IN THE FALL 2025 SEMESTER, UWF RECEIVED THE FOLLOWING COMPETITIVE AWARDS:

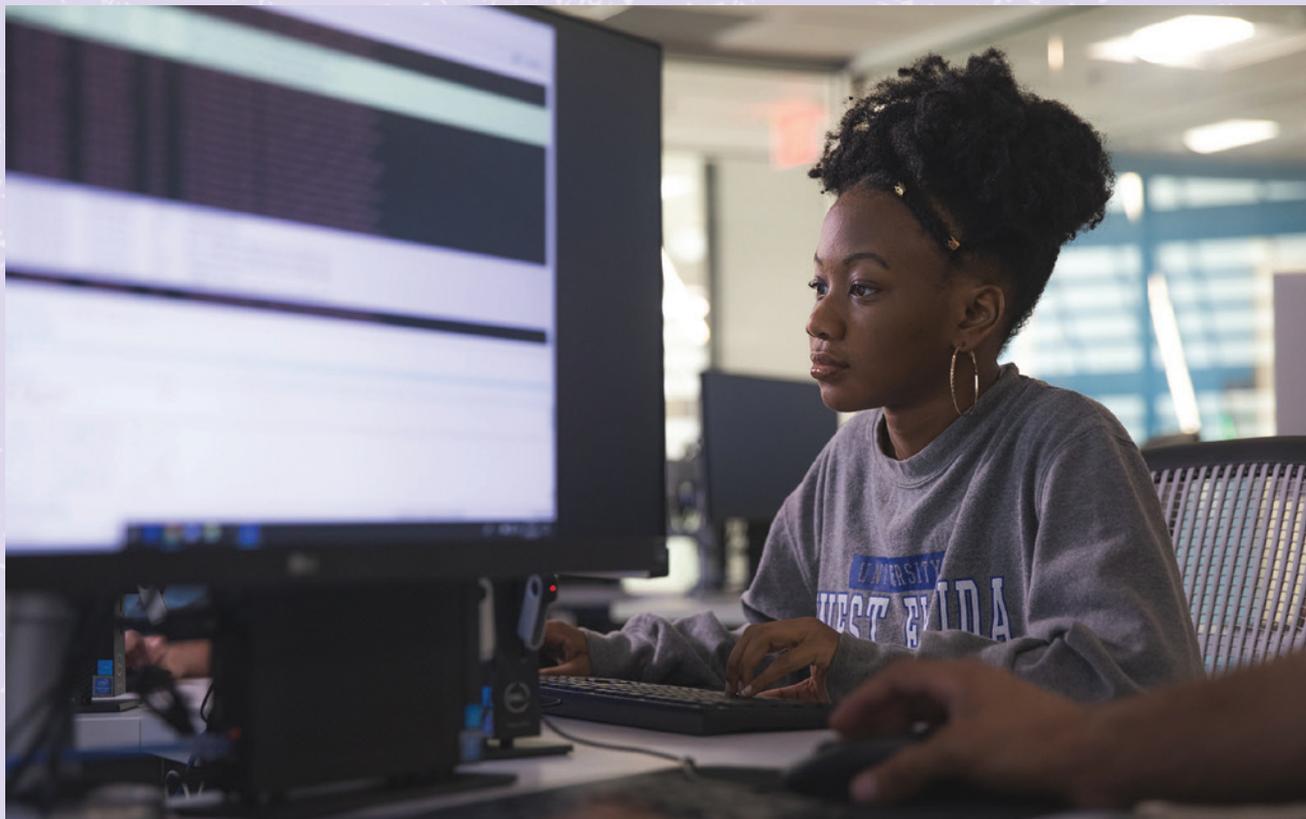
- \$9.6 million for the National Cybersecurity Workforce Development Program, sponsored by the U.S. Department of Defense's National Centers of Academic Excellence in Cybersecurity program and led by Dr. Eman El-Sheikh. This is the largest federal grant award the University has ever received.
- \$6.3 million for the Florida Small Business Development Center Network, sponsored by the U.S. Small Business Administration and led by Gregory Britton.
- \$2 million to expand the UWF Florida Cybersecurity Training Program, funded by the Florida Legislature through the Cyber Florida: FirstLine initiative.
- \$1.8 million for UWF TRIO Student Support Services Program 2025-2030, sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education and led by LaTonya Wesley.
- \$1.6 million for the Academy of American Civic Republicanism, sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education and led by Dr. David Ramsey.

## AWARDS CONTINUED

- \$1.3 million for the APEX Accelerator 2025, sponsored by the U.S. Department of Defense and led by Gregory Britton.
- \$575,142 for a collaborative research project aimed at improving undergraduate teacher education in the fields of science, technology, engineering and math, sponsored by the National Science Foundation and led by Dr. John Pecore.
- \$400,000 to support the creation of a new Office of Industrial Innovation, which will provide local businesses with access to the University's research capabilities and talent, sponsored by the National Science Foundation and led by Dr. Matthew Schwartz, Dr. Mohammed Khabou and Nicole Gislason.
- \$300,000 for a collaborative research project aimed at advancing understanding of human judgment and decision making, sponsored by the Office of Naval Research and led by Dr. Kristen "Brent" Venable.
- \$300,000 for a collaborative research project to train local AP Computer Science teachers, sponsored by the National Science Foundation and led by Dr. Sikha Bagui.
- \$100,000 to advance cutting-edge research in artificial intelligence, sponsored by the U.S. Department of Defense and led by Dr. Kristen "Brent" Venable.



**ABOVE** The Triumph Gulf Coast grant will help fund the renovation of the Laboratory Sciences Annex to house advanced computational research labs.



Together, these grants strengthen UWF's role as a leader in cybersecurity, robotics, artificial intelligence, small business support and student success, while preparing the University to expand further in civics, science, technology and engineering.

The growth in funding coincides with a major recognition of UWF's research enterprise. Last year, the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education designated UWF as a Research 2: High Spending and Doctorate Production institution. This prestigious classification places UWF among the nation's top research universities, acknowledging the faculty's expertise, research productivity and contributions to innovation.

According to Dr. Jaromy Kuhl, Provost, the recent awards align with the University's mission to leverage

faculty expertise in ways that directly benefit the region and the state.

"Research is no longer just a part of what we do – it's central to who we are as a University," Kuhl said. "With Triumph Gulf Coast as a catalyst, we've created a foundation that continues to attract major projects, partners and opportunities. These grants show that our strategy of hiring with research in mind and investing in high-impact projects is paying off."

With more grants on the horizon and a University-wide emphasis on research driving new hires and strategic growth, UWF is poised to sustain and accelerate this momentum. From cybersecurity to civics to workforce development, UWF research is making a difference across Northwest Florida, the state and the nation.

---

**"Research is no longer just a part of what we do – it's central to who we are as a University."**

— Dr. Jaromy Kuhl, University of West Florida Provost



# Dr. Nye Grant



When he's not teaching or researching, Dr. Nye Grant can often be found visiting active construction job sites, a habit that reflects his genuine passion for the field.

**A** professor in the Department of Civil Engineering and Construction Management, Dr. Nye Grant has been shaping the University of West Florida's building construction program since 2010. Through hands-on learning, project-based assignments and real-world scenarios, he prepares students to step into the construction industry with confidence, skill and integrity.

Grant's path to the construction industry was anything but linear. His first career was far from the classroom, having spent 11 years as an ocean lifeguard in California during high school and while pursuing his bachelor's degree in social ecology from the University of California Irvine. After relocating to Florida in 2001, Grant completed a master's degree in urban and regional planning and went on to work as a senior planner for the Orange County Planning Division in Orlando. It wasn't until 2005, when he enrolled in the Ph.D. program at the M.E. Rinker School of Construction Management at the University of Florida, that his career in construction truly began to take shape.

Grant's academic focus crystallized during a pivotal graduate course on sustainable construction and development taught by the late Dr. Charles Kibert, a nationally recognized leader in the field. The course ultimately shaped Grant's research specialization and teaching approach.

"Dr. Kibert emphasized work ethic above all else," Grant said. "He wanted us to dig into the material or, as he put it, to 'hold our noses to the grindstone.' I teach many of my classes in a similar manner, with emphasis on rigor, project-based learning and strong industry relevance."

Grant's research interests span sustainable construction, life cycle assessment, water conservation, construction safety, additive manufacturing and alternative building materials, with his work published in respected peer-reviewed journals including "Building Research and Information," "Journal of Industrial Ecology," "International Journal of Life Cycle Assessment," "Journal of Green Building" and "Safety Science." His current research focus is "coastal resilience" with an emphasis on structural hardening, insurance claims and the building code.

In the classroom, Grant teaches courses ranging from blueprint reading and construction surveying to construction safety, sustainable construction and estimating. Students gain hands-on experience through internships, capstone projects and newly enhanced laboratory spaces in Building 80, where state-of-the-art

Dr. Aneurin "Nye" Grant doesn't just teach construction management — he builds futures.

**BY MICAYLA YATES**

facilities allow construction management and civil engineering students to apply theory to practice in a real-world setting.

An early mentor left a lasting imprint on Grant's professional philosophy. Mark Klosterman, retired chief of marine safety for the City of Laguna Beach, taught him lessons in professionalism, integrity and accountability that continue to guide his work decades later.

"Some of the toughest lessons I've ever learned in life came from Mark," Grant said. "I owe a lot of my character to him. His guidance has stuck with me for 35 years."

When he's not teaching or researching, Grant can often be found visiting active construction job sites, a habit that reflects his genuine passion for the field.

"I have spent over twenty years in and around the construction industry," Grant said. "It's fast-paced, dynamic and intense. All aspects of construction fascinate me. You can spend a lifetime in the construction industry and still learn something new every day."

He also enjoys spending time with his family, cooking and, despite what he jokingly calls a "fateful choice," watching his beloved West Ham United compete in the Premier League.

Whether he's on a job site, in the classroom or cheering on his favorite team, Grant brings the same curiosity and commitment to everything he does — not just teaching construction management, but helping students lay the foundation for meaningful, lasting careers.



**DR. NYE GRANT** helps students lay the foundation for meaningful, lasting careers.



***“It’s fast-paced,  
dynamic and  
intense. All aspects  
of construction  
fascinate me.”***



L. Johnson  
University of West Florida  
Athletic Director

# MANNY DIAZ JR.

## GUIDING UWF INTO ITS NEXT CHAPTER

BY BRITTANY SHERWOOD '14, '25

**E**ach day at the University of West Florida brings a familiar sense of motion and purpose. Students cutting across the Cannon Green, conversations spilling out of classrooms, the easy confidence of a campus that feels both intimate and full of possibility. Manny Diaz Jr. notices these details. He notices because he believes leadership begins with paying attention.



“It’s hard not to notice the natural beauty of the campus,” Diaz said. “The atmosphere feels laid back and natural. Universities are living, breathing places, and you can feel when people believe in what they’re building together. At the same time, I’m always looking for where we can make things better and how we can continue to improve this place for students and for the community.”

That blend of appreciation and forward motion has come to define Diaz’s leadership style, grounded in respect for what UWF already is, and energized by what it can become. It is a style shaped by a lifetime in education, and now, it is guiding the University of West Florida into its next chapter.

### **It starts with the students**

When Diaz arrived at UWF as interim president, it was the people, especially the students, who made the biggest impression.

“The energy, the commitment students have to this institution, and that family atmosphere you feel from them, that’s what stood out right away,” Diaz said. “When I had the opportunity to interact with the community, donors, students, faculty and staff, and really get a firsthand feel for the University, it felt like this is the place for me.”

That sense of belonging connects directly to Diaz’s roots as an educator. His career began not in administration, but in a Miami-Dade County classroom, where he taught social studies and coached baseball.

Those years in the classroom gave Diaz an enduring perspective: every policy, every budget line, every strategic plan ultimately comes down to how it affects the lives of students. It’s a belief that has guided him through roles as a school leader, a college administrator, Florida’s Commissioner of Education and now as president of UWF.

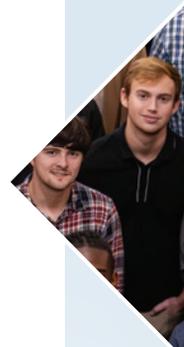
“At the end of the day, it’s about students first,” he said. “Understanding the mission and the reason we’re here. That’s always been front and center for me, from the classroom all the way through my arrival at UWF. We are preparing people for careers, for citizenship and for lives of purpose. That responsibility matters.”

### **Setting the pace and leading through momentum**

Diaz stepped into the interim presidency at a time when UWF was already on strong footing. Enrollment remained solid despite national headwinds, academic programs continued to grow, and the University earned strong marks in performance metrics from the Florida Board of Governors, particularly in post-graduation success and institutional efficiency.

Rather than pausing progress, Diaz leaned into it. He knew setting the tone early would matter.

“One of the most important things was for the University and the community to get to know me and to understand my strong commitment to



1. President Diaz supports a UWF Talent Catalyst program networking event.
2. President Diaz attends UWF Day at the Capitol.
3. Anna Lochas and President Diaz enjoy the faculty and staff ice cream social.
4. President Diaz hands out diplomas at his first commencement ceremony in Fall 2025.
5. President Diaz moderates a panel at the Leadership in the Age of AI Conference.
6. President Diaz high fives Argie during UWF Day at the Capitol.

**“WHEN I HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO INTERACT WITH THE COMMUNITY, DONORS, STUDENTS, FACULTY AND STAFF, AND REALLY GET A FIRSTHAND FEEL FOR THE UNIVERSITY, IT FELT LIKE THIS IS THE PLACE FOR ME.”**



**“THIS IS ABOUT COMMUNITY. IT’S ABOUT CREATING A PLACE WHERE STUDENTS, ALUMNI AND FAMILIES COME TOGETHER, WHERE MEMORIES ARE MADE, AND WHERE ARGO PRIDE IS ON FULL DISPLAY.”**

— President Manny Diaz Jr.



**President Diaz with Sandy Sansing, UWF alumnus and UWF Athletics Hall of Fame inductee**



excellence at UWF — the energy, pace and sense of urgency I was going to bring to the campus,” he said. “This University already had momentum. My responsibility was to honor that foundation and help move it forward.”

Under his interim leadership, UWF continued expanding programs of strategic emphasis, especially in STEM- and health-related fields, responding directly to workforce demand across Florida and the Gulf Coast. UWF moved swiftly, organizing military assets under a centralized Office of Military Services, engaging donors and community partners, and launching multiple initiatives designed to strengthen academics, infrastructure and student support. The University deepened its commitment to high-impact practices, internships, undergraduate research and experiential learning opportunities that ensure students graduate not only with a degree, but with real-world experience.

One of the most visible symbols of UWF’s forward momentum has also taken shape during this period: the start of construction of the new Darrell Gooden Stadium. More than an athletics facility, the stadium creates a gathering place for students, alumni and the broader community, producing a tangible investment in campus life and regional pride.

“This is about community,” he said. “It’s about creating a place where students, alumni and families come together, where memories are made, and where Argo pride is on full display.”

### **A University on the rise**

From the moment he stepped foot on campus, Diaz knew UWF was something special — not just in its programs and facilities, but in the people who call it home. What intrigued him most was the depth of pride and loyalty that runs through the campus and far beyond it.

"You hear about it, but it's different when you see it firsthand," he said. "That private-school, family-feel you're getting at a public university, and the overwhelming passion from donors, the community and the campus. It was eye-opening."

That sense of connection, Diaz believes, is one of UWF's greatest strengths. Yet he also sees a university that is still one of higher education's best-kept secrets.

"I think people still underestimate the incredible potential UWF has," he said. "Not just as an institution that provides opportunity, but as a catalyst for this community and this region."

Rather than talking about the future in terms of a rigid checklist, Diaz frames it around people, pos-

sibility and place. He envisions an institution that is becoming more visible, more confident and more deeply connected to the region it serves.

"Our job is to create opportunity and to make sure students have what they need to succeed, not just here, but in their lives after UWF," Diaz said. "We have so much potential, and what excites me is seeing our people lean into that. This campus community takes pride in what we are and has an open imagination of what we can become. The UWF our alumni remember is still here, but it's growing. We are expanding our reach, strengthening our reputation and opening doors for new generations of Argonauts who will carry that pride and promise into the future."



**President Diaz and his family, along with the men's golf team, cheerleaders and UWF Police, served as grand marshals in the 2026 Pensacola Mardi Gras Parade.**



## The person beyond the presidency

Diaz's passion for education is deeply personal.

"I grew up in a working-class family," Diaz said. "Without education, I wouldn't have had the opportunities I've had in my life. That experience completely shaped my view of education and the drive I have to improve opportunities for students every day."

No matter how large the responsibilities, Diaz said his family keeps everything in perspective.

"When you come home, you still have to take out the trash and do the chores," he said. "Kids are still kids. My first job is being a father and a husband, and that keeps you grounded every day."

That grounding, he believes, makes him a better leader, one who never loses sight of what truly matters. It influences how he thinks about students arriving at UWF with hopes, pressures and responsibilities of their own. Many, he notes, are balancing academics with jobs, military service or caregiving roles — realities he takes seriously.

"When families trust us with their students, that's not something I take lightly," he said. "We owe it to them to create an environment where students are supported, challenged and genuinely cared for."



## Writing the next chapter

As UWF looks ahead, Diaz remains optimistic and focused. He describes his goals for the University as ambitious but achievable, rooted in a strong foundation and a united campus community.

"UWF has already achieved incredible things," he said. "My job is to help us build on that success, stay true to our mission and imagine what's possible next."

As that chapter begins, one thing is clear: under Manny Diaz Jr.'s leadership, the future of the University of West Florida is being shaped with intention, integrity and a deep belief in the power of education.

# CHAMPIONSHIPS, RECORDS AND



Women's soccer, women's volleyball, men's soccer, men's and women's cross country, and football all had standout fall seasons.

# RECOGNITION

## ARGOS SHINE IN FALL 2025

BY WILL KENNEDY '93, '21, '25

**A**rgo Athletics turned the Fall 2025 semester into one of the most successful stretches in program history, delivering championships, postseason appearances and national recognition across multiple sports. From the football field to the volleyball court, the Argos consistently rose to the moment.

The season was defined not only by wins and titles, but by the people behind them — student-athletes who excelled under pressure and coaches whose leadership earned conference and national acclaim.

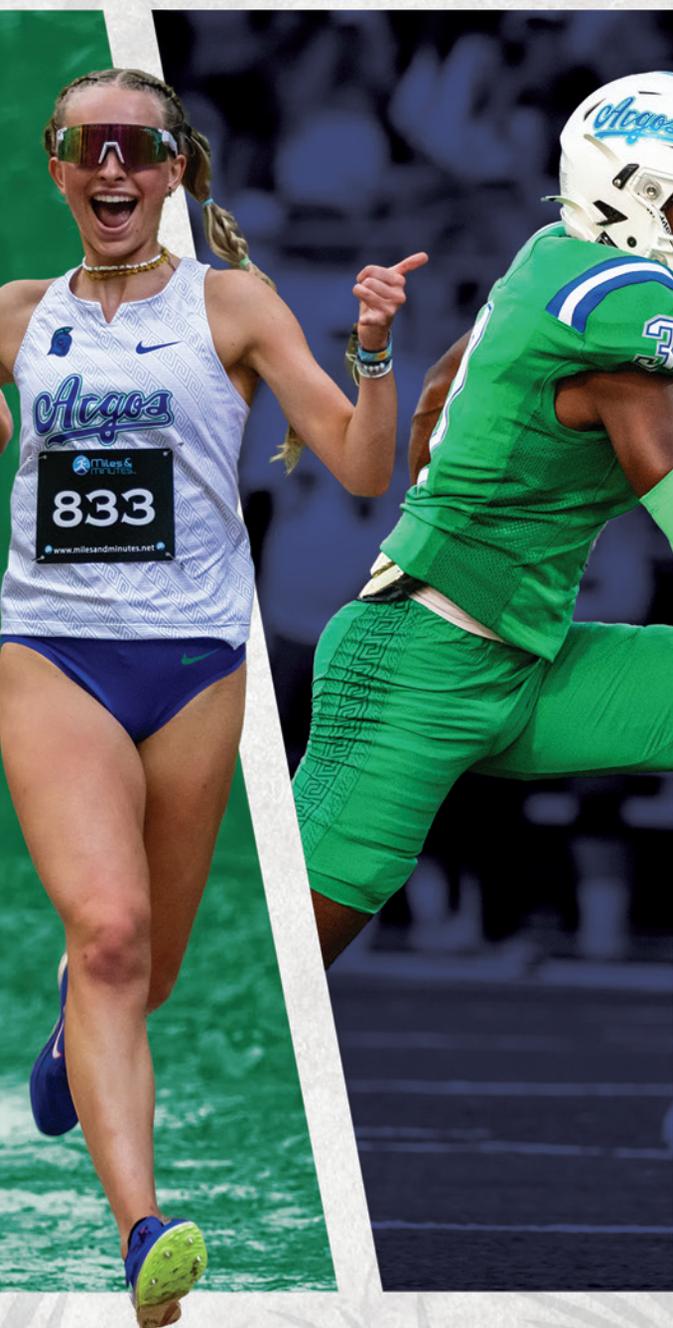
### FOOTBALL: A HISTORIC RUN

Argo football set the tone early, winning its first nine games to post the best start in program history. UWF finished the regular season with a 9-1 record and earned a berth in the NCAA Division II playoffs, advancing to the second round in Super Region 2.

“The 2025 season was a great season for the Argos and something we can continue to build on for the future of the University of West Florida,” said head coach Kaleb Nobles. “Seeing the behind-the-scenes work put in by our coaches and players translate into success on the field is what I coach for.”

Nobles was named the American Football Coaches Association Region 2 Coach of the Year.

Linebacker Ja’Kobe Clinton earned AFCA First Team All-America honors, while quarterback Marcus Stokes delivered a standout season that drew national attention. Stokes was named a finalist for the Harlan Hill Trophy, awarded to the top player in Division II football, and was selected as the Division II Conference Commissioners Association Super Region 2 Offensive Player of the Year.



## WOMEN'S SOCCER: CHAMPIONS ONCE AGAIN

Women's soccer captured the Gulf South Conference championship and advanced to the NCAA Division II Regional, combining a dynamic attack with disciplined defense throughout the season.

Olof Thorvaldsdottir led the Argos offensively and was named GSC Offensive Player of the Year, while Jillian Thompson anchored the back line and earned GSC Defensive Player of the Year honors.

"It was great to see how this 'rebuilding' team came together as one Argo soccer family," head coach Joe Bartlinski said.

Bartlinski added another milestone to his résumé, earning GSC Coach of the Year honors for the fourth consecutive season and the 11th time overall.



**WOMEN'S SOCCER**  
players celebrate a win.



**MEN'S SOCCER** player Rafael Esteves hustles hard after the ball.

## VOLLEYBALL: SUSTAINED EXCELLENCE

Volleyball continued its run as one of the conference's premier programs, winning the GSC championship and advancing to the NCAA Division II South Regional.

Gabi Moulton and Maddie Mire earned American Volleyball Coaches Association All-South Region First Team honors. Moulton was also named GSC Player of the Year and Setter of the Year, while Mire claimed GSC Libero of the Year.

"I think the most satisfying takeaway from 2025 was that winning GSC championships never gets old, especially in our home gym with our crowd behind us," said head coach Melissa Wolter. "I'm also proud of how our team responded after losing eight seniors from 2024 and still put together another successful season."

Wolter was named GSC Coach of the Year for the fifth consecutive season.

## MEN'S SOCCER: CONFERENCE CHAMPIONS

Men's soccer matched the women's success, claiming the GSC championship and advancing to the NCAA Division II Regional. The Argos showcased depth, tactical discipline and an ability to deliver in key moments during their title run.

"Winning the GSC championship again was incredible, but the most rewarding part of this season was watching our players truly unite," head coach Bill Elliott said. "We built our year around the Greek word oikos — meaning extended family — and seeing them embrace each other and the history of this program made the journey special."

Adrian Rodriguez emerged as a postseason standout and was named the GSC Championship Most Outstanding Player.



**VOLLEYBALL** setter Gabi Moulton sets the volleyball at the net.

## CROSS COUNTRY: NEW PROGRAM RECORDS

Cross country rounded out the fall with strong performances on both the men's and women's sides. Freshman Elyse Carmichael and junior Jessica Chappell earned All-Region honors after finishing among the top 25 runners at the NCAA South Regional.

The UWF men also advanced to the NCAA South Regional, led by Grant Chastain, who earned Second Team All-GSC honors at the conference championship meet.

"The most satisfying takeaway was seeing four women break the school record during the season," head coach Caleb Carmichael said. "The most impressive part was how our women closed the gap on top-tier conference and regional competition."

**"THE POSITIVE OUTCOMES  
OF THE FALL SEMESTER  
ARE A DIRECT RESULT OF  
OUR STUDENT-ATHLETES'  
DEDICATION AND OUR COACHES'  
PURSUIT OF EXCELLENCE."**

— Dave Scott, *UWF athletic director*



**MEN'S CROSS COUNTRY** runner  
Carson King sprints to the finish line.

## A SEMESTER OF MOMENTUM

Across all sports, Fall 2025 represented more than a collection of wins and awards. It reflected a culture of excellence that extended beyond competition. UWF athletic programs posted a cumulative GPA of 3.32 for the semester, with 68 student-athletes named to the President's List and a record 113 earning spots on the Dean's List.

"The positive outcomes of the fall semester are a direct result of our student-athletes' dedication and our coaches' pursuit of excellence," said Dave Scott, UWF athletic director. "We want our student-athletes to succeed in the classroom and in competition."

For alumni, the season reinforced the pride and tradition associated with wearing the blue and green. For current student-athletes, it set a clear standard. And for the future of Argo Athletics, Fall 2025 delivered momentum that will carry forward into seasons to come.



**UWF ATHLETES** shine  
on the field and court.



# UWF DAY OF GIVING 4 • 16 • 26



## ***GIVING HAPPENS HERE***

### **Gear Up for Impact.**

Day of Giving is when Argos come together to strengthen what matters most: student success, innovation, athletics, research and community impact.

When you give, you don't just show support. You help move UWF forward.

**Gear up. Give back. Make an impact.**

Find out how to claim these limited edition items!  
*Puppy not included.*

Learn more at

[dayofgiving.uwf.edu](http://dayofgiving.uwf.edu)





## LETTER FROM THE ALUMNI ASSOCIATION PRESIDENT

### DEAR ARGOS,

Spring at UWF brings some of our most meaningful traditions, and I'm excited to invite you to be part of them. This April, we'll come together for Founders Week, a celebration of our history, our community and the bright future ahead. From Day of Play and cultural events to Argos Day of Service, Founders Week offers many opportunities to reconnect with campus and fellow alumni.

A highlight of the week is our eighth annual UWF Day of Giving. This 24-hour initiative is dedicated to supporting UWF students and programs. Since 2018, alumni and friends have contributed nearly \$1,000,000, demonstrating the incredible impact we can make together. Day of Giving also brings back exclusive Argo gear for donors, including this

year's collectible socks, bandana and hat. The only time you can grab these limited-edition designs is during the Day of Giving festivities, so you don't want to miss it!

As your Alumni Association President, I am grateful for the passion and generosity of our more than 100,000 alumni. I hope you'll join us this spring as we celebrate UWF and support the next generation of Argos.

#### GO ARGOS!

**Greg Threadgill '92**  
President  
UWF Alumni Association

UNIVERSITY of WEST FLORIDA



# Latiya Robinson

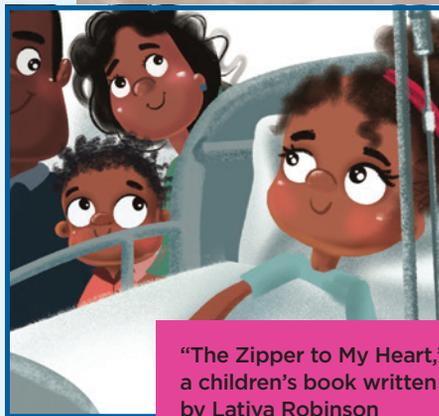
Author of “The Zipper to My Heart” and Adjunct Instructor in Psychology at the University of West Florida

Dr. Latiya Robinson faced heart surgery at the young age of four. As she grew older, she realized that there were very few resources designed to help children process medical fears and uncertainty, so she took it upon herself to write a story offering comfort, representation and reassurance to families navigating similar experiences.

During Robinson’s final semester at UWF, Dr. Vanessa Rainey, associate professor of psychology, challenged Robinson to create a project that truly reflected her purpose, leading her to write “The Zipper to My Heart.”

“As I reflected on my journey and spoke with parents who had gone through similar medical experiences with their children, I realized many struggled with how to explain such difficult information in ways their children could understand,” Robinson said. “The gap in resources available to these families led me to write

’19



“The Zipper to My Heart,” a children’s book written by Latiya Robinson

the children’s book through age-appropriate storytelling.”

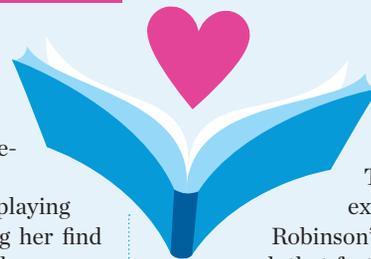
Robinson credited Rainey for playing a transformative role in helping her find her voice as a writer and storyteller.

“Dr. Rainey’s mentorship taught me how to use my lived experiences as strengths and how to speak boldly from my purpose,” Robinson said. “That moment marked a turning point in my confidence and continues to shape how I teach, lead and tell stories today.”

Less than four years after its publication, Robinson would undergo a heart

“Your story does not need to be complete or fully healed before it can be meaningful.”

— Latiya Robinson, ’19



transplant surgery. This life-altering experience reaffirmed

Robinson’s purpose to create work that fosters healing, courage and hope. She now inspires the next generation of students as an instructor at UWF and as a personnel psychologist for the U.S. Navy.

“I teach my students to write from authenticity rather than waiting for perfection,” Robinson said. “Your story does not need to be complete or fully healed before it can be meaningful.”



**Dr. Jodie Rummer chased her dreams at UWF, moving from the landlocked Midwest to Florida’s Gulf Coast to pursue her bachelor’s and master’s degrees in marine biology and biology, respectively.**

“As a child, I was fascinated by water, whether it was lakes in Illinois or the Gulf of Mexico on family trips,” Rummer said. “UWF allowed me to dive into hands-on marine science research, combining curiosity and discovery to ignite my lifelong passion.”

At UWF, Rummer had the opportunity to do research early and was encouraged by the faculty to ask bold questions, something she strives to pay forward with her own students today.

“UWF offered me the perfect blend of small-class mentorship and direct access to the ocean,” Rummer said. “I wasn’t just

**'99,  
'04**

# Jodie Rummer

Marine Biology Professor and Research Associate at James Cook University



sitting in lecture halls; I was out on boats, wading through coastal lagoons and in the lab learning how science could make a difference.”

Rummer, now a professor and research associate at James Cook University in North Queensland, Australia, encourages students to be open-minded and take advantage of international opportunities that arise. Rummer’s bold choice to move beyond her comfort zone has led her to a career she loves training the next

generation of scientists while exploring critical questions about marine life.

“Every move broadened my perspective, built my resilience and created lifelong collaborations,” Rummer said. “Science is global. Embracing that will shape not only your career, but also who you are. Each step – Florida, Canada, Australia and beyond – was both daunting and exhilarating and reinforced that growth comes from pushing beyond your comfort zone.”

**“I wasn’t just sitting in lecture halls; I was out on boats, wading through coastal lagoons and in the lab learning how science could make a difference.”**

— Jodie Rummer, '99, '04



# Smile!

Whether we gather at commencement, a banquet, networking event or tailgate, our events provide the perfect opportunity to show our appreciation of your continued support. They are also a wonderful chance for you to socialize with fellow alumni, current students, staff, faculty and friends of the University.

Don't miss out! We continue to add new events to the mix. For a look at upcoming events, visit [alumni.uwf.edu](http://alumni.uwf.edu).



UWF celebrated its Golden Graduates from the class of 1975 with a special ceremony and luncheon at the Pensacola Bay Center following the Fall 2025 commencement ceremony.



The University of West Florida hosted its inaugural Leadership in the Age of AI Conference at the UWF Conference Center where experts and community leaders explored the opportunities and challenges of artificial intelligence through keynote presentations, panel discussions and networking.



Dr. Allysha Winburn and Dr. Cate Bird led a Pensacola Noir discussion that examined the cultural impact of "Murder She Wrote" and connected its fictional forensics to real world investigative and human rights work.



The Office of Workforce Development hosted a Talent Catalyst networking meet and greet that highlighted the UWF Talent Catalyst Amplified by Landrum program and its mission to connect students with paid workforce experiences, expert mentoring and essential professional skill development.



The Argo Playoff Push brought alumni and fans together at Seville Quarter to celebrate an outstanding fall season and cheer the teams into postseason play.



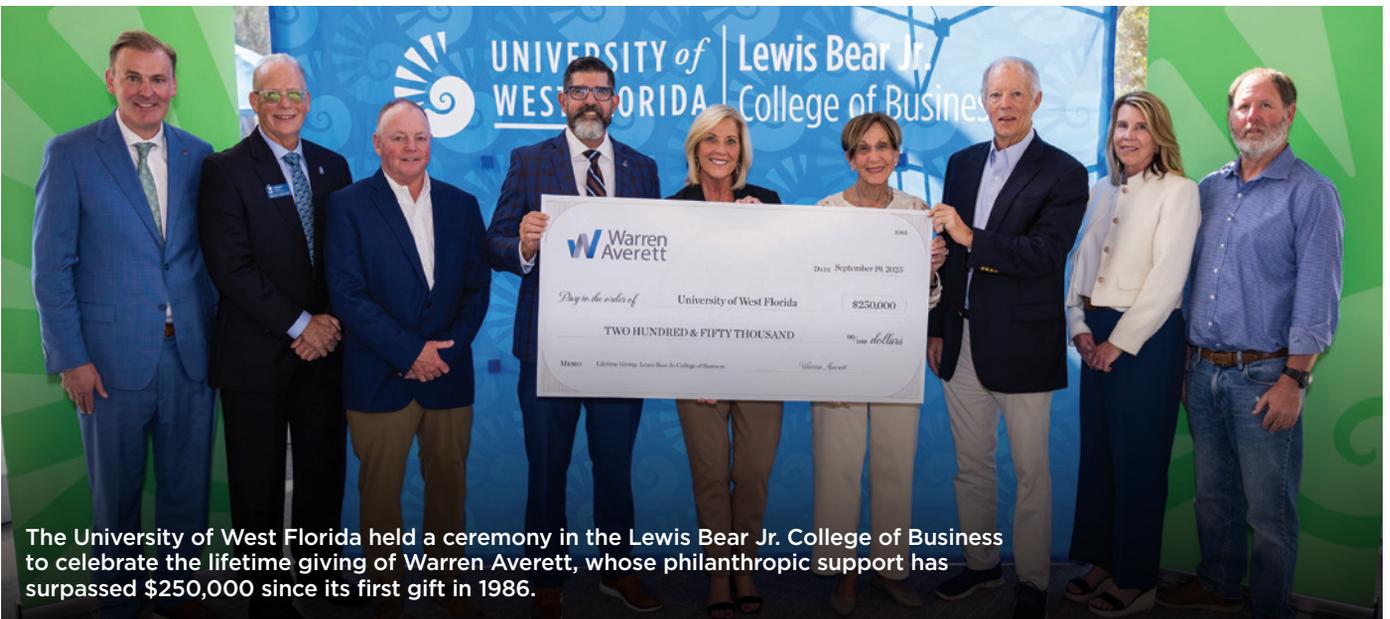
The Lewis Bear Jr. College of Business inducted 13 new members into its Hall of Fame during a ceremony held on Nov. 17, 2025, in the UWF Conference Center.



The College of Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities hosted a memorial reception to honor the late John Markowitz, celebrating the naming of the John Markowitz Memorial Painting Studio and announcing a scholarship endowment in his memory.



The Homecoming Alumni Breakfast welcomed guests to Museum Plaza for a grab-and-go meal, along with a donation drive for the Argo Pantry and complimentary alumni swag.



The University of West Florida held a ceremony in the Lewis Bear Jr. College of Business to celebrate the lifetime giving of Warren Averett, whose philanthropic support has surpassed \$250,000 since its first gift in 1986.

# Class Notes

## 1970s

'73 **Charles Darrell Gooden, B.A. Accounting;** Gooden was inducted into the UWF Athletics Hall of Fame.

'74 **Norman S. Schomer, M.S. Cell & Molecular Biology;** Schomer published "The Thermodynamics of Language: Where Reality and Spirituality Finally Meet."

## 1980s

'81 & '86 **Susan H. Hendricks, B.A. & M.A. Elementary Education;** Hendricks was featured in Marquis Who's Who biographical volumes.

## 1990s

'90 & '96 **Jacqueline Gheen (Duck), B.A. Middle School Education & M.Ed. Curriculum & Instruction;** Gheen joined Ballet Pensacola as Development Director.

'92 **Dr. Lucian Boldea, B.S. Chemistry;** Boldea was appointed President and CEO of the Timken Company, a global technology leader in engineered bearings and industrial motion.

'92 **Jeffrey W. Limoncelli, B.S. Health, Leisure & Exercise Science;** Limoncelli was hired as an assistant coach for Mansfield University baseball.

'96 **Paul A. Hechenberger Esq., MBA;** Hechenberger was appointed senior vice president, general counsel and corporate secretary at AerSale in Miami.

'96 **Dr. Damian Wilson, B.A. Political Science;** Wilson received his doctorate in public administration from Walden University.

'97 **Shane R. Catone, B.S. Health, Leisure & Exercise Science;** Catone was appointed Special Agent in Charge of the Drug Enforcement Administration Chicago Field Division.

'98 **John M. Gormley, BSBA Marketing;** Gormley joined Regions Bank as market executive and commercial banking leader in Pensacola and surrounding communities.

'98 **John W. Stafford CPA, CGMA, B.A. Accounting;** Stafford was appointed senior manager at Thomas Howell Ferguson P.A. CPAs.

'99 **Teresita Pinon, B.S. Medical Technology;** Pinon premiered her documentary film "Kim Novak's Vertigo" at the 2025 Venice International Film Festival.

## 2000s

'00 **Matthew Levon Christian, BSBA Marketing;** Christian was promoted to regional managing director at Saunders Real Estate's regional office in Tampa.

'00 & '09 **Holly Jane Strickland (Hyder), B.A. Communication Arts & M.A. Communication Leadership;** Strickland was selected as Autism Pensacola's new executive director.

'01 **Dr. Karen Rae Barber, Ed.D. Curriculum & Instruction;** Barber received the prestigious North Star Award, which recognizes outstanding community members who exemplify servant leadership, inspire others through service and mentorship, and demonstrate exceptional commitment to youth, families and community advancement.

'02 & '18 **Richard Lee Coleman II, BSBA Marketing & M.Ed. Educational Leadership;** Coleman was named Tate High School Teacher of the Year.

'04 **Rev. Ashlee Mosley Brown, B.A. Philosophy;** Brown was appointed executive director of Bright Bridge Ministries and senior pastor of Richards Memorial United Methodist Church in Pensacola.

'04 **Jessica Love Duncan (Purser), BSBA Marketing;** Duncan joined Scenic Sotheby's International Realty at their new location in downtown Pensacola.

'04 **Nizar Michael Yaich, BSBA Marketing;** Yaich was featured in Marquis Who's Who biographical volumes.

'06 & '18 **Brandy Rose Gottlieb, B.A. Communication Arts & M.A. Strategic Communication & Leadership;** Gottlieb was hired as senior director of marketing and communications for the Tampa Bay Chamber of Commerce.

'08 **Brian Kyle Riviere, M.Ed. Educational Leadership;** Riviere was promoted to principal of Dothan High School in Dothan, Alabama.

'09 **James Preston Roberts, B.A. Hospitality, Recreation & Resort Management;** Roberts was named general manager at The Statler, a Curio Collection by Hilton hotel in downtown Dallas.

## 2010s

'10 **Seth Paul Crochet, B.A. Political Science;** Crochet was promoted to executive vice president, general counsel of Radiance Technologies in Huntsville, Alabama.

'11 **Diana L. Murray, B.A. International Studies;** Murray joined Haynsworth Sinkler Boyd, P.A., in Columbia, South Carolina.

'11 **Eric Paul Nuxol, B.S. Health, Leisure & Exercise Science;** PGA of America named Nuxol the championship director for the 2026 Senior PGA Championship in Bradenton, Florida.

'12 & '14 **Dorian Zwierewicz, BSBA Management & MBA;** Zwierewicz was named state director of the Connecticut Small Business Development Center.

'13 **Ashley Anderson Saba, B.S. Health Science;** Saba was selected as FloridaWest Economic Development Alliance's new director of business development. She was also named the 2025 Woman of the Year in Medical Marketing in Scarlett Magazine.

'15 **Titus K. Cheruiyot, B.S. Electrical Engineering;** The Hospital for Sick Children (SickKids) in Toronto honored Cheruiyot with the 2025 Award for Black Nursing Students.

'15 **Laura M. Glasgow, M.Ed. College Student Affairs Administration;** Glasgow was hired as assistant director of residence life at Simpson College in Indianola, Iowa.

'15 **Martin A. Schoepper, MBA;** Schoepper was named one of Capital Magazine's "Top 40 under 40" in the management field. Capital Magazine is one of the most recognized business magazines in Germany.

'15 **Mary Kathryn Waldrep, BSN;** Waldrep joined Wayne Memorial Community Health Centers as an advanced practice provider at their Tafton office.

'16 **Anna Elin Carolin Olsson, B.S. Hospitality, Recreation & Resort Management;** Olsson was inducted into the UWF Athletics Hall of Fame.

'17 **Peggy Kerber (De Villiers), B.A. Public Relations;** Kerber was inducted into the UWF Athletics Hall of Fame.

**UWF  
FOUNDERS  
WEEK**

**SAVE THE DATE**  
**April 13 - 18**

Celebrate Founders Week with UWF Alumni through Day of Service, Day of Giving and various campus and community activities. **Learn more at**

[uwf.edu/foundersweek](http://uwf.edu/foundersweek)

'17 **Lauren Lamm, B.S. Sports Management**; Lamm was inducted into the UWF Athletics Hall of Fame.

'18 **Chandler L. Blanchet, B.S. Exercise Science**; Blanchet earned his first career Korn Ferry Tour title and secured PGA TOUR membership for the 2026 season.

'19 & '23 **Jarred Cole Chandler, BSBA Finance & MBA**; Chandler was hired as vice president of finance and business intelligence at Gulf Winds Credit Union.

## 2020s

'21 **Kayla L. Capron, B.S. Health Sciences**; Capron joined the Institute for Defense Analyses as a program analyst in the Joint Advanced Warfighting Division of IDA's Systems and Analyses Center.

'21 **Melody Angelica Murray, BFA Musical Theater**; Murray performed in "Dream Hou\$e" with Refracted Theatre Company at The Den Theatre in Chicago.

'21 **Katelyn Rae Smith, BFA Musical Theater**; Smith performed in "Tempestuous," a three-person play that was shown at UNDER St. Marks Theatre in New York City.

'22 **Rylee Givens Buzbee, B.A. Legal Studies**; Buzbee passed the Alabama Bar and was promoted to attorney at Beasley Allen in Mobile, Alabama.

'23 **Natalie Marie Erwin, M.S. Physical Education & Sports Performance**; Erwin was named head coach of the softball team at Lurleen B. Wallace Community College.

'24 **Clayton Wade Schroeder, MSA Public Administration**; Schroeder was appointed director of St. Johns County Office of Management and Budget.

'25 **Barry Michael Reed Jr., MBA**; Reed was selected as president and CEO of Goodwill Gulf Coast.

## Lewis Bear Jr. College of Business

### Hall of Fame 2025

'73 **Charles Darrell Gooden**, B.A. Accounting

'74 **James C. Thornton** CPA, B.A. Accounting

'77 **Gerald W. Adcox Jr.**, B.A. Accounting

'81 **Thomas R. Vaughn CFP, CLU, ChFC**, B.S. Marketing

'81 **Stephen Francis Wright**, B.A. Accounting

'89 **Mary A. Holladay (Brake)**, B.A. Accounting

'91 **Cameron J. Davies**, MBA

'91 **Rodney A. Sutton**, B.S. Marketing

'93 **Daniel W. McMillan**, BSBA Management

'08 **John David Thomas**, BSBA Finance

'16 & '25 **Melissa Brode**, Ed.S. Curriculum and Instruction & MSA Public Administration

## In Memoriam

### Alumni

'68 **Ann Panella (Leunig)**, B.A. Spanish

'70 **Dr. Antonio Apap, USN (Ret.)**, B.S. Management

'70 **Robert C. Bliss**, B.S. Management

'70 **David L. Powell, USN (Ret.)**, M.S. Aeronautical Systems

'71 Philip E. Atkerson, B.S. Management  
 '71 Michael G. Berry, B.A. Mathematics  
 '71 Anne M. Clapsadl (Sarandria), B.A. Elementary Education  
 '72 Jo A. Torrans (Fletcher), B.A. Elementary Education  
 '73 Russell Marvin Dart, B.A. Accounting  
 '73 Ellen L. Gay, B.A. Elementary Education  
 '74 Linda Oates Barnes, B.A. Elementary Education  
 '74 Michael D. Coffey, B.A. Sociology  
 '74 & '97 Kathleen Faulkner Jenkins, B.S. & MST Biology  
 '75 Leonard J. Bornemann, MBA  
 '75 Van McKinnon, B.A. Accounting  
 '75 William G. Sidebottom, B.S. Management  
 '77 & '80 Pamela Trompeter (Monaco), B.A. & M.A. Psychology  
 '78 John B. Gilbert, B.A. Accounting  
 '78 Peter J. Riggi, B.A. Communication Arts

'78 Gwendolyn Gayle Stinson (Crowder), B.A. Music Education  
 '80 Cynthia E. Ferris (Segallis), B.S. Marketing  
 '80 Ralph Milton Moulder, MPA  
 '82 James R. Lewis, MPA  
 '82 Richard D. Rogers, B.A. Interdisciplinary Social Sciences  
 '83 & '86 George H. Brinkman Jr., B.S. Systems Science & M.S. Systems Analysis  
 '83 Carmen Wright Edwards (Seaman), B.A. International Studies  
 '83 Barbara W. Henderson, B.S. Health  
 '83 Karen Vaughn (Kegley), B.S. Management  
 '84 David C. Clark, B.S. Systems Science  
 '84 Angela P. Coleman (Vercellino), M.A. Elementary Education  
 '85 Joyce Riddle (Bush), B.A. Legal Administration  
 '87 Steven J. Fried, MBA  
 '87 Jimmy F. Lay, B.A. Accounting

'88 Elizabeth K. Margedant, B.S. Marketing  
 '90 Courtland E. Kent, B.S. Management  
 '90 Sarah E. Seelmann (Leonard), B.A. Elementary Education  
 '92 John E. Robinson, MBA  
 '01 Martin Christopher Bullock, B.A. Communication Arts  
 '02 Elizabeth J. Mary St. Clair, B.A. Special Education  
 '04 Lashawna Katrice Hill, B.S. Health Education  
 '06 Ronna Margaret Prescott, B.A. Middle School Education  
 '08 Dr. Jin Seup Lim, B.S. Biology  
 '23 Jeremy Daniel Varno, BSBA General Business

# Adventure: It's Who We Are

Argos are defined by curiosity, courage and the drive to explore what's next. The UWF Alumni Travel Program brings that spirit to life through expertly planned group travel – connecting alumni across decades through unforgettable journeys around the world.

Now expanding with Young Alumni Travel, Argos ages 18–35 can experience high-energy, adventure-driven trips designed for the next generation of explorers

Wherever you are in life, the journey continues.

Find more information on upcoming trips at [uwf.edu/alumnitravel](http://uwf.edu/alumnitravel).



**CLASSES OUTSIDE**  
on campus in 1976.

## Connection

### UNIVERSITY OF WEST FLORIDA

11000 University Parkway

Pensacola, FL 32514

[uwf.edu/alumni](http://uwf.edu/alumni)

NONPROFIT ORG

U.S. POSTAGE

PAID

PENSACOLA, FL

PERMIT NO. 183

Aaron Korel  
Finance '25

# HERE IS WHERE YOU *Thrive*

At the University of West Florida, opportunity takes shape across 1,600 acres of possibility. From innovative research to vibrant campus life, you'll build a future that's uniquely yours.

Whatever you're searching for, you can find it here.

[uwf.edu/HappensHere](http://uwf.edu/HappensHere)

