



UNIVERSITY *of*
WEST FLORIDA

Foundation

ANNUAL

REPORT

2024 *to* **2025**

WE ARE

Thankful

**YOU ARE HERE
FOR GOOD**

At the heart of our University are the people — students, faculty, staff, alumni and supporters — driven by a desire to make a positive impact in their communities and in the future of our world. We wouldn't be where we are today without the dedicated individuals who see our vision, believe in our mission and commit unwavering support to the future of the University of West Florida.

Because of your gifts, we continue to empower our students, foster groundbreaking innovation and strengthen our community. This year, your donations directly funded life-changing scholarships, supported cutting-edge research and created transformational learning experiences for our students.

Your ardent commitment to the future of Argo Nation demonstrates that you are truly Here for Good. We are forever grateful for your continued support.

Thank you



Message from the **PRESIDENT**

The University of West Florida continues to thrive because of the steadfast support of alumni, friends, faculty, staff and community partners who believe in our mission. Because of your support, our students dream bigger, our faculty reach higher and our community grows stronger. This past fiscal year, you helped make that possible through gifts that reflect not just generosity, but the value of our University.

As your interim president, I am inspired by the passion and pride that surround this institution. UWF is a place where potential meets opportunity, and the impact of giving is felt across campus. Together, we are writing the next chapter in our story.

As we continue our Here for Good capital campaign, we remain committed to ensuring UWF serves as a catalyst for positive change in Northwest Florida and beyond.

Thank you for being part of this journey. With your support, UWF will always be here for good.

Go Argos!

Manny Diaz Jr.
Interim President



Message from the **VICE PRESIDENT**

It is an honor to share my first message with you as Interim Vice President for University Advancement. As a proud two-time UWF alumna, I am deeply grateful to be part of a community that continues to believe in the power of education and the impact of generosity.

Due to your exceptional commitment and belief in our mission, this past fiscal year was one of remarkable success. Together, we were able to provide support for deserving students, innovative programs and important campus infrastructure. Your collective generosity not only met, but exceeded every fundraising goal we set.

Your investment in UWF changes lives and fuels the progress that defines what it means to be an Argo. We are inspired by the momentum you've helped create and excited to continue building on this success together. Thank you for your unwavering support and belief in UWF's mission.

Sincerely,

Tori Bennett '12 '16
Interim Vice President University Advancement



Powering the Future

THE IHNS LEGACY BENEFITS UWF ELECTRICAL AND COMPUTER ENGINEERING STUDENTS

By Micayla Yates

Juergen Ihns, one of the first five employees of the University of West Florida back in 1965, continues to leave an impact long after his time here. In January, the University created the Electrical Engineering Juergen and Helen Ihns Scholars Endowment with a \$125,000 gift from his wife, Helen Ihns. The endowment was established in honor of Helen and her late husband with the goal of providing four annual need-based scholarships to UWF electrical and computer engineering students.

“We are so grateful to the Ihns family for their generosity and continuous support of UWF and its students,” said Dr. Mohamed Khabou, dean of the Hal Marcus College of Science and Engineering. “This generous gift is the latest of many made by the Ihns family in support of various programs at UWF. It is befitting the wonderful legacy of Mr. Juergen Ihns as an engineer and an active member of the community.”

Born in Brazil, Juergen Ihns came to the United States during World War II for flight training in Texas, and then he returned to Brazil to instruct on PT-19’s, T-6’s and B-25’s as an officer in the Brazilian Air Force. After the war, he earned a degree in electrical engineering

from Purdue University. He worked for General Electric as an engineer and the University of Florida as a purchasing agent. When UWF was formed in Pensacola, Ihns was hired as the first Director of Purchasing, becoming one of the University’s original five employees.

“Many of our students are non-traditional students, so they work hard both inside and outside of class to support themselves and often their families. Scholarships like this are vital to help them complete their degrees.”

— *Dr. Thomas C. Gilbar, senior lecturer and chair of the Dr. Muhammad Harunur Rashid Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering*

Juergen and Helen were extremely involved in giving back to the Pensacola community. Juergen devoted decades of service to organizations that shaped the cultural and civic life of the region. He left a legacy of service that touched nearly every corner of the community, and this new Electrical Engineering Juergen and Helen Ihns Scholars Endowment will extend this legacy and touch the lives of students for years to come.

There are nearly 300 undergraduate students enrolled in the Dr. Muhammad Harunur Rashid Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering for the Fall 2025 semester. The scholarship recipients will be selected by the department chair in consultation with the dean of the Hal Marcus College of Science and Engineering.

Dr. Thomas C. Gilbar, senior lecturer and chair of the department, noted the importance of scholarships like these in helping prepare electrical and computer engineers to meet state workforce and economic needs.

“Many of our students are non-traditional students, so they work hard both inside and outside of class to support themselves and often their families,” he said. “Scholarships like this are vital to help them complete their degrees.”

Charting a Course

THE MERTING FAMILY'S \$500,000 GIFT SETS STUDENT SCHOLARS UP FOR SUCCESS

By Micayla Yates

For more than five decades, John W. Merting built his career navigating the complexities of maritime law. Now, the Pensacola native is charting a new course – one designed to guide University of West Florida students toward some of the most prestigious academic opportunities in the world.

A \$500,000 gift from the Merting Family has established the Merting Family Fellowship Support Endowment, funding the creation of the John W. Merting Family Office of Research and Intellectual Growth. Based in UWF's College of Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities, the program will prepare students and faculty across all disciplines university-wide to compete for elite scholarships and fellowships, including the Fulbright and Rhodes.

For Merting, the decision was both personal and purposeful.

"I chose to support our hometown University, which is a very big part of our community and one so many are part of and so proud of," he said. "I also wanted

The John W. Merting Family Office of Research and Intellectual Growth helps students explore international fellowships and study opportunities.

to help UWF gain another Fulbright Scholar and nominate its first Rhodes Scholar. Such high-profile scholarships are another metric that help raise the visibility and stature of a University."

The office will serve as a resource hub for students, offering guidance and mentorship for experiences that strengthen applications. From understanding selection criteria to refining essays and preparing for interviews, participants will receive support to navigate the rigorous process.

Merting knows the challenge well. As an undergraduate at Florida State University, he graduated cum laude and became the school's first Rhodes Scholar nominee. After earning his Juris Doctor

"Thanks to Mr. Merting's generosity, we already have more students who are preparing to apply for these prestigious opportunities. I am very excited to get the chance to help bring his vision to life."

— Claire Holderman, director of the Merting Office of Research and Intellectual Growth



from the University of Virginia School of Law, he practiced maritime law for more than 50 years, becoming the first attorney in North Florida certified in admiralty and maritime law by the Florida Bar. He also served as chairman of the Southeastern Admiralty Law Institute, a professional organization of approximately 750 maritime lawyers.

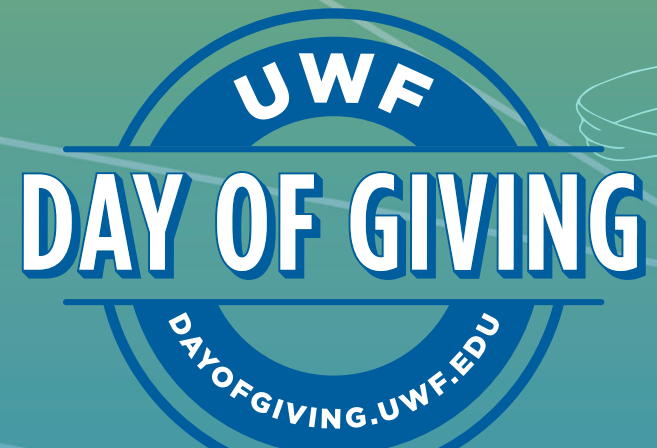
Beyond his legal achievements, Merting has long been a generous supporter of local causes, from The Satori Foundation

to Feeding The Gulf Coast. His latest gift, he hopes, will inspire others to contribute to the endowment, creating a permanent source of financial support for UWF's brightest scholars.

"UWF has the kind of students who should be applying for prestigious awards and fellowships such as Fulbright; however, we have not had the ability to support them in this process until now," says Claire Holderman, director of the Merting Office of Research and Intellectual Growth. "Thanks to Mr. Merting's generosity, we already have more students who are preparing to apply for these prestigious opportunities. I am very excited to get the chance to help bring his vision to life."

With the Merting Family's vision and generosity, UWF is setting sail toward a future where its students are recognized among the best and brightest on campus, across the nation and around the globe.

UWF's best and brightest students have more opportunities and support than ever before.



UWF DAY OF GIVING

DAYOFGIVING.UWF.EDU

Join us on
April 16, 2026,
for UWF's eighth annual
Day of Giving event.

Over the years, Argos have raised more than \$1,130,000 in support of our students, programs, teams and community. As the biggest fundraising event of the year, Day of Giving is an opportunity for our supporters to connect with former classmates, share why they give back to UWF and come together as a community to support our shared love of the University.

Learn more by visiting dayofgiving.uwf.edu.



Empowering Futures

INSPIRING IMPACT ONE GIFT AT A TIME

Gifts from alumni and friends transform lives at UWF. This timeline celebrates the generosity and enduring influence of donors who create opportunities for students to thrive and succeed.

Margaret Stopp
\$31,000

Former UWF Historic Trust board member Margaret Stopp made a \$31,000 contribution to the Trust to help support its mission to collect, preserve, interpret and share the history of Northwest Florida.



August 2024

July 2024

DeFuniak Springs Landmarks, Inc.
\$284,564

A \$284,564 gift was made to continue support of the DeFuniak Springs Landmarks fund at the UWF Historic Trust.



August 2024

Santa Rosa Medical Center
\$37,800

A \$37,800 investment will continue support of the Santa Rosa Medical Center Linking Industry to Nursing Education, or LINE, program to help combat the growing nursing shortage in the state.



August 2024

Ascension Sacred Heart
\$160,000

The healthcare organization made a gift of \$160,000 to support the LINE program at UWF to help combat the growing nursing shortage in the state.





October 2024

Judy Bense
\$100,000
The UWF President Emeritus made a gift commitment of more than \$100,000 to support UWF Softball scholarships and a facility upgrade.



January 2025

Robert H. Kahn, Jr. Family Foundation
\$250,000
A gift of \$250,000 was made by the foundation to support the Robert H. Kahn, Jr. Scholarship Endowment in the Hal Marcus College of Science and Engineering.



February 2025

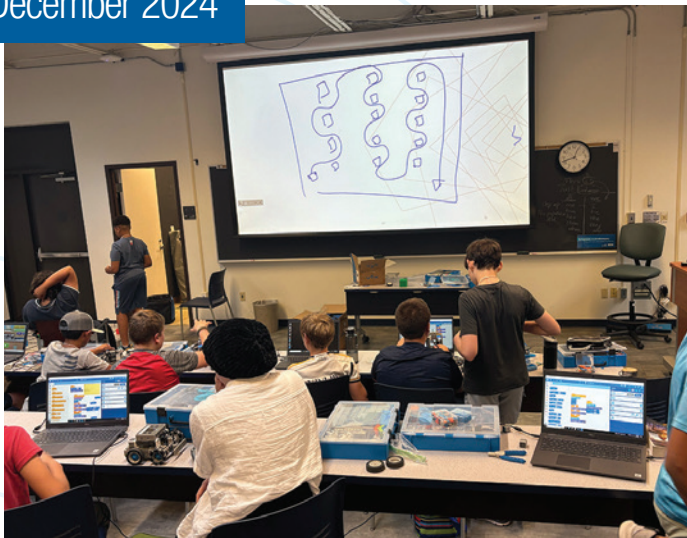
Anonymous
\$50,000
This \$50,000 gift was made by an anonymous donor to support the operations of WUWF Public Media.

September 2024



Anonymous
\$75,000
A \$75,000 gift was made to support the UWF Softball team and provide funding for facility upgrades.

December 2024



NextEra Energy Foundation
\$50,000
The \$50,000 gift, made through the corporate foundation of Florida Power & Light Company, gave local students the opportunity to engage with engineering, math and technology at the inaugural Florida Power & Light Robotics Summer Camp.

February 2025



Sherlynn Flynn Admin. Survivor Trust
\$160,000
The Trust made a generous donation of more than \$160,000 to support the Flynn Scholarship Fund and the UWF School of Education.

Flynn Martial Trust
\$774,000

A generous gift of \$774,000 was made to support the Flynn Scholarship Fund.



February 2025

Andrew Penton
\$82,000

A gift of \$82,000 was made to the Arvie Malone Penton Endowment which provides support for special collections in the University Libraries



April 2025

Wells Fargo Foundation
\$95,000

An estate gift of \$95,000 was donated to the UWF Historic Trust on behalf of Beverly Benson.



May 2025

Pledges and Recurring Gifts

Thank you to the following individuals who continued to support the University of West Florida through their ongoing pledge payments and recurring annual gifts to the University during this fiscal year:

- | | |
|---|--|
| Estate of Herman Rolfs
\$200,000 | Charlie, Fran, Jason and Philip Switzer
\$20,000 |
| Ted & Kathy Brown
\$30,000 | Linda Cassaly
\$25,000 |
| NextEra Energy Foundation
\$50,000 | Dr. Muhammad and Fatema Rashid
\$90,000 |
| Chris and Jenny Roney
\$25,000 | The Sansing Foundation
\$21,000 |
| Southern Company Charitable Foundation
\$20,000 | Pen Air Credit Union
\$128,000 |
| Robert Ledford
\$25,000 | Mr. and Mrs. Eric J. Nickelson
\$22,000 |
| Fiesta Foundation
\$25,000 | Members First Credit Union
\$25,000 |
| LaRue Groth
\$25,000 | Order Sons & Daughters of Italy in America Lodge-2422
\$25,000 |
| James Biasco
\$30,000 | Dr. Usha Kundu and Dave Kundu
\$210,000 |
| Bob Kimball
\$60,000 | |

April 2025



Estate of Carl Penton
\$229,000

A gift of \$229,000 was made to support the Charles Anderson Penton STEM Scholarship in the Hal Marcus College of Science and Engineering

April 2025



Emerald Coast Charitable Foundation Inc.
\$40,000

The organization made a \$40,000 contribution to the BLP College of Business Scholarship in the Lewis Bear Jr. College of Business.

June 2025



Baptist Health Care

Throughout the fiscal year, Baptist Health Care made many generous donations in support of Intercollegiate Athletics, the LINE program and the Usha Kundu, MD College of Health.

Student

Spotlight **Elijah Etienne**

“I am proud to be an Argo because this University allowed me to chase my dreams of becoming a CPA. UWF welcomed me with open arms, and I am honored to be a part of the Argo family.

As a donor, you may not know the ultimate impact of your commitment. But I can assure you that your investment in the next generation is surely felt.

Without your support, I would have likely gone through much more adversity as I started classes at UWF. But your blessings have given me the direction to become successful. I hope to follow in your footsteps and invest in the next generation as well when I get the opportunity.”



Elijah Etienne '26
Accounting



The Sandy Sansing Sports Medicine Center is a state-of-the-art facility dedicated to enhancing the quality of care for UWF student-athletes.

Uplifting Athletic Training

ANDREWS INSTITUTE AND BAPTIST HEALTH CARE SUPPORT THE MASTER OF SCIENCE IN ATHLETIC TRAINING PROGRAM

By Savannah Guilford

It was August 2021 when the first classes began for the Master of Science in Athletic Training program. In two years, the first MSAT graduates walked the stage to receive their diploma, and by the end of 2024, the program received a generous donation and an official name.

In October 2024, UWF announced a gift from Andrews Institute and Baptist Health Care to fund and name the Andrews Institute and Baptist Health Care Master of Science in Athletic Training program.

Dr. David Bellar, who was dean of the Usha Kundu, MD College of Health at the time of the gift, was excited for the continuation of the program through this donation and the opportunity to strengthen MSAT for future students.

“This generous gift from Andrews Institute and Baptist Health Care enhances our Master of Science in Athletic Training program and transforms the athletic training student experience at UWF, ensuring continued excellence in our program,” Bellar said.

The athletic training program employs various methods for instructing individuals on how to become professional health care providers that manage problems associated with sports and physical activity. MSAT also prepares students for successful careers in high school and university athletics, professional sport teams, medical clinics and other settings. In 2023, the program earned accreditation from the Commission on Accreditation of Athletic Training Education, receiving the maximum initial five-year accreditation.

“We hope this contribution will help students access the resources they need to excel and positively impact the health and well-being of athletes everywhere.”

— Chad McCammon, vice president of orthopaedics and ambulatory services, Andrews Institute

The gift from Andrews Institute and Baptist Health Care has already made an impact on the student experience. This generous gift provided six \$1,000 scholarships to MSAT students in Spring 2024 and assisted MSAT students in attending the Southeast Athletic Trainers’ Association annual meeting in Atlanta, Georgia, in February 2025. Additional certifications within the program are being developed for students as well.

The donation is also improving and transforming the student-athlete experience at UWF with 50% of the gift allocated to Intercollegiate Athletics.

This gift will support the Sandy Sansing Sports Medicine Center and increase academic tutoring and advising resources for student-athletes, helping them excel both on and off the field.

Andrews Institute strongly believes that working with students to ensure their academic success will directly influence innovation, leadership and work ethic in future health care and sports performance.

“This gift reflects our belief in the power of education and hands-on training to shape future athletic trainers who will drive innovation in health care and sports performance,” said Chad McCammon, vice president of orthopaedics and ambulatory services, Andrews Institute. “We hope this contribution will help students access the resources they need to excel and positively impact the health and well-being of athletes everywhere.”



UWF’s MSAT students receive hands-on learning opportunities on the field.

WE ARE HERE FOR

good

BECAUSE

greatness

HAPPENS HERE



Financial Information

UNIVERSITY OF WEST FLORIDA FOUNDATION

The UWF Foundation exists to encourage, manage and administer private resources to support the mission and priorities of the University of West Florida, as established by the Board of Trustees and the president of the University of West Florida.

The Foundation is dedicated to assisting the University through building the donor and board restricted endowments, currently valued at \$117.7 million. Through private financial support, Foundation resources support long-term academic and other priorities of the University. These funds provide opportunities for students and afford a margin of institutional excellence unavailable with state funds.

Investment Philosophy — Asset Allocation and Style Diversification

Research suggests that the decision to allocate total assets among various asset classes will far outweigh security selection and other decisions that impact portfolio performance. The Investment Committee recognizes the strategic importance of asset allocation and style diversification in the investment performance of the assets over long periods of time. Domestic and international equities, both large and small capitalization,

fixed income, cash equivalent securities, real estate, private equity, and fund of funds hedge funds in the form of diversified fund of funds have been determined to be acceptable vehicles for these assets. Additional asset classes and style strategies may be incorporated into the investment philosophy in the future.

Investment Objective

The objectives of the assets are the enhancement of capital and real purchasing power while limiting exposure to risk of loss. Real purchasing power or real rate of return will be defined as returns in excess of inflation as defined by the Consumer Price Index. At a minimum, long-term rates of return should be equal to an amount sufficient to maintain the purchasing power of these assets and provide necessary capital to fund the Foundation's spending policy. As such, the desired minimum rate of return is equal to the CPI plus 400 basis points (4%) for spending, plus an additional 200 basis point (2%) on an annualized basis. Bottom line, the overall minimum rate of return is equal to CPI plus 600 basis points (6%).

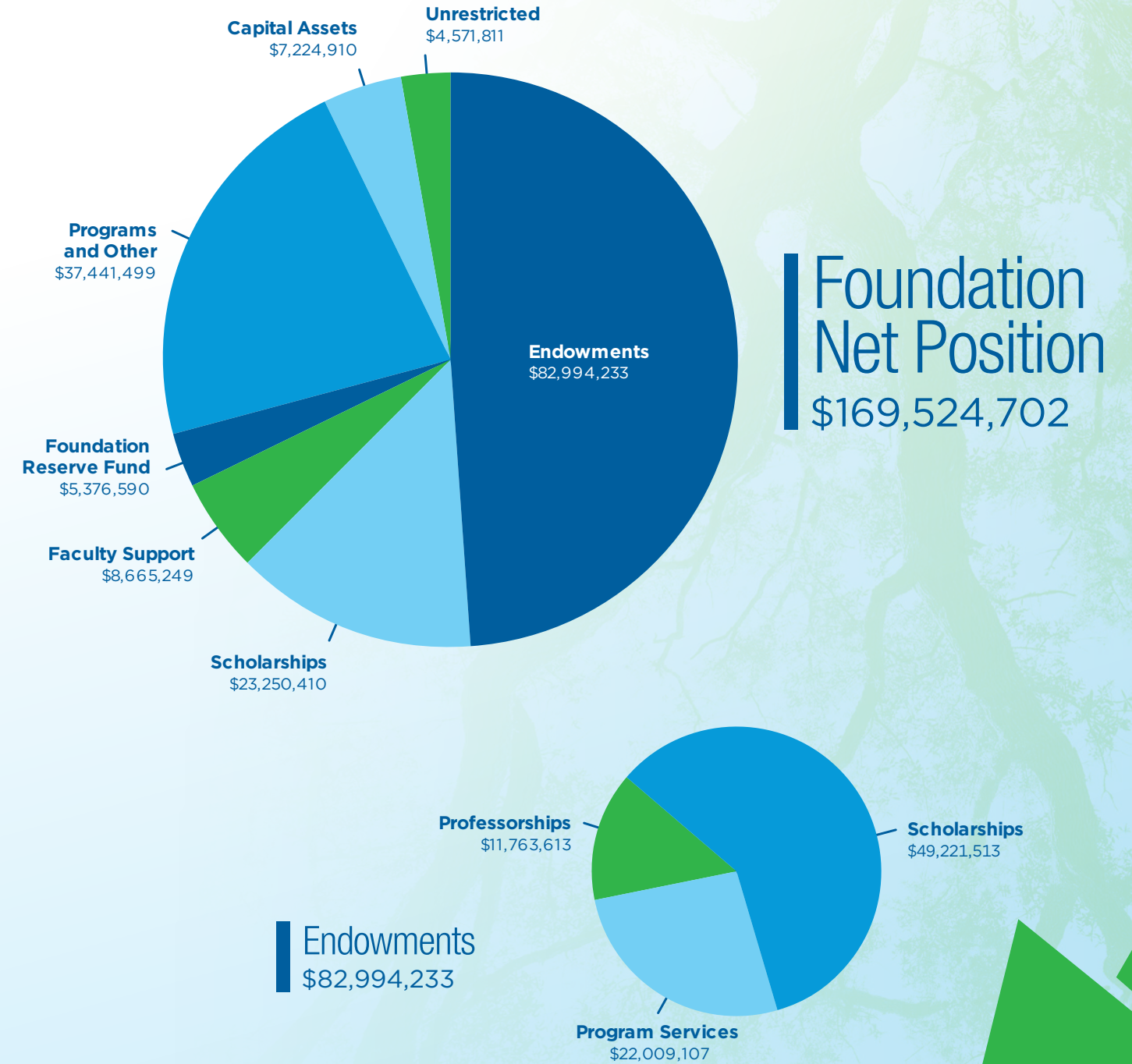
In light of this return requirement, the portfolio should be constructed using a total return approach with a significant portion of the funds invested to seek growth of principal over time. The assets

are to be invested for the long term, and a higher short-term volatility in these assets is to be expected and accepted.

Spending Policy

The Foundation takes seriously its responsibility to provide prudent fiduciary management, oversight of the endowments and intergenerational equity. To this end, the Foundation utilizes a one-year waiting period before awarding spending and a step-down spending allocation method should an endowment fall underwater. Through utilization of a well diversified investment portfolio strategy, prudent spending allocation policy, and the best good faith effort of its board members, the Foundation attempts to continue to provide spending to support the scholarships, programs and faculty as designated by the donor while preserving over time the donor's gifts to the endowment corpus. Further details on the investment policy are available at the Foundation's website uwf.edu/foundation.

The UWF Foundation was organized and incorporated in 1965 for the purpose of stimulating voluntary private support from alumni, parents, friends, corporations, foundations and others for the benefit of the University of West Florida.



Gerald Adcox '77

Alex Bell

Connie Bookman

DeeDee Davis

**Whitney Fike '07
Alumni Board President

Megan Fry - Vice Chair

Charles Gheen '86

**Carey Griffin
SGA V.P.

Amber Griffith '03 '05
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James Hosman '99, '01
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Victoria Mullet '98

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Hong Potomski '07

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Chris Roney '98

Kathy Sandstrom '96

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Faculty Senate V.P.

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Cyndi Warren, CPA

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Stephen Wright '81

** Ex-Officio Voting Member

Donor Bill of Rights

Philanthropy is based on voluntary action for the common good. It is a tradition of giving and sharing that is primary to the quality of life. To ensure that philanthropy merits the respect and trust of the general public, and that donors and prospective donors can have full confidence in the nonprofit organizations and causes they are asked to support, we declare that all donors have these rights:

- 1.** To be informed of the organization's mission, of the way the organization intends to use donated resources, and of its capacity to use donations effectively for their intended purposes.
- 2.** To be informed of the identity of those serving on the organization's governing board, and to expect the board to exercise prudent judgment in its stewardship responsibilities.
- 3.** To have access to the organization's most recent financial statements.
- 4.** To be assured their gifts will be used for the purposes for which they were given.
- 5.** To receive appropriate acknowledgment and recognition.
- 6.** To be assured that information about their donations is handled with respect and with confidentiality to the extent provided by law.
- 7.** To expect that all relationships with individuals representing organizations of interest to the donor will be professional in nature.
- 8.** To be informed whether those seeking donations are volunteers, employees of the organization or hired solicitors.
- 9.** To have the opportunity for their names to be deleted from mailing lists that an organization may intend to share.
- 10.** To feel free to ask questions when making a donation and to receive prompt, truthful and forthright answers.

The text of the above statement in its entirety was developed by the American Association of Fund-Raising Counsel (AAFRC), Association for Healthcare Philanthropy (AHP), Council for Advancement and Support of Education (CASE), and the Association of Fundraising Professionals (AFP), and adopted in November 1993.

**HERE
FOR
GOOD**





UNIVERSITY *of*
WEST FLORIDA

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Pensacola, FL 32514

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