



ORDER OF PEGASUS

CLASS OF 2018



APRIL 2, 2018

Spring 2018



Welcome from the President

It is my pleasure to introduce the 2018 Order of Pegasus awardees.

The Order of Pegasus is the highest honor the university gives to students. It recognizes outstanding graduating seniors and graduate students who have demonstrated exemplary university and community involvement, leadership, academic achievement, and service.

This year, 22 students were selected to receive the prestigious award.

The biographical sketches in this handbook provide information on the academic accomplishments, leadership experiences, and UCF and community involvement of the individual awardees.

We are extraordinarily proud of the outstanding achievements of these students, and we hope you join with us in offering our congratulations and best wishes.

Cordially yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John C. Hitt". The signature is stylized with a large, looped "J" and "H".

John C. Hitt
President

THE UCF CREED

Integrity, scholarship, community, creativity and excellence are the core values that guide our conduct, performance and decisions.



INTEGRITY

I will practice and defend academic and personal honesty.

SCHOLARSHIP

I will cherish and honor learning as a fundamental purpose of my membership in the UCF community.

COMMUNITY

I will promote an open and supportive campus environment by respecting the rights and contributions of every individual.

CREATIVITY

I will use my talents to enrich the human experience.

EXCELLENCE

I will strive toward the highest standards of performance in any endeavor I undertake.



CARISSA BAKER

Carissa Baker, College of Arts and Humanities, is a Ph.D. candidate in the Texts and Technology program. She earned bachelor's and master's degrees in English from Chapman University and UCF, respectively. Her research focuses on theme parks as unique storytelling entities. Baker published articles related to this research and has been invited to present in both the United States and the Netherlands. She is a professor of English and honors humanities at Seminole State College of Florida. During her tenure, she directed the large-scale Read to Succeed initiative for accreditation, which included embedding reading strategies across the curriculum and encouraging reading outside the classroom. Baker was instrumental in bringing the LGBTQ Ally Program to campus and was a founding member of the LGBT Scholarship Committee.

Carissa's UCF Experience:

My experiences at UCF have come to define the academic conversation, my career and my orientation toward the world. I traveled to UCF from across the country and found a forward-facing, creative institution. I entered the master's program as a first-generation college graduate, with a background of adversity. I lacked confidence, but UCF quickly set me up for success with great resources, subject matter knowledge, conference preparation and educator training. Being the only fit for my non-traditional subject and approach, the Texts and Technology doctoral program expanded my horizons with its interdisciplinary perspective and supportive faculty. This program helped me find my passion and showed me the path for becoming a contributor in an emerging field. It truly allowed me to soar.



Carissa Baker
Los Angeles, CA

Future Plans:

I want to continue to inspire the next generation of students through teaching and mentoring. I also wish to become a productive member of the international academic community with an active research and publication agenda.

PORSHA DOSSIE



Porsha Dossie
Homestead, FL

Porsha Dossie, College of Arts and Humanities, is pursuing her master's degree in history. She is the National Council for Preservation Education Intern at the National Park Service, and served on the Student Undergraduate Research Council and as a summer advisor in the Office of First Year Advising. She won the 2017–2018 CAH Award for Excellence as a Graduate Teaching Assistant. During her undergraduate career, Dossie's research won the Honors in the Major First Place Outstanding Thesis Award. Since then, Dossie's dedication to social justice and community action led to her selection as a 2016 Smithsonian Minority Awards Fellow at the National Museum of African-American History and Culture. She was the first UCF student to intern at the museum.

Future Plans:

After graduation I intend to work as a cultural heritage professional, dismantling regressive practices in museums, and ensuring that there are spaces that reflect the diverse communities they are charged with serving.

Porsha's UCF Experience:

UCF had a transformative impact on my life and, in turn, I have used this experience to impact the university, its students and my community. My university-supported research and teaching has afforded me opportunities to serve the UCF community in numerous leadership roles. During my time here, UCF nourished my potential as a scholar-practitioner who advocates for social justice, cultivating a steadfast commitment to diverse representation and empowerment in both my research and professional development experiences, especially as it concerns women of color. My work and dedication have taken me across the country where I have been proud to represent UCF, as the university's innovative efforts to uplift and reaffirm diverse first-generation students afforded me limitless opportunities.

DANIEL FRANKLIN

Daniel Franklin is a physics Ph.D. candidate in the College of Sciences who received his B.S. in physics from Missouri University of Science and Technology. He currently serves as a graduate research assistant in the Nano-Optics group at UCF. Franklin's research on dynamic and tunable optical systems resulted in a new class of color-changing surfaces which could lead to high-resolution and low-power reflective displays. He developed this technology through National Science Foundation funding and obtained two Nature family publications, two patents, a start-up company and the international Displaying Futures Award from Merck KGaA, Germany. His work has been featured by BBC, NBC, Science Daily and as a Year of Light favorite by NSF. Franklin held leadership roles in the Graduate Student Physics Society, CREOL Association of Optics Students and Society for Information Display. His teaching experience and service at UCF includes four years of graduate-level optoelectronic device fabrication.

Daniel's UCF Experience:

UCF afforded me opportunities for personal and professional growth that I will always cherish. I have been fortunate to experience far parts of the world through international travel and, even more valuably, a world of cultures through lifelong friends and colleagues within the UCF community. Now nearing the completion of my doctorate in physics, I am truly appreciative of the intellectual freedom and resources available to explore new ideas here at UCF. I had the privilege of working with scientists who have changed the world through their research, and I have also learned from the experiences of those just embarking as professors. This combination of established and rising mentors I've had while attending UCF has prepared me for a long career as a scientist and greatly informed the type of mentor I hope to become.



Daniel Franklin
Saint Louis, MO

Future Plans:

After earning my doctorate in physics, I plan to continue research in dynamic nanoscale systems as a post-doctoral fellow and professor. I hope to make a lasting impact on the world through advancement of fundamental knowledge and the technology that follows.

AHMAD QASEM



Ahmad Qasem
Amman, Jordan

Future Plans:

In the future, I plan to integrate my multidisciplinary work as a pharmaceutical scientist for a major healthcare organization such as the FDA or the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. I hope to discover cures for chronic illnesses, establish cost-effective therapies and find ways to enhance disease prevention.

Ahmad Qasem, College of Medicine, is pursuing a doctorate in biomedical sciences after earning his master's degree in biotechnology. Qasem became certified by the National Association of Boards of Pharmacy, and worked on several research projects studying the link between genetic mutations and the microbial aspect of Crohn's disease. At the Burnett School of Biomedical Sciences, Qasem has already co-authored six peer-reviewed publications, and has been involved in a Food and Drug Administration-approved Phase III international clinical trial for an investigatory antibiotic treatment for Crohn's disease. He presented his research in many statewide conferences, earned two UCF doctoral-level awards and is a member of several professional societies. Qasem has been volunteering for the World Recreation Association of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing since 2011, and he participated in several events held in Jordan, Malaysia, Singapore and the United States.

Ahmad's UCF Experience:

UCF provided me with an invaluable international student experience that I will always be grateful for. The innovative environment and productive collaboration UCF creates, encourages students from diverse backgrounds to implement unique initiatives. Since I graduated from pharmacy school, I knew my passion for helping others went way beyond dispensing medications to patients. UCF connected me with an outstanding mentor, Dr. Saleh A. Naser, who continues to challenge and encourage me to do my best. Additionally, my published research articles have opened new insights into novel therapeutic strategies to cure Crohn's disease. UCF also inspired me to further develop my leadership skills and involvement in nonprofit organizations. My UCF experience has led me to believe in myself and strive for lifelong excellence.

ELIZABETH WELLINGS

Elizabeth Wellings was born in Philadelphia and raised in Clearwater, Florida. She attended UCF as an undergraduate, majoring in mechanical engineering. Wellings went on to receive a Master of Engineering, in Biomedical Engineering, at Cornell University. Following school, she went to work in the orthopedics industry as a product design engineer for Biomet for several years before deciding to switch careers to medicine. Wellings has been very involved in global health while at UCF, and she hopes to continue to participate in international service trips and promote global health as an orthopedic surgeon. She also hopes to become a future leader in promoting women in both orthopedics and engineering through involvement in the Perry Initiative program.



Elizabeth Wellings
Clearwater, FL

Elizabeth's UCF Experience:

I enthusiastically committed to UCF's College of Medicine upon hearing Dean Deborah German's dream for a medical city. The opportunities and experiences she described were realized throughout my educational journey. I explored who I am, who I want to be and, with the support of amazing faculty, staff and colleagues, I rose to become the best well-rounded physician I could possibly be.

Future Plans:

I plan to do my residency in orthopedic surgery followed by a fellowship in an orthopedic subspecialty, such as adult reconstruction.

TAYLOR WICKEY



Taylor Wickey
Omaha, NE

Future Plans:

After graduating from Rosen, I plan to pursue a career in the sports industry. My goal is to someday work for a professional sports team, while sharing my experiences and the importance of sports to children through coaching and mentoring.

Taylor Wickey, Rosen College of Hospitality Management, is pursuing her master's degree in hospitality and tourism management, while also receiving a graduate certificate in destination marketing and management. She was a five-year member of the women's volleyball team and served as team captain for two years. Wickey earned her bachelor's degree in business administration in three years at UCF. She has been a Dean's List member throughout her collegiate career. During her time at UCF, Wickey was involved in The Burnett Honors College, Student Athlete Leadership Institute and Student Athlete Advisory Committee. She was also awarded the 2016 Female Scholar-Athlete of the Year in the American Athletic Conference.

Taylor's UCF Experience:

UCF provided me with many amazing opportunities and lessons, both in the classroom and on the court. Through the platform I was given as a student-athlete, I have been able to make a difference in my community through volunteering with Fellowship of Christian Athletes, Relay for Life and Knight of Giving. I was also able to pursue my passions at UCF which include playing collegiate volleyball, traveling through UCF's Study Abroad program, and working with young girls as a coach and mentor. UCF provided me the opportunity to pursue my dreams, accomplish my goals and positively impact people's lives. As a child, I dreamed of being a Division I athlete. I was able to accomplish that dream and so much more while at UCF. This university truly exemplifies excellence and integrity. I will always cherish my time here and am proud to forever be a Knight!

ANA BELTRAN

Ana Beltran, College of Arts and Humanities, is majoring in both emerging media and digital media with an emphasis in experimental animation and game design, respectively. She is a LEAD Scholar and a member of the President's Leadership Council. Additionally, Beltran is heavily involved in community outreach and the creative arts. She worked at Feeding Children Everywhere, a nonprofit in Longwood, Florida, that aims to activate people for a hunger-free world. There, she served as the associate videographer and created animated videos to showcase the groundbreaking initiatives the nonprofit is forming in order to combat world hunger.

Ana's UCF Experience:

My family emigrated from Venezuela for a better life and brighter future, therefore I know how rewarding it is to attend an institution like UCF. Here, I have been able to partake in incredible experiences, and to do so with the arts in mind. I've been in many positions that allowed me to be creative and introduce new initiatives and events to further enhance programs. And I have held true to the fact that when something is fun and creative, there will always be more enthusiasm and involvement. UCF gave me thrilling opportunities like holding a week-long scavenger hunt for the LEAD Scholars Academy, creating videos with a purpose in the nonprofit world — and so much more! For that I will always bleed black and gold. I live in the world of creating and telling stories, and at UCF my story has only grown deeper with thought, gratitude and love.



Ana Beltran
Celebration, FL

Future Plans:

I plan on going to the Florida Interactive Entertainment Academy for my master's degree and then hope to become an Art Director at Nintendo.

ELIANA BENEVENTO



Eliana Benevento
Panama City, FL

Eliana Benevento, Rosen College of Hospitality Management, is majoring in event management and minoring in business administration. During her time at UCF, she served on the President's Leadership Council, was a LEAD Scholar, and planned a variety of student programming and volunteer events, all while remaining on the President's Honor Roll. This past year, Benevento served as UCF Homecoming's executive director. She was also the founding director of Homecoming's newest tradition, Knights Got Talent, as well as a co-founder of the equestrian competitive eventing team. This semester, Benevento is studying in Bournemouth, England, through the UCF Abroad Hospitality Exchange program, where she is taking courses in event management to broaden her horizons and enhance her UCF education.

Future Plans:

I plan to move to Ireland and continue working in the live events industry. I aspire to create celebratory community-based events that leave positive, impactful memories for everyone involved.

Eliana's UCF Experience:

When I came to UCF, I never imagined the person I would become. Because of the opportunities UCF provides, I took what I learned in the classroom and applied it to hands-on experiences within student programming. Through the Homecoming Executive Board, I was able to leave a lasting impact on the UCF community by creating a brand new tradition. Knights Got Talent aims to engage students and motivate them to step up, give back to their university and, in turn, inspire other students to do the same. I first became involved at UCF through peer engagement, so I hope to inspire fellow students with the legacy of this event. My UCF involvement helped me find my current position where I discovered my passion in the live events industry. Throughout my time at UCF, I have learned to seize every opportunity. I am forever grateful for my experiences as a Knight.

ERICA CASTANEDA

Erica Castaneda, College of Medicine, is majoring in biomedical sciences with a minor in psychology. She is a National Hispanic Scholar, a Research and Mentoring Program Scholar, a member of the President's Leadership Council and The Burnett Honors College. Castaneda is also a member of Kappa Alpha Theta and served as a Resident Assistant for three years. She is currently working on a Honors in the Major thesis investigating the African leopard population on the Nambiti Private Game Reserve, which she visited during an Honors study abroad service-learning trip to South Africa. During this trip, Castaneda led conservation projects on the reserve, which included the dehorning of a mother rhinoceros and her calf. She also volunteered with orphaned children at a township in Intabazwe.



Erica Castaneda
Lake Worth, FL

Erica's UCF Experience:

UCF allowed me to take advantage of once-in-a-lifetime opportunities and realize dreams I never thought possible. My professors, faculty mentors, and peers supported and encouraged me to take advantage of the research, service and professional development opportunities on campus, and I have grown tremendously as both a leader and scholar. UCF taught me the importance of giving back to one's community, and I feel honored to have been able to impact students and the Orlando community through my leadership and service roles. Additionally, UCF enabled me to spread my passion for helping animals on both a local and global scale through interning at Back to Nature Wildlife Refuge and traveling abroad to volunteer with conservation efforts in South Africa. As I continue my journey to become a veterinarian, I will always remember what it means to be a Knight and to reach for the stars.

Future Plans:

I will be attending veterinary school to become a small-animal veterinarian and serve as an advocate for animal welfare and conservation.

ANTHONY CHRISTOPHER CATOTTI



Anthony Christopher Catotti
Oviedo, FL

Future Plans:

Next year, as a fifth-year senior, I will finish my collegiate athletic career and look to continue building on the UCF men's basketball team's historic run of success. I will also intern in the Athletics offices at UCF. Upon graduation, I will seek to follow my greatest passion by continuing to give back to the community through the channel of youth sports and athletics, and I will also publish my first novel.

Anthony Christopher Catotti, College of Business Administration and College of Education and Human Performance, is double majoring in management and sport and exercise science with a minor in coaching. A National Merit Scholar and an Eagle Scout, Catotti is also a member of The Burnett Honors College and proudly maintains a 4.0 GPA. After serving as a student manager his first two years, Catotti pursued his greatest passion by walking on and playing for the men's basketball team. Throughout his time at UCF, Catotti has served, and continues to serve, as a volunteer tutor to his fellow classmates, teammates and other students, and takes tremendous joy and pride in influencing their academic success. He is also a proud member of UCF's Catholic Campus Ministry and Fellowship of Christian Athletes. As an aspiring author, Catotti is currently writing his first young-adult fantasy novel.

Anthony's UCF Experience

My UCF experience is growth, development and understanding — charging on past failures and disappointments as heartbreaking as my worst nightmares, and reveling in triumphs and accomplishments beyond my wildest dreams. In my time at UCF, surrounded by the greatest professors, coaches, teammates and mentors imaginable, I have been challenged to think on a global perspective, learn what it means to be a part of a team and a community, and do what it takes to be a part of something special. I have also learned what it means to leave your legacy as a winner on and off the court and to be a champion every single day of your life. Coming to UCF has been the greatest decision I have ever made in my life, and I could not be prouder to be a Knight. Go Knights, and Charge On!

SARAH DAVENPORT

Sarah Davenport, College of Sciences, is an anthropology student and a Ronald E. McNair Scholar. Her UCF research intersects the subfields of urban and environmental anthropology as well as food studies. Davenport's experiences as an environmentalist, as well as her work in local food and environmental justice initiatives and politics, underpin her interest in the complexities of socio-environmental injustice in Orlando and the need to address such inequities. Outside of research and coursework, she serves as a community activist and volunteers with local organizations such as Hebni, the UCF Arboretum and Fleet Farming. Since transferring to UCF, Davenport also worked as a Water Safety Instructor at the UCF Recreation and Wellness Center, assisting students to develop their swimming skills.



Sarah Davenport
Naples, FL

Sarah's Experience at UCF

Transferring to UCF was pivotal in my growth as a scholar and an ethnographic researcher. Studying here allowed me to integrate my love for gardening and ecology into my research experiences, leading me to ask deeper questions and fueling my desire to continue public and applied research. My UCF experience has been enriched by my mentors from the McNair program and the Department of Anthropology. Through the McNair program, I have been given an equitable opportunity for academic success, and the tools to mentor other students. My faculty mentors have guided my scholarly development and encouraged me to pursue my passion for community-engaged research. With their support, I reached goals I never thought possible. Most importantly, I was able to attend UCF with my best friend and younger brother — a criminal justice student who challenged me to think deeply, never doubt myself and cultivate compassion for all.

Future Plans:

Following my graduation in spring 2018, I will continue my scholarship in an anthropology Ph.D. program, and intend to expand research on food justice in low-income, minority and urban communities. I hope my future research politicizes the ways researchers think about food acquisition in the urban United States and encourages anthropologists to critically examine issues of race and food at home.

JESSIE DICKENS



Jessie Dickens
Orlando, FL

Future Plans:

Upon graduation, I plan to pursue a doctorate in economics. My long-term goal is to be a professor of economics, impacting the community through research and enhancing the quality of education.

Jessie Dickens, College of Business Administration, is an economics major. He is a proud member of the LEAD Scholars Academy, President's Leadership Council and The Burnett Honors College, through University Honors and Honors in the Major. Throughout his four years, Dickens impacted the UCF experience of his peers through leadership roles as an O-Teamer, a Student Orientation Coordinator and a Resident Assistant. He was also an undergraduate admissions ambassador and a member of the 2016 Homecoming Royalty Court. Dickens was a Top Orator for UCF Moot Court, conducted research as an intern for UCF's Global Perspectives Office and served as the President of Delta Sigma Pi business fraternity. One of his favorite and most rewarding roles on campus was serving as Finance Manager on the Executive Board for Knight-Thon, which raises over \$1,000,000 annually for Arnold Palmer Hospital in Orlando.

Jessie's UCF Experience:

Being from Orlando, I have always been right down the road from UCF — and now UCF has become home for me in ways I would have never imagined. UCF instilled a set of values within me and provided opportunities that helped me learn about myself and the world around me. I built connections with fellow students as an O-Teamer and demonstrated how to live by the UCF Creed. I engaged in service abroad through an Alternative Break Program trip to the Dominican Republic, and locally through Knight-Thon, where I fundraised for Children's Miracle Network while brightening the lives of kids. I made lifelong friendships and built valuable connections. UCF's scale made my experiences all the more rewarding and impactful, and choosing UCF was the best decision I ever made. I will forever be a proud Knight and am excited to show the world what UCF is all about.

PAUL GILL

Paul Gill, College of Sciences, is majoring in political science with minors in diplomacy and economics. He is a proud student of The Burnett Honors College and served as a team leader, a team leader coordinator and an orientation peer ambassador. Currently, he is a member of the President's Leadership Council and Student Government Association Election Commission. Gill also works for the Intelligence Community Center for Academic Excellence where he splits his time between informing students of career opportunities within the U.S. Intelligence Community and conducting political psychology research under Mark Schafer, Ph.D.



Paul Gill
Winter Park, FL

Paul's UCF Experience:

My fondness for UCF started at a young age because both my parents attended this university. Even before enrolling, I had an overwhelming affinity for UCF because it has given me virtually everything I cherish: family, friends, memories, connections and more. I had thought that my love for UCF could not possibly grow any further, but I was greatly mistaken. My experience as a UCF student has been nothing short of spectacular. The faculty and staff are the main reasons this place is so special. The mentors I have gained along my collegiate journey have done everything in their power to help me succeed, and I will be forever grateful for them. While at UCF, I have been able to travel to conferences, engage in research, witness historic collegiate sporting events and create bonds that will last forever. I love UCF, and that is all there is to it!

Future Plans:

After graduation, I plan on attending graduate school in Washington, D.C., to further my knowledge of international relations. I aspire to eventually work at the Department of State as a Foreign Service Officer or foreign policy civil servant.

HEATHER HOLMAN



Heather Holman
Ormond Beach, FL

Future Plans:

After graduation, I plan to attend a one-year post-baccalaureate research program working in the neuroscience field. My long-term goal is to attend medical school. I am strongly considering M.D. and Ph.D. programs with hopes of taking basic research and translating it to a clinical environment where patients can reap the benefits.

Heather Holman, College of Medicine and College of Education and Human Performance, is double majoring in biomedical sciences and sport and exercise science. She is a member of The Burnett Honors College and was selected for the UCF Founders' Day Award and the UCF Private Practice Clinical Internship. Holman spent the past three years working on an independent research project studying Alzheimer's disease under the tutelage of Dr. Kiminobu Sugaya. She was awarded two undergraduate research grants and participates in Honors in the Major and the Program for Undergraduate Research Experience. Holman led other students as a COMPASS mentor and teaching assistant through UCF's Peer Instruction and Laboratory Occupational Training. Outside of academia, Holman is a member of the Kappa Alpha Theta sorority and enjoys being a volunteer scribe at Shepherd's Hope, which offers free health care to the uninsured.

Heather's UCF Experience:

My UCF journey has been a transformative experience. In high school, I excelled as a competitive dressage equestrian and thought my future would be in riding. I had always been fascinated with the medical aspects of caring for horses, and I began my college career as a biomedical sciences major. I added a double major in sport and exercise science in order to gain a holistic approach to medicine. Getting accepted into Dr. Sugaya's lab and discovering my passion for research was a turning point in my life. My time at UCF has not only provided me with an excellent education, but has given me the life experience to appreciate the greater joy obtained by helping others. I learned the importance of serving those in need, pushing intellectual boundaries and motivating others to strive for excellence. UCF has given me the foundation I need to hopefully make a meaningful contribution to society.

JESLIN KERA

Jeslin Kera, College of Medicine, is majoring in biomedical sciences with a minor in health sciences. Decorated with the Women's Achievement Award, Who's Who Among Students award, Honors in the Major Scholarship and Four-Year Rigsby Memorial Fund award, Kera's talent manifests through pure dedication. She is first author of her interdisciplinary research presentations in biophysics with multiple undergraduate research grants and a thesis publication. Kera mentors at a nationally recognized UCF Surgical Internship and is Founder and President of Knights Overseas. As a Test of Essential Academic Skills Instructor, she delivers medical sciences lectures to aspiring nursing students. She is also a Supplemental Instruction Leader, Student Academic Resource Center Tutor and Teaching Assistant for ten classes. Kera has held leadership roles in the Pre-Med American Medical Student Association and other student organizations, and mentors struggling biomedical sciences and research-driven students. Kera also volunteers at medical clinics and nursing homes.

Jeslin's UCF Experience:

When I journeyed to the United States nine years ago, words may as well have buzzed past my ears. A drift faster than the air across the speeding plane took from me everything I knew but rewarded me with hope. I promised myself to conquer a new language and design my own destiny. Though I was born in a developing country with minimal opportunity, UCF gave me the needed framework of support to achieve more than I ever imagined. Growing up, my mantra was to cherish myself by lifting others, and at UCF I rose with thousands of students as a leader and an educator. I also started the Knights Overseas organization — a longtime dream that my mother and I had shared. It provides education-based empowerment to underserved communities. UCF acted as a harness, pulling me from a puddle to a sky of confidence, wisdom, virtue and benevolence.



Jeslin Kera
Uttar Pradesh, India

Future Plans:

I seek to serve and maintain the dignity of human life through my leadership, community service and medical knowledge. I hope to continue to globally expand my project of serving the underprivileged through the organization that I founded in fall 2017, Knights Overseas. Finally, I aspire to become a surgeon and medical educator in my community and inculcate enthusiasm for medicine in our youth.

NICHOLAS R. LARKINS



Nicholas R. Larkins
Orlando, FL

Future Plans:

After graduation, I plan to attend law school, then to become a lawyer, and to serve my country by becoming a Judge Advocate General Corps officer in the U.S. Navy.

Nicholas Larkins, College of Health and Public Affairs, is majoring in health sciences pre-clinical with aspirations to attend law school following graduation. He currently serves in concurrent roles as the Student Body President as well as a member of the UCF Board of Trustees. While serving as President, one of his greatest accomplishments was drafting a proposal, which he later presented to his fellow trustees, that would provide in-state tuition to the students of Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands for one full academic year, in the wake of the destruction left behind by hurricanes Irma and Maria; his proposal passed unanimously. Larkins served in Student Government under two previous Student Body presidents, first as the Facilities, Safety and Transportation Coordinator, and then he served as the next President's Chief of Staff. With a passion for both public service and reforming the criminal justice system, in law school, Larkins plans to focus his studies on constitutional/government law and criminal law.

Nicholas' UCF Experience:

I was born and raised right here in Orlando. Growing up, I always had a deep affinity for my community, and when it came time to apply to college, UCF was the only school I applied to. During my time here at UCF, I have met so many people from around the world, and I have been exposed to new ideas and new ways of life that, I believe, have truly made me a much more well-rounded individual. I have had the opportunity to receive mentoring from some of the most brilliant, passionate and philanthropic leaders in the Orlando area, and I have recently had the deep honor of mentoring some of my younger peers. UCF is also the place where I met my girlfriend whom I plan to marry following graduation. UCF truly changed my life and I am forever grateful to this university.

MINH-CHAU N. LE

Minh-Chau N. Le, College of Engineering and Computer Science, is a Provost Scholar, RAMP Scholar, and member of both The Burnett Honors College and Honors in the Major program. She studies mechanical engineering, materials science and engineering, and music. Le conducts biomedical engineering research at the UCF Biomaterials for Tissue Engineering and Cancer Lab, and spent a summer researching at Harvard University. She is a proud member of the young Biomedical Engineering Society at UCF, where she served as the Social Media Chair, Secretary and President throughout her undergraduate career. Le loves to help students achieve academic success. She mentored local high school students through the Elevation Fellows Program, and tutored fellow Knights through the TRiO PRIME STEM program. In her spare time, Le enjoys drumming with the UCF Jammin' Knights, and writing and photographing for Sparks Magazine at UCF.

Minh-Chau's UCF Experience:

I entered UCF thinking I would just get a degree in mechanical engineering and get out fast. I was wrong. In the past three years, I have felt myself growing exponentially. I am forever thankful to have experienced research at top research universities, working toward physiologically relevant 3-D breast tumor models and effective middle ear infection treatments, and presenting at national research conferences. I am extremely grateful for the opportunities to work with many students to understand the roles that resources and guidance play in the success of young people. Growing up, I was taught that life is all about relationships. I hold dear to my heart all the love and support from my incredible research mentor, Dr. Stephen Florczyk, as well as teachers, friends and family. UCF taught me to reach for the stars, and to help others do the same.



Minh-Chau N. Le
Danang, Vietnam
Titusville, FL

Future Plans:

After graduation, I plan to pursue a doctorate in materials science and engineering. I would like to teach at the university level and conduct biomaterials research, developing innovative biomaterials for low-cost medical diagnostic devices and advanced 3-D tumor modeling.

MARIA PENNELLA



Maria Pennella
Summerland Key, FL

Future Plans:

I will be taking a gap year and applying to medical school. I hope to attend a program that offers a dual degree with a Master of Public Health that focuses specifically on global health so that I can continue to be an advocate for communities around the world.

Maria Pennella, College of Health and Public Affairs, is majoring in health sciences pre-clinical. She is a UCF LEAD Scholar, Founders' Day Award recipient, Lacrosse Club alumna and peer tutor for Pathophysiology and Human Anatomy. Pennella is the Founder/President of GIVE @ UCF — a volunteer organization focusing on English education and sustainable infrastructure projects in developing countries. Through her time volunteering abroad, she developed a passion for empowering underserved communities around the world, which is why she decided to serve as Director of Global Health for the Pre-Med American Medical Student Association. She expanded this passion while enrolled in an independent study course that allowed her to develop a mock nonprofit organization that sponsors medical students in developing nations. While serving as the Assistant Director of the UCF Surgical Internship, Pennella enjoyed working closely with surgeons and being a mentor for other pre-med students.

Maria's UCF Experience:

My time at UCF is something that I wouldn't trade for the world. I have established lifelong relationships, received mentorship allowing me to grow as a student and have become inspired to give back to the global community. By attending UCF, I was able to take advantage of every opportunity that came my way and discover my life purpose. From serving as a guide for volunteer trips in rural Laos, to shadowing numerous surgical specialties at Florida Hospital, I believe that my time at UCF allowed me to find a perfect balance between my hobbies and studies. I will keep these lessons close to my heart as I enter my career as a physician. One day I hope to give back to the next generation and help young adults explore their passions just as I have during my time at UCF.

MICHELLE PROPHETE

Michelle Prophete, College of Medicine, is majoring in biomedical sciences. She is a member of The Burnett Honors College, the LEAD Scholars Academy and the Research and Mentoring Program. Her passion for sharing knowledge and encouraging academic success allowed her to excel in roles as a microbiology teaching assistant and statistics Supplemental Instruction Leader. In addition, Prophete held leadership roles with the LEAD Scholars Academy and the Pre-Medical American Medical Student Association, and also served as secretary to the newly established UCF chapter of the American Medical Women's Association. Her interest in medicine and research led her to conduct research with the Burnett School of Biomedical Sciences, participate in a National Science Foundation partnership summer Research Experience for Undergraduates program, and complete a thesis project based on her research in natural killer cell immunotherapy.



Michelle Prophete
Queens, NY

Michelle's UCF Experience:

UCF provided so many opportunities for me to apply the knowledge and skills I gained through academics. Through UCF I was able to contribute to the establishment of new organizations in medicine, participate in summer research programs, present my research, connect to encouraging professors and complete an undergraduate thesis. Whether it was teaching, leadership, volunteering or networking, the university provided various opportunities for me to get involved, and access to resources necessary for success in my endeavors. UCF encouraged me to pursue my goals without reservations and to challenge myself by striving to be better every day. Through my coursework, research experience, community service and leadership roles at UCF I have been able to develop myself professionally, reinvigorate my passion for learning and become confident that I am prepared for what the future may bring.

Future Plans:

After graduation I plan to further my experience in research and higher education before pursuing a career as a medical professional in research, practice and academia. I will ultimately strive to create a positive impact on the community and contribute to the field of medicine through my work, while continuing to serve as a mentor to others.

BAILEY RANSON



Bailey Ranson
Jacksonville, FL

Future Plans:

Following graduation I plan to work as a Critical Care Registered Nurse. Additionally, I plan to continue my education through a Doctor of Nursing Practice graduate program, striving to foster a healthier community through emphasis on health education and chronic disease prevention.

Bailey Ranson, College of Nursing, is pursuing a B.S. degree in nursing. She is a proud member of The Burnett Honors College and the women's track and field team. While Ranson found success on the pole vault runway, her proudest accomplishments stem from the classrooms and service organizations where she made an impact and grew into a compassionate leader. Ranson served as an undergraduate teaching assistant, a member of the Student Nurses Association, and was appointed to the Student Athlete Leadership Institute. She also volunteered for seven organizations throughout the Orlando community, using her platform as an athlete and student nurse to emphasize health promotion and the importance of education. Ranson traveled to Toquecito Panama in partnership with Courts for Kids and Knights Without Borders, where she built a multipurpose sports court. All the while, Ranson remained on the President's Honor Roll every semester with a 4.0 GPA.

Bailey's UCF Experience:

UCF allowed me to chase each and every dream that I set for myself from the first day I stepped foot on campus. My journey through the College of Nursing taught me compassion and strength. Through The Burnett Honors College I learned the importance of coupling scholastic achievement with civic engagement. By competing in Division I athletics, I learned how to use my platform to make a difference in the world around me, and I developed an unrelenting drive to succeed. During my time at UCF I have grown more as a person than I ever thought possible. I am committed to implementing these lessons as I go forth into the world, striving to make a positive impact on those around me by empowering others in the same way that UCF empowered me. I am forever grateful and proud to be a UCF Knight.

LINDSEY WEBB

Lindsey Webb, College of Engineering and Computer Science, is majoring in mechanical engineering with minors in bioengineering and international engineering. She is a LEAD Scholars Academy graduate, Provost Scholar, Burnett Medical Scholar and Burnett Honors College member. Webb conducts research in the Applied and Computational Biofluids Laboratory, and is completing her Honors in the Major thesis on mimicking blood rheology for more accurate modeling in benchtop research. She enjoys volunteering at UCP, a local elementary school for children with and without special needs. She has also been a Provost mentor to Honors students and assisted with Relay for Life. This summer Webb will be the first UCF student to begin a study abroad internship program with Germany's Hochschule Bremen for engineering students. She is a member of the Biomedical Engineering Society, where she serves as treasurer, and a member of Delta Zeta, where she serves as Parliamentarian.

Lindsey's UCF Experience:

UCF empowered me with the tools to make a difference. I have had the opportunity to learn in both the classroom and lab, and to demonstrate my knowledge, leadership abilities and joy of service to others. As a freshman, I wanted to become involved so that I could become a part of UCF. I became a LEAD Scholar, which gave me confidence and introduced me to helping the wonderful students at UCP. I also participated in sorority recruitment and joined Delta Zeta, which gave me lifelong, supportive sisters. I joined the newly formed Biomedical Engineering Society, and am now treasurer, and I quickly became involved in research in Dr. Alain Kassab's lab. I had the privilege to begin assisting with research as a freshman, a foundation that catapulted my future dreams. My outstanding professors, leaders and friends at UCF have helped shape me into the person I am today.



Lindsey Webb
Melbourne, FL

Future Plans:

After graduation, I plan to attend medical school while also earning my master's degree in biomedical engineering. I hope to practice medicine and serve my community while continuing with biomedical research.

MATTHEW WRIGHT



Matthew Wright
Lancaster, PA

Future Plans:

Upon graduation, I plan on working in the aerospace field, with aspirations of working in the space industry. In the future, I wish to obtain a master's degree while continuing to give back to the community.

Matthew Wright, College of Engineering and Computer Science, is an aerospace engineer major, as well as a member of The Burnett Honors College and the football team. In the past four years he has nearly completed his major requirements while remaining on the Dean's List, and had the opportunity to work on Hybrid Carbon Fiber Reinforced Polymers in a UCF lab. Wright used his platform as a member of the football team to give back within the community through various methods. He enjoys using his football-specific knowledge to inspire younger athletes looking to follow the same path.

Matthew's UCF Experience:

UCF allowed me to excel in the classroom and to compete at the highest level on the athletic field. My favorite memory as a Knight was getting to represent UCF in the Chick-fil-A Peach Bowl and become an undefeated National Champion. This was an experience that showcased the support of the UCF community which is largely known for its sizeable and diverse student population. Throughout my time at UCF I developed many friendships and relationships that will stay with me for the rest of my life. This university molded me into a driven, dedicated individual relentlessly aiming to become a better person each day. I will take the drive and motivation that UCF awarded me to push myself in the future.





ORDER OF PEGASUS LOUNGE

The Order of Pegasus Lounge is located on the second floor of the Student Union, overlooking the Pegasus Grand Ballroom. In honor of the inductees, a plaque with the 2018 Order of Pegasus names and a group photo will be on display on the lounge wall along with previous Order of Pegasus inductees.



2018 ORDER OF PEGASUS COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Dr. Stacey Malaret, Chair, LEAD Scholars Academy

Mr. Arup Guha, College of Engineering and
Computer Science

Dr. Lauryn De George, College of
Business Administration

Dr. Nancy Marshall, Office of the President

Dr. DeLaine Priest, Division of Student Development
and Enrollment Services

Dr. Vivian Ortiz, Office of Assessment and Grants

Mr. Rex Roberts, The Burnett Honors College

Dr. Carolyn Walker-Hopp, College of Education and
Human Performance
and Order of Pegasus, Class of 2001



The Division of Student Development and Enrollment Services would like to thank members of the administration and faculty for nominating students, and the committee members listed above for undertaking the difficult task of selecting the outstanding UCF students receiving this distinguished honor. A special thank you to the Student Government Association for sponsoring the generous scholarships for the Order of Pegasus recipients.

