



# ORDER OF PEGASUS

## CLASS OF 2021



SPRING 2021

Spring 2021

## WELCOME FROM THE PRESIDENT

I am honored to introduce the recipients of the 2021 Order of Pegasus.

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

This year, 23 students were selected to receive this prestigious award, including 15 Burnett Honors College students, six LEAD Scholars, six Student Government leaders, three President's Leadership Council members, one Greek member, one student-athlete and three transfer students. The biographical sketches in this handbook will provide additional information on honorees' academic accomplishments, leadership experiences and UCF and community involvement.

These are some of UCF's most dedicated, passionate and highest-achieving students, and we are very proud of all they have accomplished. We hope you will join us in offering your congratulations and best wishes for a very rewarding and impactful future.

Best,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Alexander Cartwright". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Alexander Cartwright  
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.



## JORDAN DOWELL

Jordan Dowell, College of Sciences, is a Ph.D. candidate in Integrative Biology, a Bill and Melinda Gates Millennium Scholar, and McKnight Doctoral Fellow. He holds an M.S. and B.S. in Ecology and Evolutionary Biology from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. His dissertation research focuses on understanding the evolutionary ecology of how plants communicate with one another via airborne chemical cues and the genetics behind specialized metabolism. At UCF, he has mentored many graduate and undergraduate students who have continued in science at various levels (e.g., graduate school, private industry, government, and non-profit work) focused on diversifying the face of science.



Jordan Dowell  
Las Vegas, Nevada

### **Jordan's UCF Experience:**

My experience at UCF has been one of growth through struggle. I have learned that if you want a diverse and equitable community, you need to take the initiative while guiding those in positions of power to compensate for historical inadequacies. During my time at UCF, I have learned to coordinate support for data-driven visions focused on developing spaces and practices that equitably support students and faculty. UCF has also provided me the freedom to explore my research endeavors at the intersection of biology, chemistry, and computer science with opportunities to build a diverse set of skills honed across several departments.

### **Future Plans:**

After earning my doctorate, I plan to continue my research in comparative biochemistry and chemical ecology at the post-doctoral level and into the professoriate. In the short-term, I will be working on a post-doctoral fellowship at the University of California, Davis examining co-evolutionary aspects of chemical communication between common fungal pathogens and a diverse set of agronomically relevant plants. In the long term, I plan to maintain my research and community development efforts to change the face of science while shedding light on our understanding of the primal language of life, chemistry.

## COLE FRIEDES



Cole Friedes  
Jacksonville, Florida

### Future Plans:

After completing medical school, I plan to complete a medical residency in radiation oncology at an academic institution, where I will focus on becoming an excellent and compassionate oncologist. During my residency training, I will specifically concentrate on the oligometastatic cancer response to immunotherapy, patient financial toxicity, and clinical trial design.

Cole Friedes, College of Medicine, graduated from Florida State University in 2016 with a B.S. in Biochemistry. Currently, he is finishing his medical degree while demonstrating ardent leadership and dedication to compassionate medical care and oncologic research. During his time at UCF, he served as student council Vice President as well as President and co-founded the Chapman Compassionate Care organization, which provides access to healthcare for the transiently homeless population of downtown Orlando. Further demonstrating his love for clinical research, he pursued a dedicated year of research in collaboration with Johns Hopkins University, in which he published many articles regarding the optimal use of radiotherapy in oligometastatic lung cancer as well as the financial burdens of anti-cancer therapies. Additionally, while at UCF, Cole has completed international service trips to Costa Rica and Peru, created a medical education podcast, served as a peer academic coach, and played in a professional ultimate frisbee league.

### Cole's UCF Experience:

I remember choosing to attend UCF for medical school because I felt that as a student here, I would be able to achieve any goal I set my mind to—without a doubt, that feeling has been actualized. Through the continued encouragement, support, and collaboration of the UCF College of Medicine faculty, I have been able to kickstart new community-based organizations, present and publish research internationally, and participate in unparalleled clinical experiences. I am confident that my time at UCF will make me an outstanding, compassionate, and enthusiastic physician researcher, who is prepared to provide high-level and thoughtful cancer care to the patients who need it the most.

## DAKOTA LEWIS

Dakota Lewis, College of Sciences, graduated from the University of Central Florida in 2017 with a B.S. in Biology and a minor in emergency management. She recently completed her M.S. degree in Biology. Her thesis research focuses on assessing the impacts of ecological disturbances on estuarine fish communities. Specifically, she uses multiple statistical modelling approaches to untangle the complex relationships between different trophic level fish and their environment in a changing ocean. Apart from her thesis, Dakota has taken an active role mentoring undergraduate students. Through lab and field training these students have produced multiple undergraduate led proposals, presentations, and research projects.



Dakota Lewis  
Orlando, Florida

### **Dakota's UCF Experience:**

I transferred to UCF in my sophomore year to pursue my interests in marine biology and research. I was not disappointed. As an undergraduate, my first research opportunity focused on studying the impacts of sea level rise as part of my minor in emergency management and homeland security. That internship cemented my interest in coastal systems. Subsequently, during my final summer as an undergraduate I joined the marine ecology and conservation (MEC) lab in UCF's Department of Biology. My various research experiences in the MEC lab helped me become the scientist I am today. Throughout my undergraduate and graduate career at UCF I was fortunate to have been a part of an amazing community of scientists who encouraged my academic growth and exploration.

### **Future Plans:**

After completing my M.S. at UCF I will continue my education and earn a PhD with a focus on ecological disturbance impact on fish population and community dynamics. Ultimately, I plan to secure a tenure track faculty position that will provide me with the opportunity to run my own research lab, and the freedom to ask and answer pressing environmental research questions in the field of marine ecology. My future research will combine large data sets, cutting edge statistical models, and lab and field-based experimentation to generate fundamental understanding that can be used for solutions to pressing environmental issues.

## EMILY WINCHESTER



Emily Winchester  
Panama City, Florida

### Future Plans:

Upon my anticipated graduation in spring of 2022, I hope to work within the social sector, either with nonprofit organizations or government entities, and serve the Central Florida community. Specifically, I hope to engage in efforts to increase gender parity in government, better civic and voter education, and work to further social justice.

Emily Winchester is pursuing a dual master's degree in Nonprofit Management and Public Administration within the College of Community Innovation & Education. Emily currently works as a graduate assistant in UCF's Multicultural Academic & Support Services Office. Emily serves on the President's Leadership Council, Homecoming Executive Board, and board of the Orlando Young Nonprofit Professionals Network. She is also a member of the League of Women Voters, Nonprofit Knights, and School of Public Administration's Mentoring Circles. Emily grew up in Panama City, Florida and is the oldest of three siblings. Emily is married to Matthew Winchester, a UCF Knight, who she met while attending UCF as an undergrad.

### Emily's UCF Experience:

My UCF experience has been nothing short of transformative, full of both personal and professional milestones. As a graduate student, I feel that I have been immensely blessed to work with the Multicultural Academic & Support Services (MASS) Office. Working with the MASS Office, specifically the peer mentoring programs, has provided me with numerous opportunities for professional growth. I am thankful for the many professors and faculty members that have allowed me to ask hard questions, navigate difficult dialogue, and pushed me to pursue my passions. I have been so lucky to work alongside some of the most passionate and wonderful student leaders within the Knight community, and I am so glad to have met them, been challenged by them, and have had the opportunity to accomplish great things with them.

## NIKKI ANNE BALLELOS

Nikki Anne Ballelos, College of Medicine, is a biomedical sciences major with a psychology minor. As a Burnett Honors scholar, she served her honors community as Vice President for Honors Congress and a student representative on the University Honors Committee. Her passion for medicine and service is evident in her directorships in Pre-Med AMSA and Hearts for the Homeless. Nikki Anne is also a Peer Mentor for the Burnett School of Biomedical Sciences and a teaching assistant for Quantitative Biological Methods and Molecular Biology. She volunteers her time at Nemours Children's Hospital and the Dr. Phillips Center for the Performing Arts. Nikki Anne performs research that combines her interests in education and medicine by capturing multimodal data on diagnostic reasoning skills across varying levels of medical expertise with implications to enhance medical training. In her journey to pursue her dreams and exceed limits, Nikki Anne commends her parents and younger brother for their unconditional support, encouragement, and love.

### **Nikki Anne's UCF Experience:**

UCF has become my second home with its communities to explore my interests and opportunities to develop novel skills. The diverse Knight Family has welcomed and encouraged me to step out of my comfort zone these past four years. From participating in UCF traditions such as Spirit Splash and Universal Knights, I was inspired to start my own traditions such as Ice Cream Wednesdays at Topper's and free t-shirts on Market Wednesdays. I am forever grateful for the memories and experiences I have made as a UCF Knight.



Nikki Anne Ballelos  
Orlando, Florida

### **Future Plans:**

After graduation, I plan to apply to medical schools in the summer. My goal is to become a physician that emphasizes compassion and trust with her patients. During my growth year, I plan to carry on research in the SMART Lab and continue volunteering at Nemours Children's Hospital and the Dr. Phillips Center for the Performing Arts. I also intend to continue playing USTA tennis leagues with my family.

## NATALI BARAKAT



Natali Barakat  
Anabta, Palestine

### Future Plans:

I was raised by a Palestinian father and a Syrian mother in the beautiful city of Amman, Jordan; however, I reserve the term hometown to Anabta, Palestine. I came into science for its ability to tell truths about the world and solve problems. After undergrad, my goal is to pursue an MD-PhD program to garner the necessary interdisciplinary mindset to be able to work with impact-driven scientists from different backgrounds to make advancements in the fields of pathology and medicine. Wherever I end up in science, I aspire to always embrace the humanity of the challenges I am tackling and build on the intersectionality that comes with the responsibility of being a modern-day scientist.

Natali Barakat, College of Sciences, is pursuing a degree in chemistry. In her research lab, Natali bridges chemistry and genetics to study diet effects on longevity, looking to maximize the lifespan of flies and hopefully one day, humans. She is also conducting her thesis in surface chemistry, working on creating a more sustainable chronic in-vitro drug testing system out of the “body-on-a-chip” system. Natali has worked as a teaching assistant for six classes and is an active executive board member in Relay for Life, and a director at Hearts for the Homeless. Inspired by the unconditionally giving service community at UCF and the effect it has on the lives of its neighbors, Natali led the efforts to expand Hearts for the Homeless back to her home country, successfully opening a chapter to give back and help in the diagnosis, treatment and information about the leading cause of death in Jordan: heart disease. She is also an active assistant editor for Stylus, after being published in it herself and receiving the John C. Hitt award for Excellence in Writing.

### Natali’s UCF Experience:

The UCF community is a tapestry uniquely knitted by the diverse, driven, and selfless ideas of its people. I believe my mentors, peers, and professors at UCF supplied me with the threads to add to this tapestry in the most unexpected and joyful ways. Being around passionate and intentional people, has liberated me from the closeted world of my academics and jobs, and allowed me to expand and make value-aligned choices. In classic chain reaction fashion, this unconsciously gives other people the permission to make similar choices of their own. In this self-sustained ecosystem we have created, we formed great relationships that feed and pour into one another. Our mere presence with another is fuel and inspiration to leave our comfort zones and express ourselves. Wholeheartedness, growth, and gratitude frame every memory I have here, and I wouldn’t have it any other way.

## STEPHANIE BLANCO

Stephanie Blanco is a senior majoring in political science pre-law with two minors in mass communication and legal studies. During her time at UCF, she has been heavily involved in Student Government and the Panhellenic Council. She found her passion for servant leadership through her roles as the Internal Legislative Assistant and Director of Student Affairs for Student Government. Stephanie has also had involvements within the greater Greek community as a Recruitment Guide and Treasurer of her sorority. Among other achievements, she has served in several registered student organizations, became a peer mentor for the Summer Access Program, and lobbied every year for student tailored legislative priorities at our state's capitol. Through her current role as Student Body Vice President, she has represented the student voice as a member of various advisory boards and has overseen organizations, agencies, and departments at the university level.

### **Stephanie's UCF Experience:**

Growing up in a Latino household, I was taught that a house is not a home without love, contribution, and servitude. Upon arriving at UCF, I immediately discovered my home away from home. My journey as a Knight has given me the ability to grow into a strong, passionate, and empathetic leader. But most importantly, it has given me the opportunity to build endless relationships and create fond memories that will last a lifetime. To me, UCF is about being a part of a distinguishable community of Knights who not only persevere through hardship, but continuously choose to charge forward no matter the adversities faced, and to always reach for the stars.



Stephanie Blanco  
Miami, Florida

### **Future Plans:**

Following graduation, I plan to attend law school in the state of Florida. My goal is to graduate with my Juris Doctorate degree and become a practicing attorney specializing in civil law. Ultimately, I aspire to become a professor and continue my passion to serve in local, state, and eventually national politics.

## FRANCESCA BURRI



Francesca Burri  
Clearwater, Florida

### **Future Plans:**

Following graduation, I plan to pursue a graduate degree to broaden my perspective. Longterm, my dream through hospitality is to play a part in creating once-in-a-lifetime experiences for others that become cherished memories.

Francesca Burri, Rosen College of Hospitality Management, is a hospitality management major and a member of The Burnett Honors College. Francesca is the President of the Rosen College Leadership Council, where she represents the student body, is an ambassador for the dean, and develops initiatives to enhance the student experience. She is President of the Future Theme Park Leaders Association, through which she partners with park leaders to give students an in-depth look into the industry. Francesca is a founding executive board member of the Human Resources Development Association, a Peer Mentor and Volunteer Coordinator within the Peer Mentoring Outreach Program, and a Young Skål Member of Skål International. Francesca is passionate about her field and has participated in site visits, study programs, and internships worldwide to learn more about hospitality. Having received life-changing encouragement and mentorship, Francesca is committed to passing this on and helping others grow and learn.

### **Francesca's UCF Experience:**

During my time here, my goal has been to make the difference in others that this school first made in me. The UCF community provided me the encouragement I needed to come out of my shell, allowing me to accomplish things I had never dreamt possible. This experience empowered me to go on to become a leader, a mentor, and an ambassador for my college. It inspired me to get involved so I could help other students reach their potential. UCF has been a catalyst for my growth, and I am grateful for the gift it has been to attend.

## COREY CLANCY

Corey Clancy, Rosen College of Hospitality Management, is a senior studying entertainment management and minoring in theatre studies with a certificate in theme park and attraction management. Mr. Clancy was a member of the Burnett Honors College, participating in Honors Congress and working as a Team Leader and Coordinator for the Honors Symposium course. He acted as a member of the 2018 Orientation Team, Undergraduate Admissions Ambassador, leader in the 2020–2021 Rosen College Leadership Council and the 2020–2021 Rosen College Diversity and Inclusion Committee, and a competitor in several ethical competitions. He has also worked at the Walt Disney World Resort as a food and beverage cast member and balloon vendor. Constantly striving to live out his lifelong motto to “be the sparkle,” Corey Clancy sincerely hopes that he has left his mark on UCF.

### **Corey’s UCF Experience:**

UCF has provided me the home that I have been desiring my entire life, giving me a safe space to become myself, to be a work in progress, to meet friends and mentors, and to have the experience of a lifetime. I am so proud to call myself a Knight and to be a part of “Knight Nation.” When I found UCF, I found my forever family and my forever home.



Corey Clancy  
Charleston, South Carolina

### **Future Plans:**

After graduation, I intend to continue working at the Walt Disney World Resort and eventually join the entertainment of the parks. I hope to attend graduate school at UCF in the future, either pursuing themed experience design or hospitality management. Furthermore, I aspire to be a leader within Disney Parks Live Entertainment or a member of Disney Creative.

## PADMAVATHI GANDURI



Padmavathi Ganduri  
Tampa, Florida

Padmavathi Ganduri, College of Business, is majoring in integrated business with minors in political science and leadership studies. She is a member of the Burnett Honors College and a graduate of the LEAD Scholars Academy. Padmavathi currently serves as a UCF Legislative Scholar at The Southern Group lobbying firm. While at UCF, she held leadership roles as the President of Honors Congress and as an Associate Justice in Student Government. She also volunteered as a hearing officer with the Office of Student Conduct and Academic Integrity. Because of her interest in politics and campaign work, Padmavathi interned on the 2018 Second Chances Florida campaign and later served as a Voter Protection Legal Fellow on the 2020 Biden for President campaign. In her free time, Padmavathi enjoys singing and playing the flute in UCF's Concert Band.

### Future Plans:

After graduating from UCF, I hope to take a year off to become a Certified Associate in Project Management (CAPM) and obtain a certification in Indian Classical Carnatic Music before starting law school in August 2022.

### Padmavathi's UCF Experience:

When starting out as a freshman at UCF, my goal was to refine and reconcile my skills and interests in order to best serve my community. This university has given me more academic, leadership, and service opportunities than I could have ever imagined. Through each experience, I learned something new about myself that would help me in creating positive change in the lives of others. I will always be thankful for the mentors who have guided me in my professional development endeavors and provided me with endless encouragement and support. UCF has truly shaped me into the person I am today, and I will always be honored to be a Knight.

## EVA GLUCK

Eva Gluck is an industrial engineering major in the College of Engineering and Computer Science and a mathematics minor. She is part of the Burnett Honors College, the LEAD Scholars Academy, and Compass/EXCEL program. She is heavily involved in the Institute of Industrial and Systems Engineers where she is the current president. She created events like IISE's Career Fair and implemented initiatives like the IISE mentorship program to improve the education of her peers. These clubs propelled her into internships at Lockheed Martin CWEP, Pratt & Whitney, and PepsiCo. At UCF she also worked with the First Year Experience office as an O-Teamer and Volunteer UCF as the Food Share Director and Alternative Break Program participant.



Eva Gluck  
Winter Springs, Florida

### **Eva's Experience at UCF:**

UCF has uncovered countless opportunities for me and allowed me to have experiences I couldn't have gotten elsewhere. From meeting Bill and Melinda Gates through the LEAD Scholars Academy, being a part of the College Work Experience Program at Lockheed Martin, serving local homeless communities through Volunteer UCF, serving communities abroad in Costa Rica through the Alternative Break Program, to giving Knightro a piggyback ride at Homecoming events, my UCF experience has been unforgettable. I've learned to be a leader through organizations like IISE and SWE and I've given back as a mentor to students as an Orientation Leader and member of the Honors Congress. I have built invaluable connections in diverse communities that have not only allowed me to impact others positively, but have also impacted me professionally, giving me critical internship experiences, and personally by becoming part of the Knight Nation.

### **Future Plans:**

Eva will be working at Procter & Gamble as a Physical Distribution Process Engineer. In this role she will be on the technology platform team developing and implementing new solutions with automation to create more value in P&G warehouses. In the future she would love to pursue an MBA and manage teams that innovate business further into the 4th Industrial Revolution.

## GILLIAN GOMER



Gillian Gomer  
St. Cloud, Florida

Gillian Gomer, College of Sciences, majors in biology on the plant sciences track and minors in physics and computer science. She transferred to UCF from Valencia College and became a member of the Learning Environment and Academic Research Network (LEARN) Program and the Ronald E. McNair Scholars Program. Gillian conducted research at UCF with Dr. Adrienne Dove and Dr. Chase Mason. She also had the opportunity to participate in a research internship at Princeton University. As an undergraduate, she helped secure a grant to establish UCF's Plant Breeding Initiative, offering permanent infrastructure for student plant breeding experiments and providing free produce to Knights Helping Knights Pantry. Gillian held several leadership roles in the SACNAS UCF Chapter, the Botanical Society of America UCF Chapter, and the Summer Research Academy. As a peer mentor for LEARN and a pre-grad advisor for Academic Advancement Programs, she assists underrepresented students in their pursuit of research involvement and graduate education.

### Future Plans:

With a Ph.D. in Plant Sciences, my long-term goal is to collaborate with interdisciplinary scientists to research sustainable food sources for space exploration.

### Gillian's UCF Experience:

As a first-generation college student, I am incredibly grateful for the opportunities at UCF that helped me grow as a member of the community and as a scholar. I had endless support from wonderful mentors to pursue my interdisciplinary interests while supporting others in their own, unique journeys. Being a part of this diverse and inclusive learning environment makes me overjoyed to call UCF home. My experience at UCF will ultimately enable me to continue impacting others through research and direct mentorship.

## ROMINA HOMAYOUN

I am pursuing a Bachelor's degree in Health Sciences and a minor in Spanish. During my time in the unparalleled Burnett Honors College, I made it my mission to forge a path of purpose, integrity, and impact. As the Supplemental Instruction Leader for Microbiology, Honors Orientation Ambassador, ACCESS Leader, and Honors Symposium Team Leader, I served as a mentor. During my extensive time volunteering at the Knights Food Pantry, Hope Helps Organization, Crohn's and Colitis Foundation, Hoffner Dental Clinic, and Grace Medical, I grasped the power of service with passion. Through my leadership in PDSA and Honors Congress, I connected with inspiring students. Furthermore, I pursued research related to oral health and Crohn's Disease, hoping to raise awareness about their link. As I pursue dentistry, I believe in the tooth, the whole tooth, and nothing but the tooth!



Romina Homayoun  
Winter Springs, Florida

### **Romina's UCF Experience:**

UCF means U Can't (Ever) Forget. Every instance increased my personal growth and provided immense opportunities for innovation and involvement. Without hesitation, doors were wide open at every corner, and as long as I took the chance to cross that threshold from my dreams to reality, there were ample opportunities to make strides towards my highest potential. There were outstanding professors and faculty mentors willing to light my path, and I am forever grateful for them. It has been a cherished honor and unforgettable privilege to be a UCF Knight: to charge on towards a bright future, as if on the wings of a Pegasus.

### **Future Plans:**

After graduation, I will attend University of Florida's College of Dentistry. While pursuing my DMD, I will continue to research the link between periodontal disease and autoimmune conditions. I also hope to open dental clinics for underserved populations to ensure that oral health is a necessity for all, not a luxury for few.

## MARIANA KELLIS



Mariana Kellis  
Clermont, Florida

### Future Plans:

I plan to complete my History Ph.D. at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Afterward, I hope to become a professor of history at the university level. I am interested in studying languages and would like to eventually translate foreign works of history to make research more accessible to future historians.

Mariana Kellis, College of Arts and Humanities, is a history major with minors in political science, Russian studies, and a TEFL certificate. Mariana has served as President and Secretary of the Russian American Student Association, Secretary of UKnighting the World Through Literacy, and Senator for the Student Government Senate during the 52nd session. She has researched social class relations during the Russian Imperial era. Her Honors Undergraduate Thesis discusses the perspectives of American abolitionists on Russian serfdom during the Antebellum era. She has presented her research at various conferences and was awarded the J. Calvitt Clarke III Award for best undergraduate paper at the Florida Conference of Historians, 2020. Mariana is also a recipient of the Benjamin A. Gilman Scholarship, the Distinguished Undergraduate Researcher Award, the Burnett Honors Undergraduate Thesis Scholarship, the Thomas D. Greenhaw History Scholarship, and more. She studies Russian and participated in the STARTALK Intensive Russian Language Program in 2019. She is a Fulbright ETA Semifinalist for Russia and received the 2021 ACTR Post-Secondary Russian Scholar Laureate Award for the University of Central Florida.

### Mariana's UCF Experience:

UCF has provided me with a plethora of opportunities to excel academically, professionally, and personally. I have met and worked with many professors that have supported my academic success along my undergraduate journey. I am especially thankful to Dr. Barbara Gannon and Dr. Alla Kourova for their support and mentorship. I will leave this campus as a proud Knight and well-rounded student who is ready for whatever the future may hold.

## FATEMA KHONDKER

Fatema Khondker, College of Health Professions and Sciences is pursuing degrees in social work and biomedical sciences. She is a first-generation college student who was selected as a Health Education and Leadership Scholar and various other leadership positions. Fatema is involved in many research projects including research on Cytolethal Distending Toxin and she is independently researching transportation barriers to health access in Orlando. Representing UCF, she was honored with a best presentation award at the national ABRCMS 2020 conference for her toxin research. Fatema's passion about social policy and improving the social determinants of health in her community is evident in her service to clinics like Shepherd's Hope and Grace Medical Home.



Fatema Khondker  
Orlando, Florida

### **Fatema's UCF Experience:**

I wasn't always the best at studying, I had to reinvent myself as a person to excel. Without UCF, I don't know if I would've been able to discover the root of who I am as a leader, social justice advocate, and researcher. I attribute much of my success to supportive and kind faculty at UCF like Professor Robin Kohn and Dr. Ken Teter. My professors were the never-ending sunshine and water that helped me grow bigger than I would have ever thought. They inspired me to become a mentor to others, planting the seeds of success along their path.

### **Future Plans:**

I will attend medical school to become a physician and one day work in Congress advocating for just policies. My calling is to be a lifelong learner and activist who serves others. I have a particular interest in serving those who come from disadvantaged backgrounds like I did.

## JASMINE MASRI



Jasmine Masri  
Melbourne, Florida

### Future Plans:

After graduation, Jasmine will attend law school in D.C. in Fall 2021. She will focus on international and comparative law in hopes of one day practicing international law and working for the United Nations or State Department.

Jasmine Masri is pursuing two degrees, one in political science and the other in legal studies. Spending four years overseas in Lebanon, Jasmine developed an appreciation for diverse cultures and perspectives. This motivated her to pursue an education that would allow her to advocate for vulnerable communities both at home and abroad.

Jasmine is a graduate of UCF's LEAD Scholars Academy, where she served on the Executive Board as the Community Service Director. As a student in the Burnett Honors College, she served as a team leader for the incoming 2019 and 2020 fall freshman classes. Jasmine's previous internship experiences have included those with the UCF Office of Global Perspectives, the United Nations Association of Orlando, and the U.S House of Representatives. She has served as the president of UCF's Rotaract Club and was an editor for UCF's Undergraduate Law Journal. She has volunteered with several Rotary Clubs in Orlando and the Bithlo afterschool program. Jasmine is also involved in undergraduate research, combining her interests in human rights law and Middle Eastern politics to develop her Honors Undergraduate Thesis on the topic of domestic migrant workers in Lebanon.

### Jasmine's UCF Experience:

As a student pursuing two degrees, my UCF experience has been immersive, enlightening, and fulfilling. Through the support of my colleges, the Burnett Honors College, and several other academic programs and opportunities, I have been able to gain experiences that I never even considered as a freshman entering college. Although the UCF community is incredibly large, I have found myself belonging to several tight-knit, supportive communities that have encouraged my academic and personal growth. I am extremely appreciative of the professors and faculty mentors who have supported me throughout my journey over the last four years.

## BRYAN MEDINA

Bryan Jose Medina is a Ronald E. McNair Scholar majoring in computer science with minors in mathematics and cognitive sciences. Medina is conducting research on the viability of artificial intelligence as a normative model for human pitch perception with Dr. Josh McDermott at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). Medina has participated in research internships at Carnegie Mellon University and MIT, where he immersed himself in neuroscience. He has done extensive volunteering and teaching with underrepresented students to encourage participation in STEM through UCF STEM Ambassadors and the Academic Advancement Programs. He co-founded the Cognitive Sciences Club at UCF, currently serving as vice-president. Throughout all his endeavors, Medina hopes to inspire those that have never imagined a career in STEM to be a part of the world's future innovators.



Bryan Medina  
Hialeah Gardens, Florida

### **Bryan's UCF Experience:**

As a first-generation Afro-Latino, I grew up with scarce educational opportunities. Because of the supportive community and network I built at UCF, I have strived to facilitate access to these opportunities for all students through mentorship. Being a part of the UCF STEM Ambassadors provided me the opportunity to educate students through community outreach. Participating in the Ronald E. McNair Scholars Program introduced me to like-minded individuals that were both passionate about pursuing graduate education and about reinvesting in the communities they came from. McNair opened the door that led to a transformative research experience, setting me on a path towards success. The community I cultivated at UCF allowed me to fully realize my capability as both a scholar and community advocate. I am grateful to everyone I have met throughout this journey.

### **Future Plans:**

Upon completion of a Ph.D in Neuroscience, I will prioritize encouraging all students to carve their own path to scientific careers they never knew they could have.

## CHANTALE NINAH



Chantale Ninah  
Orlando, Florida

### Future Plans:

After graduation, I will be joining Microsoft as a Program Manager on the Windows team where I will use technology to empower every person to achieve their best.

Chantale Ninah, College of Engineering and Computer Science, is a computer science major with a minor in mathematics. She is a member of the Burnett Honors College, a Provost Scholar, and an Emerging Leader Scholar. She is an ambassador on the President's Leadership Council, Harvard's WECODE conference, MongoDB's Women in Computer Science Summit, and a representative at the Clinton Global Initiative University where, with her sister, she pitched her idea for a solar array park to promote sustainability. She is a three-time Microsoft intern on the Windows Update team and the Global Machine Translation team. Chantale shares a passion for inclusive technology, making technology accessible for everyone. At Microsoft's One Week Hackathon, she worked on a project that translated American Sign Language to English during a live video chat through machine learning. In her senior design capstone, she is working on a speech therapy app using a lip recognition algorithm to help recovering aphasia patients. She was featured on the Windows Insider Program Podcast to share thoughts about intern life at Microsoft. At Microsoft Ignite, Chantale was a student ambassador and speaker, leading a panel on "It Takes a Village" focused on the importance of empowering future generations to pursue technical careers. Additionally, she is also a devoted volunteer at the Special Olympics, Give Kids the World, and Feeding Children Everywhere.

### Chantale's UCF Experience:

At UCF I learned to reach for the stars. I have become an ambassador, representative, intern, podcaster, conference speaker, mentor, volunteer, leader, researcher, scholar, and national traveler. At UCF, I learned to work hard, chase opportunities, and never lose hope. I am forever grateful for my UCF experience.

## JULIE POULSON

Julie Poulsen, College of Sciences, graduated Magna Cum Laude with a bachelor's in human communication and a minor in mass communication in December 2020 as a first-generation college student. She has been a member of the women's rowing team for four years where she was the team leader. Julie has helped the rowing team win three consecutive conference championships and has been named First Team All-Conference three times and All-American twice. Furthermore, in her time at UCF she has also been a part of the Student Athlete Leadership Institute, completed an internship with Golden Key International Honour Society, and is currently a mentor for High Impact Practices. While at UCF she has also been to World Championships in 2017 and 2018, finishing fourth and seventh. Julie has also dedicated a lot of time volunteering in multiple community service projects and played a major role in the community project #likeagirl.

### Julie's UCF Experience:

My UCF experience has been an incredible and growing journey where I have gotten to meet so many amazing people and had the opportunity to find myself and my passions. UCF has been a major part in helping me become a more independent, resilient, and empowered person. It is through my leadership experiences, my community service, and my amazing teammates that I have found passion for helping other women to become a greater part of sports and academia. I have gained some of the most impactful life lessons here in Orlando, which has helped me realize that I can do anything that I put my mind to. This has only proven that I am able to push myself beyond my limits. I could not have been successful without my experiences here at UCF and I will remember them for the rest of my life. Go Knights!



Julie Poulsen  
Odder, Denmark

### Future Plans:

My plan after leaving UCF is to start my master's and continue harnessing my skill within media, as I one day want to pursue a PhD focused on improving social media. My future plans also include continuing my rowing career on the Danish National team where my ultimate goal is to pursue an Olympic Gold.

## SADIE RICHARDS



Sadie Richards  
Lake Worth, Florida

### **Future Plans:**

After graduation, I will become an intensive care nurse, and later, pursue a doctoral degree to become a provider and university professor. I hope to use my platform to advocate for diversity within healthcare and health equity for underserved populations.

Sadie Richards was born in Jamaica but moved to Lake Worth, Florida as a teenager. Her family instilled in her very early on the importance of education, always seizing opportunities, and always striving to do her best in whatever she does. These values have stuck throughout her life and have helped to guide her academic journey. Sadie is currently pursuing a Bachelor of Science in Nursing, and was recently inducted into the Sigma Theta Tau Honors Society. Currently, she serves as the Vice President of the Student Nurses Association. As vice president, Sadie conducts monthly educational and professional development meetings, organized a student mentorship program for incoming junior nursing students and collaborated with other health and science majors to organize an interprofessional education event. Additionally, she served as a research assistant for a critical care review paper and has stayed involved in the community through volunteering.

### **Sadie's UCF Experience:**

As a first-generation and non-traditional college student, my time at UCF has opened up a world of opportunities that may have otherwise not been possible. I am extremely grateful for the education, support, mentorship, and growth that I have gained. I'm thankful for my amazing professors, faculty members, mentors, and peers who have helped nurture my passions and ambitions through opportunities for leadership, research, and community outreach. I am extremely proud to be a UCF Knight!

## ABDULLAH SAQIB

Abdullah Saqib, College of Medicine, is a Burnett Honors Scholar pursuing a Bachelors of Biomedical Sciences. A proud Muslim, he takes inspiration from his faith in all that he does. A passionate servant-leader, Abdullah was selected to serve on President Cartwright's novel Student Advisory Council (PSAC) and he is also involved with the Islamic Center of Orlando where he serves as a Student Imam, on committees regarding interfaith and youth, and teaches classes. Abdullah also serves as the President of the Muslim Student Association at UCF and he founded and directs the Union of Muslim Organizations at UCF. He advocated for and helped to open the Prayer and Reflection Room at UCF and start a novel Interfaith Council at UCF. A sincere servant of and ardent advocate for those in need, he organizes food and clothing drives to support those in need at UCF and in the Central Florida community at large.

### **Abdullah's UCF Experience:**

My experience at UCF has been nothing short of amazing. What I have learned and gained has been empowering and life changing. It has been an honor to serve and lead at this world-class university. I am forever in debt to UCF for giving me the experiences and opportunities to grow and become the person I am today. It is a privilege to be a Knight and I hope to keep a lifelong connection with UCF. Finally, I would like to thank God and my honorable professors and mentors for this award and dedicate it to my beloved parents, Saqib and Aali, and all my loved ones.



Abdullah Saqib  
Orlando, Florida

### **Future Plans:**

I plan to matriculate into medical school to become a world-class and passionate physician that will serve as a lifelong advocate for the healthcare of all, regardless of background or socioeconomic status.

## RIYA SHAH



Riya Shah  
Farmington Hills, Michigan

### Future Plans:

I plan to attend medical school this upcoming fall. As a physician, I hope to create a welcoming atmosphere for my patients—focused on the intricacies of the physician-patient relationship. Down the line, I hope to return to the classroom and serve as a clinical educator. Overall, I hope to serve my community as a strong physician leader, dedicated to improving the health of my patients.

Riya Shah, College of Medicine, is pursuing a major in biomedical sciences, a minor in Spanish, and a certificate in Spanish for healthcare professionals. She is a proud National Merit Scholar, Burnett Medical Scholar, Burnett Honors College member, and LEAD Scholars Academy graduate. As part of the Honors Undergraduate Thesis program, her research focuses on neuroglobin's effects for novel stroke diagnostic and treatment alternatives, for which she also received the Burnett Research Scholars Grant. Riya has been involved in leadership roles in the President's Leadership Council, SG Election Commission, Blood Drives at UCF, and KnightRaas. In the summer of 2019, Riya studied abroad in Granada, Spain for which she was awarded the Mary Paige O'Connell Memorial Scholarship. She also serves as a teaching assistant in the Burnett School of Biomedical Sciences for medical biochemistry. As a strong proponent of giving back to the community, Riya volunteers at Affordable Care Clinics, a walk-in clinic for underprivileged patients.

### Riya's UCF Experience:

With its memorable palm trees and welcoming atmosphere, I knew immediately that UCF would be my home for the next four years. I sincerely valued UCF's dedication to students, and I made it a point to take advantage of every opportunity. With the assistance of renowned faculty members and intelligent peers, I am so thankful to the UCF community for bringing me to where I am today. My time at UCF has taught me to step outside of my comfort zone and create new boundaries for a brighter future. I will always cherish these four wonderful years at UCF, and I will always do my best to give back to the university.

## MADELEINE SMITH

Madeleine Smith, College of Arts and Humanities, is pursuing a bachelor's degree in Music Education. She is a National Merit Scholar and member of the Burnett Honors College, where she enjoyed working as an Honors Orientation Ambassador. She has been immersed in all things music at UCF, leading the Symphony and Chamber orchestras as concertmaster for two years. She helped plan and run the inaugural UCF Summer String camp. For the past four years, she has been working alongside UCF's Dr. Chung Park teaching introductory violin classes with A Gift for Music, a non-profit that brings free string music education to students in Title I schools across Orlando. She is a member of the Phi Kappa Lambda music honor society, received the Jack Williams award for music education, and the Presser award, the Department of Music's most prestigious scholarship.



Madeleine Smith  
Audubon, Pennsylvania

### **Madeleine's UCF Experience:**

As an out-of-state student, moving to Florida by myself was terrifying! I was welcomed warmly to the music school by my professors and peers which quickly swept away my nervousness. In my years at UCF, I always knew I had faculty mentors who would guide me. I learned that there are endless opportunities to experience and grow! Being a music and honors student at UCF is really the best of both worlds: I have reaped the benefits of going to one of the nation's largest public research universities while enjoying the specialized instruction and opportunity afforded to me as a member of both the music department and the honors college.

### **Future Plans:**

After graduation, I plan to continue performing as a freelance musician and teach orchestra at the middle school level. I want to create an enriching and diverse program that embraces community service, musical outreach, and world and folk music. I hope to encourage my students to view music as a lifelong pursuit and help them realize the many ways music can build community and connect people of all backgrounds.



## 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 2021 Order of Pegasus names and photos will be on display on the lounge wall along with previous Order of Pegasus inductees.



## 2021 ORDER OF PEGASUS COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Dr. Stacey Malaret, Chair, LEAD Scholars Academy

Mr. Arup Guha, College of Engineering and Computer Science

Dr. Carolyn Hopp, College of Community Innovation and Education

Mr. Michael Aldarondo-Jeffries, Academic Advancement Programs

Dr. Anna Maria Jones, English Department

Dr. Vivian Ortiz, SDES Assessment and Planning

Mr. Rex Roberts, The Burnett Honors College

Mrs. Melinda Cartwright

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 UCF Student Government for sponsoring the generous scholarships for the Order of Pegasus recipients.