

***UF ONLINE 2019-2024***

***COMPREHENSIVE BUSINESS PLAN***

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## ***Our Approach***

The next five years for UF Online will see continued expansion of students, academic programs and employer partners during the continued transformation in higher education nationally, bringing about greater options for students seeking digital pathways. With UF Online’s early legacy of accomplishments in mind, we present this business plan, its goals, strategies and operational and financial tactics. In the pages that follow we also offer lessons learned from our first chapter that have informed how we compiled this business plan to guide us into the future. In closing we share challenges and opportunities we see and to encapsulate our entire five-year plan, we present for the first time a UF Online Logic Model in our appendices. Looking ahead, UF Online will focus its investments on ensuring the value of its academic core – faculty, academic advising and course/lab quality – while augmenting programs to support career readiness and ascension.

# I. Introduction

## Description of UF Online: Legislative Language and Plan Requirements

Chapter 2013-27, Laws of Florida (FLA. STAT. § 1001.7065(4)(2013); appendix A), requires the establishment of a Preeminent State Research University institute for online learning. The University of Florida, by its designation as the "preeminent state research university," remains host and administrator of this institute, which is charged with offering "high-quality, fully online baccalaureate degree programs at an affordable cost."<sup>1</sup>

The law requires the Board of Governors to convene an advisory board, by August 1, 2013, "to support the development of high quality, fully online baccalaureate degree programs at the university."<sup>2</sup> By September 1, 2013, the law requires the university to submit a comprehensive plan to the advisory board.<sup>3</sup> The law provides \$10 million in nonrecurring funds and \$5 million in recurring funds to the University for fiscal year 2013-14 contingent upon recommendation of the plan by the advisory board and approval by the Board of Governors.<sup>4</sup>

Components of Section 46, Chapter 2013-27, Laws of Florida note, this plan shall include:

Existing on-campus general education courses and baccalaureate degree programs that will be offered online.

New courses that will be developed and offered online.

Support services that will be offered to students enrolled in online baccalaureate degree programs.

A tuition and fee structure that meets the requirements in paragraph (k) for online courses, baccalaureate degree programs, and student support services.

A timeline for offering, marketing, and enrolling students in the online baccalaureate degree programs.

A budget for developing and marketing the online baccalaureate degree programs.

Detailed strategies for ensuring the success of students and the sustainability of the online baccalaureate degree programs. The University of Florida has met and exceeds these statutory requirements. The following describes our strategies to continue our work in this area over our next five-year chapter.

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<sup>1</sup> FLA. STAT. § 1001.7065(4)(2013).

<sup>2</sup> *Id.*

<sup>3</sup> *Id.*

<sup>4</sup> *Id.*

## **Our Mission, Vision, and Values**

The University of Florida embraces UF Online as a delivery on its core mission as a land grant institution. We remain committed to the important mission of enhancing access while leading the way for selective and valuable fully online programs with a remarkable online student experience. Each day we are guided as a campus with a steady focus on the following mission, vision, and organizational values fully embedded and active within the University of Florida’s mission of knowledge, research, and service.

### MISSION

*The mission of UF Online is to enable our students to lead and influence the next generation and beyond for economic, cultural, and societal benefit by delivering a comprehensive offering of high-quality, fully online academic programs at an affordable cost.*

### VISION

*A public, land-grant university as a hub of learning, accessible from anywhere in the world, bridging learners, educators, and researchers over a lifetime of learning and discovery.*

### VALUES

*Academic Excellence*

*Relevant, Flexible and Affordable Academics*

*Individualized Support for every online student*

*Welcoming and Engaging Learning Community*

*Unparalleled Commitment to Academic Integrity*

*Lean Operations fueled by Data*

## ***A Campus-Wide Commitment***

As we continue to expand UF Online under the guidance of the University of Florida’s vision and mission, UF is proud to have adopted a campus-wide commitment model to online learning. Online students and online programs are not separate from our university community and, instead, are a core part of how we serve students and achieve our land-grant mission. When you join us as a student in UF Online, you are a Gator from day one. The University of Florida admits, enrolls, and evaluates each online student just as they do residential students, with the same admission standards, enrollment protocols, and academic rigor required of each and every student. Our online model is therefore unique in the country, designed and taught by the very same stellar faculty that teach on our main Gainesville, Florida campus. As a result, our admissions remain selective yet our capacity in the online realm affords students additional options not available to campus students, including part-time enrollment, admissions as a lower division transfer student or as a post-baccalaureate student earning a second bachelor's degree. The UF Online pathway takes students to the very same faculty and college as our campus programs, but the options for enrollment are more versatile and varied and we work to meet students where they are, which often includes leading busy lives that include full-time work and/or care of a loved one or other family responsibilities. Once admitted, UF Online students are supported and welcomed by a campus-wide team of services and cutting-edge educational support.

## ***The Profile of a UF Online Student***

Over the last five years, we have increasingly learned that our online student population is far from monolithic. While there are immeasurable benefits to such diversity, this feature also represents a challenge as we seek to identify the characteristics of a typical UF Online student and develop strategies to best meet students’ needs, interests, and goals.

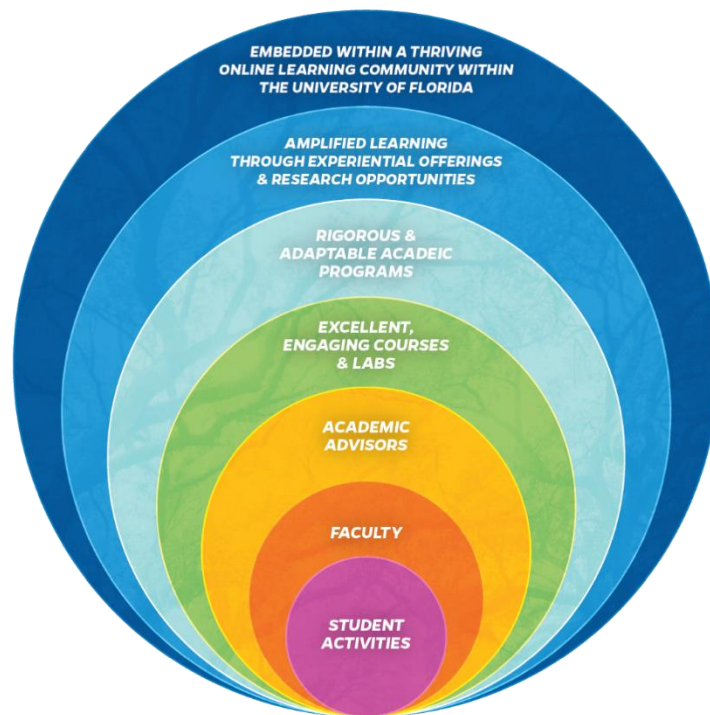
To begin with, our students represent a wide age range. The most reasonable demarcation would place UF Online students in a “less than 35 years old” category as this accounts for roughly 70% of our population. However, our student population comfortably spans from under 20 years old to over 45. The lower end of this spectrum reflects our PaCE student population, which meets the characteristics most commonly associated with first time in college students as seen in UF’s residential student population.

In Fall 2017, 47% of our students attended full-time while 53% enrolled in classes at a part-time level, defined as being enrolled in fewer than 12 credit hours per semester. The majority of our students classify as first time in college and lower division transfers – equaling 75% of our student population in Fall 2017.

Students enrolled in UF Online are overwhelmingly in-state, although we have seen a steady increase in out-of-state enrollments in the past five years. As outlined in subsequent sections, we predict out-of-state enrollments to continually grow and have set into motion unique pathways to foster growth in this area.

These points are meant to highlight two important aspects we must keep in mind as we map our next five-year chapter: the diversity of our students' needs and the significance online pathways represent for students at very different points in their lives. UF Online appeals to a vast range of individuals – those who have yet to enter the workforce and those who have plentiful professional experience; those who are free to explore internships and study abroad while enrolled and those whose demanding schedules require exceptional time management skills to successfully complete coursework in addition to meeting their countless responsibilities. This is evidenced in the responses we receive regarding the demands for engagement opportunities, the scope of resources students utilize, and the critical role dedicated advisors play in each student's journey towards graduation.

## **Seven Dimensions that Fuel Student Academic Achievement**



Looking across the University of Florida, we identify seven dimensions that all have important synergistic and cumulative impacts on UF Online student academic achievement. As we work to implement the UF Online mission over time, we examine our progress toward that mission as one team, each unit impacting various sets of these dimensions. Only by working as One UF do UF colleges, faculty, IT, academic advisors, libraries, and enrollment services, just to name a few, truly serve online students and



offer fully online academic pathways as wholly integrated components of our great university. By taking these as separate yet interconnected dimensions, we are able to hone strategies and programs that ensure the continued value of each and every piece, resulting in the overall accomplishment of our mission and the realization of our vision.



Given our campus-wide commitment, UF Online’s work proceeds along these seven dimensions, as outlined below, yet that work is accomplished by countless experts and organizational units across this institution. Therefore, in the process of compiling this five-year business plan, we have sought to identify five overarching goals that will fuel the work and capture the overall directionality of our campus-wide approach. These dimensions each have unique strategies but also have synergistic impacts that drive our success. An explanation of each dimension follows:

**Student academic achievement:** First and foremost, our core programmatic dimension is the accomplishment of our online students. Driven and controlled by the students themselves, we expect each and every student to engage academically and to be present in their chosen pathway with timely advice from advisors and faculty. UF Online also strives to provide individualized support to each of our students and, over the next five years, investments in the academic core will serve our students most of all.

**Faculty leaders and mentors:** Combining the initiative of students eager to engage and prioritize learning, over 350 of UF’s top faculty lead the way in content, course design, and teaching in UF Online. UF faculty design, deliver, teach, and evaluate all academic components of the UF Online program and experience. Faculty foster innovation, drive success, and often serve as mentors to students outside the digital classroom. UF faculty are eager to engage and work with online students and often provide multiple means to achieve those goals each and every term they teach. Among UF Online faculty, the vast majority has a terminal degree and none of our faculty is hired outside an academic college or department. UF Online students can have confidence in their instructors as leaders in their field.

**Academic advising:** Looking across each student’s academic course work and their progression along their academic program pathway, is the critical partnership *between student and their dedicated academic advisor*. Each student enrolled in UF Online has their own dedicated academic advisor who works with them to design their own custom pathway given their schedules and other constraints. Online students must meet the same academic standards and requirements as residential peers, yet advisors are the best contact to help online student’s best sequence their courses to complete their

degree within their schedules. UF Online academic advisors are also a professional cadre of experts who can assist in course sequencing, locate academic support services, map career interests to degree offerings, and overall help ensure each student has the support they need to excel academically.

**Coursework and labs:** Fueled with the creativity and acumen of their discipline or field, faculty design all courses and labs for UF Online students, often with the aid of a teaching support team comprised of expert instructional designers, graphic designers, and more. UF coursework is accessible through our learning management system and is not to be underestimated. Courses and labs are just as challenging as they are in our residential formats, given that students earn the very same degree as campus peers. Courses and labs are also available in varied formats, as determined by the faculty.

**Academic program pathways:** The next dimension of UF Online is our programs and pathways, comprised of courses, labs, and experiential learning requirements, as designed by faculty, departments, and colleges here at UF. The programs offered in UF Online must meet the same rigor as campus yet may be available in more dynamic, versatile, and often flexible formats. Over time we will be enhancing our online program pathways with clear milestones to aid online students in measuring their progress given the demands of their personal and work lives. We want to ensure our students remain in good standing as they progress through their programs.

**Amplified learning programs:** UF Online is also unique in its promotion of co-curricular activities and opportunities for online students to gain experiential learning while they complete their course of study. From internships to capstone courses to study abroad, online students have the ability to take advantage of amplified learning programs. These opportunities complement our robust academic offerings by allowing students to explore their interests through a hands-on approach.

**Learning environment and community:** Surrounding all online students is the common online student experience as a valued member of the UF Online learning environment and community. As we work to fortify a thriving and engaged learning community, we focus on both online and face-to-face opportunities for engagement and connection across our entire student body and alumni network. In 2017, UF Online was pleased to launch the country's first fully online campus for online undergraduates, the UF Online Plaza, connecting our students by major and hometown, regardless of their current location. For students that live or plan to frequent Gainesville, UF launched the Optional Fee Package for all UF Online students in 2016. This option was well-received, and we have seen a significant increase in its usage by students. This Optional Fee Package keeps costs low for students that do not intend to frequent Gainesville and therefore need not pay for the local campus services.

To drive action in each dimension and across organizational and team lines, this business plan explains our five overarching goals and associated strategies that will cut across these dimensions. The five goals for our next five-year chapter are outlined in this business plan's subsequent sections. First, however, we offer a detailed look into how we look at UF Online, its component parts, and the overall seven dimensions that drive this complex and academic online learning environment.

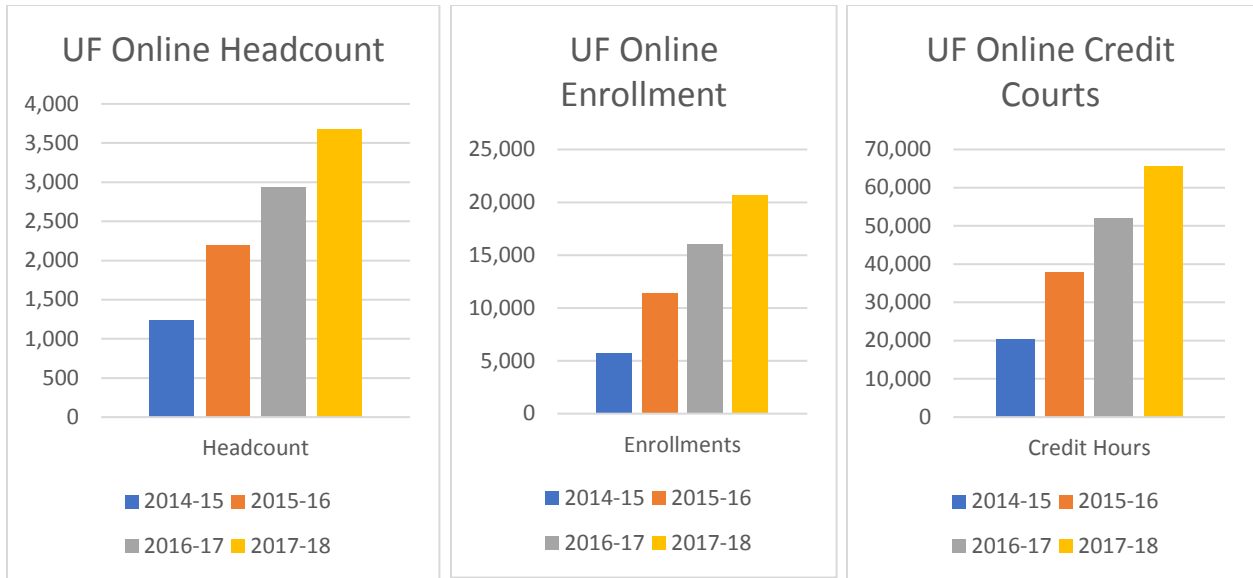
## **II. Our Progress to Date: 2014-2018**

Since its creation in 2013 and its launch in January 2014, the University of Florida (UF) Online has rapidly grown its important work to expand access to a world class education for Florida residents and beyond. Equally as important as this expanded access to preeminent academic programs in a fully online format, the UF Online tuition and fee benefits have saved Florida residents over \$14 million in tuition and fees from 2014-2018. With continued and steady investment from the State of Florida, UF Online is able to offer an ever-expanding number of Florida residents a preeminent online bachelor’s education at the lowest tuition and fee levels in the country.

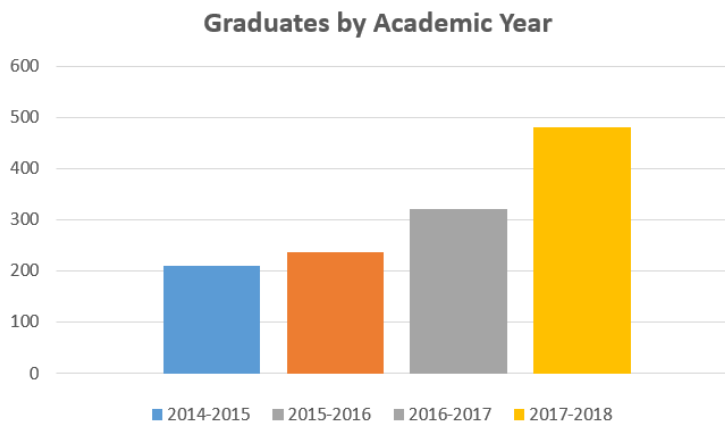
Looking into our next transformative chapter, this “UF Online Comprehensive Business Plan” provides the strategy the university will utilize to implement, beginning in January 2019, undergraduate online degree programs; accept full-time, first-time-in-college, and transfer students; have the same admissions standards as the equivalent on-campus programs; offer curriculum of equivalent rigor as on-campus programs; offer rolling enrollment; and accept transfer credits as outlined in existing policy.

The University of Florida has been able to welcome thousands of students into UF Online and graduate over 1,200 without compromising admissions or academic standards. Central to the UF Online mission is this commitment to academic excellence and, as a result, the creation of a new type of online pathway, exceptional on a national scale. The table and bar charts below show a steady progression in the number of students enrolled as well as the number of credit hours these students are enrolled in each academic year.

Term	Headcount			Enrollments			Credit Hours		
	In State	Out of State	Total	In State	Out of State	Total	In State	Out of State	Total
2014 Summer A	83	14	97	112	19	131	336	57	393
2014 Summer B	74	10	84	97	10	107	287	29	316
2014 Summer C	425	5	430	740	7	747	2,943	19	2,962
2014 Fall	849	42	891	2,130	130	2,260	7,641	411	8,052
2015 Spring	919	49	967	2,361	140	2,501	8,147	454	8,601
AY 2014-2015	1,172	68	1,236	5,440	306	5,746	19,354	970	20,324
2015 Summer A	204	20	224	269	25	294	807	72	879
2015 Summer B	266	26	292	362	32	394	1,115	96	1,211
2015 Summer C	572	23	595	928	33	961	3,632	105	3,737
2015 Fall	1,524	120	1,644	4,461	356	4,817	14,644	1,100	15,744
2016 Spring	1,641	128	1,769	4,574	354	4,928	15,058	1,111	16,169
AY 2015-2016	2,009	191	2,191	10,594	800	11,394	35,256	2,484	37,740
AY YOY Growth	71%	181%	77%	95%	161%	98%	82%	156%	86%
2016 Summer A	365	34	399	497	47	544	1,447	125	1,572
2016 Summer B	402	35	437	521	42	563	1,560	122	1,682
2016 Summer C	863	56	919	1,431	98	1,529	5,236	308	5,544
2016 Fall	2,092	147	2,239	6,316	448	6,764	20,147	1,391	21,538
2017 Spring	2,151	142	2,293	6,254	439	6,693	20,344	1,317	21,661
AY 2016-2017	2,725	214	2,939	15,019	1,074	16,093	48,734	3,263	51,997
AY YOY Growth	36%	12%	34%	42%	34%	41%	38%	31%	38%
2017 Summer A	442	41	483	565	50	615	1,691	150	1,841
2017 Summer B	434	29	463	566	43	609	1,675	115	1,790
2017 Summer C	1,208	74	1,282	2,045	135	2,180	7,245	431	7,676
2017 Fall	2,647	210	2,857	8,255	679	8,934	25,864	1,986	27,850
2018 Spring	2,582	208	2,790	7,649	675	8,322	24,449	1,925	26,374
AY 2017-2018	3,383	288	3,671	19,078	1,582	20,660	60,924	4,607	65,531
AY YOY Growth	24%	35%	25%	27%	47%	28%	25%	41%	26%



As of the 2017-2018 academic year, 1,248 individuals have completed the academic programs offered by UF Online. Each year since the launch, UF Online has seen a steady arc of increasing graduates with a notable increase in the most recent academic year. The institution has been successful in achieving its mission for UF Online by expanding the college-educated population of Florida.



## Lessons Learned to Date

Upon implementation, UF Online was a unique model in the country and remains a unique leader today. The first five years of UF Online were a resounding success by every standard. The institution has proven that a high-quality education can be obtained online and that students will seek out such an education. The next five years will be focused on continuing this success by expanding investments in our academic core value for students. To guide these investments, we evaluated our first five-year chapter, what

lessons have been learned and what advice we may offer others eager to expand into online pathways. The following lessons guide the design and approach of our future strategies:

- **With impetus and investment from the State, online innovation is possible at a large, public, flagship institution.** The State of Florida’s leadership and investment in the University of Florida is what has made UF Online a reality for over 3,000 students today and over 1,000 graduates and counting. Although UF has a long legacy of distance and continuing education and vast network of extension programs and offerings, UF had not yet launched a fully online undergraduate degree pathway, let alone 20 of them. With a great spirit of partnership among the University of Florida, the Florida Board of Governors, and the Florida state legislature, this successful investment model now demonstrates that, with a relatively modest investment of state funds, a next-generation model of undergraduate learning is possible. Additionally, the UF Online impact is also felt system-wide. With innovative benefits shared across the entire four-year State University System and enhanced options for digital transfer pathways to the flagship across the entire state college system, the entire state population stands to benefit. Whereas initially the move by the State was perceived by some as heavy-handed or even an example of a legislative body micromanaging public higher education, the results serve as a successful example of targeted investment with empowered University action within the transparent accountability frameworks of the public sector. Furthermore, with the appointment of the UF Online Advisory Board, UF Online has remained connected to top leaders in the State to ensure a continual, mutual understanding of plans, results, and future strategies.
- **Online learning is not less expensive to build or deliver if you demand high-quality, highly-engaging, and faculty-driven academic content that remains relevant and timely for optimal learning.** Originally, the modality of online learning was thought to be cheaper to design, build, and deliver. Those looking to cut costs and boost enrollments were simply advised to pursue online pathways and, in particular, lecture-capture video relay models. Many institutions, including UF, have learned that in fact the development of high-quality online learning programs requires significant and intensive resources of faculty time in particular. The resources required to deliver a top caliber online academic experience include financial costs of production studios, instructional design teams, technology needs as well as the efforts of our faculty, often in addition to their other campus responsibilities. To aid faculty in the ongoing pursuit of online academic excellence, an entire new cadre of academic and technical professionals has emerged nationally to work with faculty to ensure high-quality instructional design. Additional costs therefore include the efforts of these experts to enact detailed strategies for building and designing courses to meet set learning objectives, plus the execution of those strategies with other peers, including multimedia experts, graphic designers, and supporting instructors. Furthermore, UF Online courses are designed, built, and delivered as a product of an initial course or lab launch process, but work continues in several subsequent semesters to ensure each course is optimal for students and faculty throughout its delivery. It is important to

recognize, therefore, that there is not a discrete set of one-time, up-front costs for each online course. Instead, UF makes an important investment in the life of a course with often several faculty leaders engaged along the way and a design and technical teaching support team. Additionally, investments in courses vary by subject matter, delivery mode, and faculty design parameters. UF Online customizes the investment in each course to work with faculty to meet their learning objectives.

- **Online students do not remain at a distance and often seek out campus engagement and services.** UF Online students were originally projected to remain at a distance, largely pay out-of-state tuition, and, as a result, there were very low expectations for campus involvement or engagement. We have learned quite the opposite is true and we have been delighted to welcome an increasing number of our online students to campus. UF Online students are diverse yet all seek a meaningful connection with their faculty, their advisor, and their overall learning community. Involvement will vary by semester and by student, often fluctuating over the entire educational experience depending on other factors such as a student’s work schedule or family responsibilities. It is therefore important to remain connected with online students and to ensure services are always available and accessible at the time of greatest convenience for their schedules. Furthermore, UF Online welcomes many online students to our Gainesville campus for activities, library services, athletic events, or meetings with their faculty or academic advisor. UF Online to date has a sizeable portion of its students (approximately 30%) that not only frequent campus but also live within the city and county of our main Gainesville campus. We also have many students that prefer to remain at a distance yet engage with our campus at scheduled times for events that can fit within their busy lives and demanding schedules. UF Online also serves many students from across the country that join us in Gainesville for summer lab requirements and/or homecoming tailgate engagement events. As a result, UF Online now includes an entire engagement program and staff, plus a fully virtual community forum, to serve all students, regardless of location. In addition, UF has expanded options for online students with an entirely new Optional Fee Package in 2016. Through the implementation of innovative methods, such as those described above, UF has been able to meet the needs of our diverse online student population.
- **Supporting online students with campus services also requires ongoing modification and tailoring of those services.** Our *campus-wide commitment* model treats online students on par with our residential student population and requires the expansion of unique services and extended support hours for campus partners. The University of Florida ensures the availability of financial aid, bursar, and other services using a “one stop” model, plus opportunities for academic support from our tutoring centers on campus. UF Online intends to continue further expanding these efforts and services, customizing them each semester to meet the needs of our students over the next five-year chapter. Furthermore, we intend to modernize registration and

scheduling associated with these services to add greater efficiencies and service for busy working adults.

- **University leaders and teams across a traditional, research campus can shepherd in a new chapter of innovation on campus, without reliance on nor permanent need of an OPM private vendor and revenue share model.** Originally thought possible only with a large private vendor, UF Online successfully transitioned away from that model in 2016 in part due to less-than-expected performance by that vendor in out-of-state enrollment. UF Online took the lead with an in-house marketing and recruitment team and now has seen out of state enrollments grow 47% from AY2016-17 to AY2017-18 (prior year growth was 34% from AY2015-16 to AY2016-17). (Appendix E).
- **Navigating a new organization like UF Online during a time of transformation requires nimbleness and an openness to change and evolution as a functional unit.** During our first five years, UF Online has evolved as a team and organizational structure, always remaining agile and focused on the highest value activities for our mission. Originally, we focused our first five years on critical phases of (1) initial launch, (2) transition away from a major vendor, and (3) the final ramping-up of entirely in-house services and teams to take us into the future. For our next five-year chapter, we are focusing on our continued expansion through major investments in the academic core of UF colleges, including faculty needs, academic advising, and course production. Centrally, we will focus more deliberately on the needs of the campus as an analytic, operational unit that leads strategic marketing, communications, and academic affairs. We will also continue to identify the ideal ways in which we can continue to fully integrate online programs into the traditions of the colleges, led by faculty leaders across our campus. UF Online, as an administrative unit, must remain flexible, changing with the climate and needs of the institution as we work toward our mission.

## ***UF's Campus-Wide Commitment to UF Online Pathways and Students***

Taking many forms, leadership and expertise from organizational units across UF contribute to the success and operations of all aspects of UF Online. It is from these relationships that UF Online draws its unique value and strength, proudly welcoming UF Online students into the Gator Nation and all its benefits and services.



## UF Colleges

All UF Online degree programs, courses, labs, academic advising, academic support and even student registration are completed by the UF colleges.

## UF Information Technology

UF Online's entire learning infrastructure and environment is led by UFIT and its teams of experts that work daily to ensure a seamless learning environment for online students via the UF Learning Management System (LMS). In addition, UFIT provides the technology orientation needed by the online student and the robust backbone necessary for efficient and effective technology-assisted learning. The 24/7 IT helpdesk provides on-demand technology assistance for learning and secure identity access for assessment.



## UF Enrollment Management

UF Online's entire enrollment services function is led by UF Enrollment Management. UF Online enrollment services includes the UF Online Recruitment & Outreach Center (ROC) and the UF Online OneStop Student Services Center. Both centers are geographically located on the university's main campus and share physical office space on the third floor of Criser Hall. The OneStop was established in spring 2014 and the ROC was established in spring 2016. Together, the unit currently has 18 full-time professional and clerical staff members, all of whom support UF Online students at various points in the enrollment cycle.

The UF Online Recruitment & Outreach Center and the UF Online OneStop Student Services Center work with a high degree of cohesion to accomplish a shared mission to provide UF Online prospective students, current students, and alumni first-class customer service throughout the entire enrollment life cycle, with a specific interest in increasing student enrollment and retention.

The Recruitment and Outreach Center (ROC) and the OneStop jointly support UF Online Admissions. The ROC is charged with recruiting the highest quality applicants to join the Gator Nation through UF Online. Admissions Officers are responsible for direct outreach to all UF Online prospective students, including freshmen, lower division transfers, upper division transfers, international candidates, and readmits. Once prospective students apply to the program, the OneStop Student Services Center provides all back-end admissions support to UF Online applicants. The OneStop student services team is responsible for application services, screening, and transfer evaluation. Once admitted, the ROC provides personalized support and outreach to admitted students to help ensure they are registered for classes and have the resources they need to be set up for success in the program.

## UF Libraries

The UF libraries have provided a dedicated Online Librarian to facilitate digital pedagogy efforts of the faculty and to facilitate the effective support of the online student. In addition, each online student has access to the University's entire academic catalog using remote access or by visiting any of the UF library facilities.

## UF Student Affairs

UF Student Affairs, a national leader in student support and programming, welcomes each online student into the Gator family and all of its support services. Specifically, New Student & Family Programs (NSFP) oversees the electronic orientation module for all incoming UF Online students, known as Links, and continues to improve the program to ensure all students are well prepared to meet with their academic advisor to begin class registration. NSFP was also able to enhance the transition process for Pathway to Campus Enrollment (PaCE) students by adding additional in-person Preview Orientation sessions starting in 2016 and continuing into our next five-year phase. The addition of PaCE sessions allowed for more suitable registration options for students. NSFP also tailored Links for PaCE online orientation to be program-specific. The revamped online orientation now provides pre-Preview information, as well as addresses the post-Preview needs of transitioning students.

For UF Online-specific orientation initiatives, NSFP later included the creation of UF Online Plaza-specific pages and the UF Online Optional Fee Package information within the Links Orientation for UF Online students. Additionally, quizzes were added to each of the modules within the Links Orientation to improve student learning and retention of orientation basics. Remodeling the orientation process involves engaging campus partners, both student affairs and academic affairs, to address individual department needs for onboarding new students.

### III. Academic Offerings: Ensuring Quality and Integrity

The academic core value of UF Online remains the premier UF faculty, academic advisors, and our courses and labs. Currently, UF Online offers 20 fully online degree programs, 6 minors and 6 certificates for degree-seeking students. UF Online also includes the first-phase of over 50 majors for students enrolled in UF’s hybrid undergraduate experience, UF Pathway to Campus Enrollment (PaCE).

In just four years, UF faculty have established this diverse and relevant set of online programs to serve workforce needs across this state and around the world. Below we lay out the list of program currently in place and the philosophy and processes in place at UF to ensure that each online student has the opportunity to enroll in courses and pathways of high academic quality.

<b>UF Online Academic Offerings   2014–2019</b>	
<b>Majors and Tracks</b>	<b>Minors and Certificates</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. B.A., Anthropology</li> <li>2. B.A., Biology</li> <li>3. B.S., Business Administration</li> <li>4. B.S., Computer Science</li> <li>5. B.A., Criminology and Law</li> <li>6. B.S., Environmental Management</li> <li>7. B.A., Geography</li> <li>8. B.A., Geology</li> <li>9. B.S., Health Education and Behavior</li> <li>10. B.A., Psychology</li> <li>11. B.A., Public Relations</li> <li>12. B.S.N., Nursing</li> <li>13. B.A., Sociology</li> <li>14. B.S., Sport Management</li> <li>15. B.S., Telecommunication Media and Society</li> <li>16. B.A., Business Administration with 8 specializations (Anthropology, Computer &amp; Information Science, General Business, Geography, Educational Studies, Geology, Sport Management)</li> <li>17. B.S., Communication Sciences and Disorders</li> <li>18. B.S., Fire and Emergency Services with 3 tracks (Emergency Management, Fire Management, and Emergency Medical Services Management)</li> <li>19. B.S., Microbiology and Cell Science</li> <li>20. B.A., Educational Sciences</li> </ol>	<p><b>Minors</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Anthropology</li> <li>2. Business</li> <li>3. Geography</li> <li>4. Mass Communication</li> <li>5. Sociology</li> <li>6. Accounting</li> </ol> <p><b>Certificates for Degree-Seeking Students:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Environmental Horticulture Management</li> <li>2. Geomatics</li> <li>3. Landscape Pest Management</li> <li>4. Medical Entomology</li> <li>5. Pest Control Technology</li> <li>6. Urban Pest Management</li> </ol>

## PaCE

Launched in 2015, the Pathway to Campus Enrollment program, or PaCE, provides first-year students with the opportunity to start their UF degree as part of UF Online and then transition to UF's residential campus for their upper division coursework. This successful hybrid program welcomes students that are academically-qualified for UF enrollment yet for which we lack capacity in campus programs at the lower division. UF is proud to expand access to our campus programs through this hybrid option.

Students selected for PaCE must complete at minimum 15 credit hours and two semesters via UF Online. After completing a total of 60, including all prerequisite courses for the selected major, students may request to transition to campus. Some students opt to remain in UF Online for their entire degree and many students have already successfully transitioned to the UF residential campus for their upper division courses. In fact, UF celebrated the very first PaCE graduates in Spring 2018 that earned their UF degrees in just three years.

<b>PaCE Majors</b>	
<b>College of Agricultural &amp; Life Sciences (18)</b>	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Agricultural Education and Communication Tracks include Communication and Leadership Development or Agricultural Education</li> <li>2. Agricultural Operations Management</li> <li>3. Animal Sciences Tracks include Equine or Food Animal</li> <li>4. Botany, General Botany</li> <li>5. Dietetics</li> <li>6. Entomology and Nematology Track include Basic Science, Biosecurity, Ecotourism, Plant Protection or Urban Pest Management</li> <li>7. Environmental Management in Agriculture and Natural Resources</li> <li>8. Environmental Science (BA)</li> <li>9. Family, Youth and Community Sciences</li> <li>10. Food and Resource Economics Tracks include Food and Agribusiness Marketing and Management or International Food and Resource Economics</li> <li>11. Food Science</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>12. Forest Resources and Conservation Tracks include Environmental Pre-Law, Forest Business Management, Forest Resource Management, Protected Areas Management, Recreation Resources Management, Urban Forestry or Watershed Science and Management</li> <li>13. Horticultural Science Tracks include Horticultural Production, Horticultural Science, Organic Crop Production or Plant Molecular and Cellular Biology</li> <li>14. Microbiology and Cell Science</li> <li>15. Natural Resource Conservation</li> <li>16. Nutritional Sciences</li> <li>17. Plant Science Tracks include Community Food Systems, Crop Ecology, Garden Design and Management, Landscape and Nursery Horticulture, Plant Genetics, Plant Health, Restoration Horticulture or Sustainable Food Production</li> <li>18. Wildlife Ecology and Conservation Tracks include Wildlife Ecology and Conservation Specialization</li> </ol>
<b>College of the Arts (8)</b>	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>19. Art* Art + Technology, Ceramics, Creative Photography, Drawing, Graphic Design, Painting, Printmaking, Sculpture</li> <li>20. Art History</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>23. General Theatre</li> <li>24. *Music*</li> <li>25. Music Education*</li> <li>26. Dance*</li> </ol>

21. Art Education*	*These PaCE majors require students to attend live on campus Art, Music, or Dance studios during the first two years.	
22. Visual Art Studies*		
<b>Warrington College of Business Administration (1)</b>		
27. General Studies (BABA)		
<b>College of Design, Construction &amp; Planning (1)</b>		
28. Sustainability and the Built Environment		
<b>College of Health &amp; Human Performance (3)</b>		
29. Health Education and Behavior	31. Tourism, Events and Recreation Management	
30. Sports Management		
<b>College of Journalism &amp; Communications (4)</b>		
32. Advertising	34. Public Relations	
33. Journalism Tracks include Journal or Sports and Media		
	35. Telecommunications Tracks include Management and Strategy, Media and Society, News, or Production	
<b>College of Liberal Arts &amp; Sciences (17)</b>		
36. African American Studies	45. Mathematics	
37. Anthropology		
38. Computer Science		
39. English		
40. Exploratory		
41. Geography		
42. Geology (BS)		
43. History		
44. Linguistics		
		46. Philosophy
		47. Religion
		48. Sociology
		49. Spanish
		50. Statistics
		51. Sustainability Studies
		52. Women's Studies

### Academic Excellence and Course Quality

As we focus on the needs of faculty and continue to support them in the delivery of premier online learning, the University of Florida launched the Center for Online Innovation and Production (COIP) on July 1, 2017 to provide all course production and support for UF Online courses and graduate online courses. The goal of COIP is to form collaborative partnerships with faculty to ensure that courses developed for UF Online, and other online programs at UF, provide a dynamic and engaging learning experience for students, and that faculty are able to sustain their innovation and high-quality offerings over time. Using sound pedagogy and multimedia expertise, COIP provides services from conception through production as well as support for UF Online courses throughout the life of the course.

While faculty are central to content creation, we recognize the importance of providing assistance throughout the process as they develop engaging, challenging, and relevant coursework in each of our

academic offerings. Currently, UF faculty members are required to complete training in online teaching or on how to use online teaching tools. Offered through the Office of Faculty Development & Teaching Excellence, faculty have the opportunity to participate in a workshop series comprised of three successive workshops – Design, Build, and Teach – encouraging ongoing collaboration between faculty and instructional designers. The workshops cover pertinent topics for faculty either creating an online course from scratch or teaching an already existing online course designed by another faculty member. Completion of the workshop series provides faculty with a “Great Online Teaching” badge, a micro-credential to be further applied to special certificates offered through UF’s Office of Faculty Development & Teaching Excellence.

In addition to training tools and workshops, faculty also have access to IT Help Desk services in addition to working with instructional designers during course production. Nevertheless, there is a gap between these resources when it comes to providing real-time critical support throughout the teaching of the course. This support is as critical to successful course delivery as the initial course design. To address this issue, part of COIP’s structure involves the creation of a support team of instructional designers dedicated solely to the ongoing support of faculty and their UF Online courses. Since these instructional designers are part of the course production process, they know the courses intimately and are in a strong position to provide assistance and guidance quickly in response to the needs of the faculty. In addition to lending just-in-time support, they provide course refresh and update services while identifying opportunities for innovation.

The Center for Online Innovation and Production (COIP) supports the design, development and deployment and continual review of each course and lab offering in UF Online as a service to UF faculty. Highlights of additional services for UF faculty include:

- Working with faculty each semester to help them prepare their courses and make sure they are updated and ready to go in the LMS in time for classes to start.
- Providing just-in-time support for faculty with questions throughout the semester.
- Conducting a mid-course survey to gauge the students’ experience in the course in hopes of addressing any concerns before the semester even ends.
- Conducting end-of-course surveys to ask students questions about the overall functionality of the course and its delivery.
- Incorporating survey feedback into analysis and recommendations for faculty. During the pilot launch of a course, we pull survey data from the mid- and end-of-course surveys, as well as analytics from our video server, and provide faculty with summary analysis of the feedback. This information is then used to make improvements to the course. In addition, COIP will then support that faculty member in implementing those improvements.
- Documenting and maintain course-level documentation for faculty who may be teaching the course. Often a course is developed by one faculty member but taught by several. This

important tool, the documentation, can quickly bring new instructors up to speed on the logistics of the course to facilitate their delivery of that course.

## External Recognitions of Academic Excellence

### Rankings

While rankings are not the sole measure of academic quality, they are an important way to gauge the impression and reputation of programs being offered. In the most well-known ranking, U.S. News & World Report's review of best online programs, UF currently ranks 12th nationally for best programs at the undergraduate level. In addition, UF has consistently ranked in the Top 20 since 2016. These rankings are helpful tools for students as they search for programs that are respected and provide a return on their investment in higher education. For institutions, these rankings serve as a way to measure our effectiveness while also giving us an aspirational goal of ascending into the Top 10.

### Accreditation

Not all educational offerings are created equal and accreditation is the first sign that the school meets certain standards of quality, rigor, and continuous improvement in its programs.

The University of Florida is regionally accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, one of the seven most widely accepted institutional accrediting bodies. In the U.S., accreditation from SACS provides assurance of the quality and integrity of UF's academic programs. Additionally, it provides guidance for UF, and the other schools it accredits, on paths for continuous improvement. SACS accreditation not only ensures an institution has an appropriate mission and goals, but it also serves as a marker indicating the institution has the resources to meet its goals and is assessing progress and outcomes toward its goals. It is important to note that accreditation from entities like SACS is not a one-time instance. Institutions are required to go through periodic reviews to maintain the designation.

Many colleges and departments have taken the extra step of earning accreditation for their specific programs.

- Business – The Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) is the international standard for business schools. All the programs in the Warrington College of Business, undergraduate through doctorate, have achieved this designation.
- Communication Sciences and Disorders – All programs in our College of Professional Health and Health Professions (PHHP) are accredited by the Council on Education for Public Health (CEPH).

In addition to certain jobs requiring a degree from a CEPH program, there are many fellowships with the same requirement.

- Fire and Emergency Services (FES) – The M.E. Rinker, Sr. School of Construction Management at UF is accredited by the American Council for Construction Education (ACCE).
- Public Relations & Telecommunication, Media, & Society – The College of Journalism and Communications (CJC) has met all 9 program standards set forth by the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications (ACEJMC) to receive this prestigious designation.
- Nursing – All undergraduate programs in the UF School of Nursing, including the online RN to BSN program, are accredited by the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE).

## Academic Integrity

Integrity is a core principle that underpins our academic community. Faculty and students have a responsibility to uphold the highest ethical standards of academic conduct. The University of Florida has an Honor Code and policies related to Academic Integrity that faculty members should disseminate to their students. Through this code, the UF community expresses the rights and responsibilities related to academic integrity. The institution obtains affirmative consent from students who thereby commit to maintain and expect these high standards.

Students who enroll in the University of Florida Online join an institution committed to the highest standards of honesty and integrity. While distance education may not necessarily be more susceptible to dishonesty than residential programs, the online environment poses new challenges for educators. The following strategies are used to ensure that UF Online students are held to the same standards as residential students:

- **Community:** Foster an environment of academic and ethical scholarship
- **Prevention:** Design courses, assessments, and assignments in a manner that encourages honesty and accountability
- **Identification:** Use available technologies and procedures to prevent dishonest activities

Faculty, instructors, and teaching assistants who develop and teach UF Online courses receive [training and guidance](#) on how to incorporate these strategies into their classes. These strategies are designed to help provide faculty with the necessary tools to appropriately assess their students in an online environment so that neither quality nor integrity is sacrificed. In particular, these resources provide



evolving guidance on assessment strategies and tools that will allow faculty to be successful so that they can focus on teaching. UF Online relies upon proctoring services as just one tool as part of a broader approach to assure academic integrity of assessments and to maintain the value of our degree programs.

## ***IV. Looking Ahead, 2019-2024: UF Online Continued Expansion***

To guide our work forward, UF Online has established five overarching goals for 2019-2024. Under each goal, there are specific strategies and commitments to accomplish these goals. We also selected these goals in light of our commitment to driving student academic achievement across our seven dimensions and mindful of our forecasts of continued expansion of students and enrollments in our courses and programs<sup>5</sup>.

### ***Goals and Strategies for 2019-2024***

#### **Goal 1: Robust student learning via the UF Online pathway**

**Objective 1.1 UF Faculty leading in the area of research, innovation, course design, and delivery to foster robust student learning across UF Online academic programs.**

The foundation of success for UF Online continues to be the University’s commitment to academic excellence in the online learning environment. UF faculty, therefore, lead the way in Goal 1, demonstrating the power and value of premier academic faculty, departments, and colleges in the design and deliver of innovating online offerings and experiences.

The 10 Strategies to deliver on this objective over 2019-2024 include:

- Strategy 1: The empowerment of faculty across UF colleges to lead and innovate their pedagogy in the online classroom, a key component in the fortification and maintenance of the academic value of each course and curriculum, leading to robust student learning. Faculty-led efforts in the creation and delivery of high-quality coursework are facilitated and strengthened by

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<sup>5</sup> UF Online forecasted growth is shared in Appendix A. The budget strategies to fund and implement these goals are discussed later in Chapter 5 with detailed budget forecasts outlined in Appendix B. Finally, the crosswalk of these Goals, Strategies and Indicators we will monitor over our next five-year chapter can be found in the UF Online Logic Model in Appendix F

numerous support services, including teaching workshops and a robust team of instructional designers with specialized expertise.

- Strategy 2: Develop course demand forecasting to ensure students have access to courses they need to graduate and faculty have ample time and resources to deliver the best courses for our online students.
- Strategy 3: Ensure a manageable class size to maximize faculty impact and engagement with online students to further learning in the UF Online learning environment. Maintain a class section size under an average of 30 students.
- Strategy 4: Propel student learning with exemplary and credentialed faculty as instructors. In doing so, continually increase percentage of faculty with terminal degrees across all UF Online courses and labs.
- Strategy 5: Draw upon faculty peer review models to ensure academic excellence in the UF Online digital learning environment. Embrace the faculty peer review model to assess and ensure the high quality of all UF Online teaching, coursework, overall curriculum, and online academic programs by each UF department, major, and field of study in accordance with the UF Undergraduate Curriculum Committee.
- Strategy 6: Draw upon visible and active leadership from the UF Online Faculty Advisory Committee to ensure the delivery of a remarkable and engaging online student experience within the learning management system, coursework, and labs.
- Strategy 7: Continued investment in faculty development and support programs to assist faculty in the continual design, production, and delivery of effective and innovative teaching and mentorship of online students. Expand support services in order to further assist increased academic offerings and a steadily growing student population.
- Strategy 8: Continual input and expertise from the UF Online Learning Institute to fuel faculty and staff approaches that are based on evidence and the latest literature and research.
- Strategy 9: Continuing to weave best practices and peer-reviewed research findings into how we manage and deliver a remarkable UF Online program to propel student learning.
- Strategy 10: Support faculty in the pursuit of academic research in the online learning environment to further our understanding of the most effective strategies to propel student learning and engagement. In partnership with the Online Learning Institute, launch and fund a UF Online Research Fellows program (five faculty selected from a competitive, campus-wide process on an annual basis; research awards ranging from \$10-20K per faculty; cohort-based experience, training, and support; plus mentorship to future research fellows).

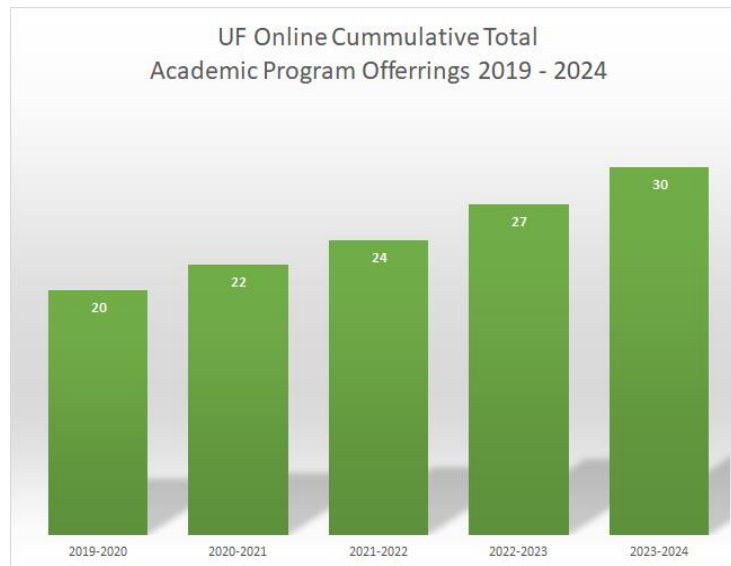
## Goal 2: Smart Design, Production, and Delivery of Academic Programs

### **Objective 2.1 Delivery of the most workforce-relevant and rigorous academic programs and pathways.**

The 9 strategies that deliver on Goal 2, Objective 2.1 from 2019-2024 include:

- *Strategy 1:* Expansion of faculty services via the UF Center for Online Innovation and Production services to ensure high-quality production services and support for faculty to produce and deliver quality courses for all UF Online students. Expansion of instructional designer expert services and the availability of multi-media expertise to ensure cutting-edge digital content that serves students best.
- *Strategy 2:* Scaling investment up from \$1 million to a level of approximately \$3 million over the next five years, 2019-2024, to fund more instructional designers who would support more faculty, for longer durations, and result in additional quality courses, improved quality courses, more frequent updates to courses, and enhanced course interactivity and engagement of UF Online academic offerings.
- *Strategy 3:* Piloting adaptive learning modules, courses, and pathways for UF Online students.
- *Strategy 4:* Maintaining the value of a UF credential during our rapid, digital expansion through persistent attention to continually evolving course content and assessment approaches that seek to maximize learning and minimize opportunities for fraud or abuse.
- *Strategy 5:* Expanded instructional design support on the front-end to assist faculty in the design, production, and delivery of UF Online courses that are safeguarded against cheating.
- *Strategy 6:* Expansion of tools to detect fraud, cheating, and other forms of violations of academic integrity.

- Strategy 7: Serving workforce needs with additional academic programs. Over the next five years, UF Online intends to work with Colleges to onboard 10 additional academic programs.



- Strategy 8: Serving workforce needs with additional engagement and optional programming to foster soft skills, including collaboration, team skills, and negotiation workshops for online students. By adding optional academic content and engagement opportunities for students, UF Online will ensure online students, if interested, have opportunities for greater face-to-face engagement with faculty and peers, equipping them for the jobs of the 21<sup>st</sup> century in collaborative organizations and teams. In this regard, UF Online intends to deploy additional lab boot-camps, summer institutes, optional weekend programs, and synchronous educational opportunities within courses and curriculum – all fueled by faculty ideas and effort.
- Strategy 9: UF Online will pilot 8-week course formats and launch micro-bachelor’s, including for-credit UF Online certificates. Not every potential student has a need for a full degree program. Some of these students have already earned a bachelor’s degree and are looking for additional education while others may be looking for a specific set of coursework for career enhancement. To help address these needs, UF Online is looking to expand its offerings beyond traditional bachelor’s degrees in areas such as certificates and stackable credentials.

## Goal 3: An Enriching and Supported Online Student Experience

**Objective 3.1** Ensuring a remarkable and engaging online student experience by augmenting services to drive student retention with celebrated academic milestones, plus a new focus on co-curricular modules to foster career readiness, career pathway ascension, or career-shifting ensuring that UF Online graduates are prepared to leverage their new degrees to build their future.

**The 7 strategies that will deliver on Objective 3.1 include:**

- **Strategy 1:** Identifying completion stages for each major; celebrating critical milestones, persistence, success along each step toward program completion.
- **Strategy 2:** Creation of student cohort groups to foster peer-to-peer engagement and persistence toward program completion.
- **Strategy 3:** Expanded UF Online student tutoring services in areas of most critical need at convenient times for working students and with clear entry points, opportunities for consultations to tailor services, and navigable appointment and scheduling systems.
- **Strategy 4:** Launch of new co-curriculum to focus on student career needs: readiness, engagement on career funnels by academic degree, plus strategies for promotions in the workplace.
- **Strategy 5:** Continual improvement in student onboarding and just-in-time support modules along the entire pathway, including modules throughout student's UF Online experience outlining key milestones and preparation for timely graduation.
- **Strategy 6:** Innovative student engagement pilots such as the establishment of a dedicated learning living community center in Florida and/or the leveraging of UF-IFAS Extension Centers to expand UF's ability to engage rural and urban students enrolled in UF Online who lack the requisite technology or internet connectivity. Launch of pilots in this area will enable UF Online to explore the value of community-based and place-based networks to amplify learning outcomes for students.
- **Strategy 7:** Launch a revitalized virtual portal for students. This new front door to campus will provide a single point of entry for UF Online students where they can easily access their courses and other items. A key to the revitalized UF Online Plaza is greater engagement features that can be assessed and have available analytics to measure reach of our efforts.

**Objective 3.2** Ensure that each UF Online student has a dedicated academic advisor providing timely, quality, and strategic advice to foster student success in achieving academic goals.

In the experience to date for UF Online, we have seen countless benefits for a strong academic advising cadre that is specifically focused on online undergraduate students. Over the next five years, UF Online will begin lowering the active student to advisor ratio to 100:1 while simultaneously augmenting academic advisor caseloads to incorporate students not in currently enrolled yet in good academic standing (i.e., students taking a semester off from UF Online). Although unprecedented amongst our peers, this change will allow UF Online to continue to set the standard for comprehensive academic advising while augmenting our strategies to engage online students that may start and stop their education along the way. While the ratio of active students to advisors will go down, this will free up advisors for many things. First and foremost, it will allow advisors to have more time to work with individual students, resulting in improved interactions and a better student experience. Second, this change will allow advisors to work with students who have temporarily left UF Online to encourage their return. This “semester off” population merits additional engagement to support student retention and their degree completion.

***The 6 strategies that will deliver on Objective 3.2 from 2019-2024 include:***

- **Strategy 1:** Launch of a new Academic Advising Initiative, 2019-2024, to expand the number of full-time, dedicated UF academic advisors serving UF Online students. In doing so, UF Online will lower the number of enrolled students assigned to each full-time UF Online academic advisor while augmenting the role of a UF Online academic advisor to encapsulate career and life coaching, plus active engagements of students not enrolled yet active in UF Online and in good academic standing.
- **Strategy 2:** Hiring more advisors; all online students advised by an academic advisor dedicated to online student advising at undergraduate level.
- **Strategy 3:** Lowering advisor caseload of enrolled students from 250 to 100 by 2024.
- **Strategy 4:** Cross training all academic advisors by 2024 to ensure that, across our entire campus, all online academic advisors are trained in life coaching, advising, and career coaching for online students.
- **Strategy 5:** Ensure that advising and coaching of UF Online students are conducted by full-time, dedicated advisors within each college by 2024.
- **Strategy 6:** Expand the duties for the campus advising cadre to include continual engagement with enrolled students as well as inactive students, those in good academic standing but not enrolled in courses that term. Reach a maximum number of 150 inactive students assigned to each UF Online advisor by 2024.

## Goal 4: Deployment of Strategic Marketing and Recruitment

The Marketing and Recruitment teams that support UF Online work strategically to inform and recruit the highest quality applicants to join the Gator Nation through the UF Online pathway. To date, UF Online has had great success in recruitment even while enduring an over 55% denial rate of applications into UF Online; often exceeding 70% for some majors. UF Online marketing efforts have made steady improvements, but additional work remains to reach the highly qualified applicant who could prevail through UF admissions yet also seeks a more flexible pathway to their degree.

Separate from marketing and communications, the UF Online enrollment management services team has had incredible success welcoming and serving new students into UF Online. The Recruitment & Outreach Center (ROC) and the OneStop jointly support UF Online Admissions. The ROC is charged with recruiting the highest quality applicants to join the Gator Nation through UF Online's program. Admissions officers are responsible for direct outreach to all UF Online prospective students, including freshmen, lower-division transfers, upper-division transfers, second bachelor's degree applicants, international candidates, and former Gators looking to complete their studies via UF Online as a readmit. Once prospective students apply to the program, the OneStop Student Services Center provides all back-end admissions support to UF Online applicants. The OneStop team is responsible for application services, screening, and transfer evaluation. Once admitted, the ROC provides personalized support and outreach to admitted students to help ensure they are registered for classes and have the resources they need to be set up for success in the program.

Looking ahead, UF Online will continue strategic marketing and recruitment of future Gators, academically qualified to gain UF admissions but seeking a more mobile, versatile academic pathway.

**Objective 4.1 Continue to raise awareness of the affordability and accessibility of UF Online as a rigorous academic pathway for students across the state of Florida and around the world for those that have not yet completed a bachelor's degree or wish to earn an additional credential.**

***The 3 strategies that will deliver on Objective 4.1 from 2019-2024 include:***

- **Strategy 1:** Smart media spending, including digital marketing, to ensure the highest return on investment and the recruitment of qualified students that meet or exceed UF admissions standards. UF Online has strategically reduced its marketing budget while increasing effectiveness, return on investment, and we continue to see impressive growth in enrollment and revenues as see in Appendix E. UF Online will build on these successful marketing strategies going forward.
- **Strategy 2:** Active engagement of feeder schools within the state and across the country to welcome transfer students eager to earn an online degree of high distinction via UF Online. UF Online will work to expand recruitment teams to serve students looking to complete their degree at UF. Liaisons would conduct onsite UF Online recruitment, advising and engagement events for current and future UF Online students across the state.



- **Strategy 3:** Continue work to grow pathways for students via the UF Online Employer Pathways Program<sup>6</sup>. Launched just this year, UF Online now partners with Walmart, Discover Financial Services, and The Walt Disney Company. These partnerships are an example of UF Online fulfilling its mission by expanding access to education through affordability working with companies and now with Guild Education. Over the next five years, UF Online will look to continue expanding these partnerships and we look forward to welcoming students into UF Online from these employer pathways.

## Goal 5: Smart Growth and Data-Driven Operations

Moving UF Online forward and into our next chapter, we remain committed to the tenets in our first comprehensive business plan. Goal 5 articulates are continued work to ensure smart growth and data-informed decisions as part of a large, traditional, land grant university.

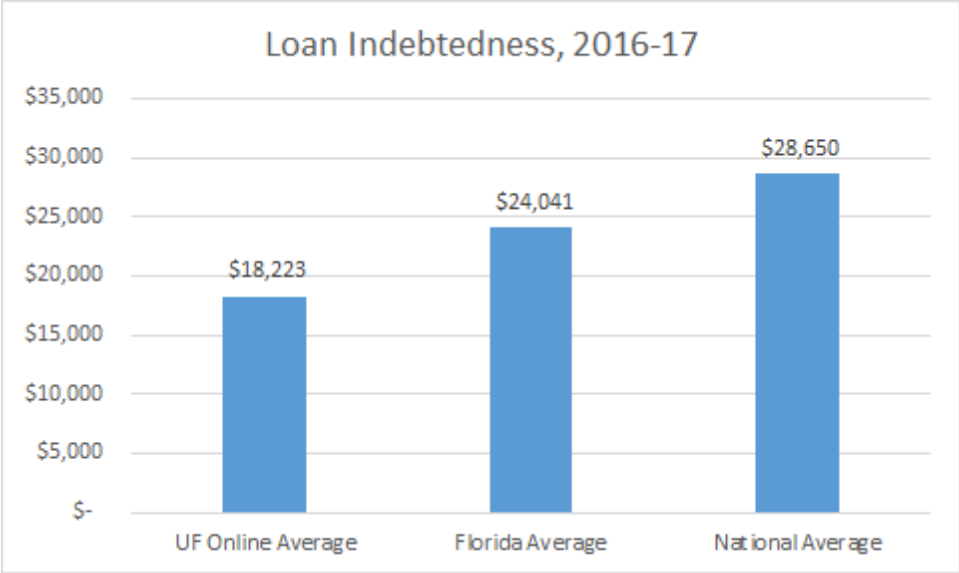
**Objective 5.1** Maintain a steady focus on our mission, vision, and values as an online experience, fully-embedded in a campus and culture.

***The 3 strategies that will deliver on Objective 5.1 from 2019-2024 include:***

- **Strategy 1:** Launch of new forecasting services for college enrollment planning, strategic communications and marketing services, and tracking key performance indicators to continually maximize investment in the UF academic core (faculty, advisors, and course production).
- **Strategy 2:** Adherence to UF Online business tenets – relentless cost containment, expanded revenue through new enrollments (in-state and out-of-state) and student persistence, fortifying current partnerships, expanding new partnerships, and focusing resources on strategic investments.
- **Strategy 3:** Persistent focus on cost containment for our students. Going forward, UF Online will incorporate a metric tied to the loan indebtedness of our students to ensure our continued focus on the value of our program as well as the real impact on our students and graduates, often ignored by higher education management teams. We will maintain a steady focus on ensuring that UF Online student indebtedness remains far below Florida and national averages. As reported on the most recent *U.S. News & World Report* (2016-17), UF Online students average \$18,223 in student loan debt, compared with the Florida average of \$24,041 and the nation-wide average of \$28,650. This metric is also presented in Appendix A.

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<sup>6</sup> <https://ufonline.ufl.edu/admissions/employer-pathways/>



## V. Operations and Finances

The last five years have brought about significant changes to UF Online as an organizational unit and campus-wide team, from the incredibly brisk launch of UF Online by January 2014, to the early reliance on a private vendor, to the vendor agreement termination, the subsequent ramp-up of in-house services and infrastructure, and, now, to our next five-year chapter of continued expansion with data-driven strategies as we fortify the academic core value for our students.

In this chapter we outline our financial components including the sources of revenue and a description and outline of our major expenses and investments. Later we tie those investments directly back to the 5 goals laid out in the aforementioned pages of this new business plan.



### Financial Management

UF Online responsibly operates within the confines of revenues and expenses. While the sources of revenue have remained consistent, allocations of expenditures have dramatically changed since the inception of the program. As described above, UF Online no longer relies on a private vendor for outreach and recruitment, and has created robust marketing and enrollment services operations in-house. This also allows for greater flexibility and control as we continually monitor and analyze our business model. As tuition revenue has been dramatically increasing over the past 5 years, so have our financial commitments to our partners in the colleges, course production, student experience, and advising

## Revenue

Money flows into UF Online in two distinct ways: through the consistent annual appropriation of \$5,000,000 by the State of Florida and through the dynamic tuition revenue paid by UF Online enrolled students.

In addition, there are required student fees collected by the University and directed to other offices, such as Financial Aid (\$5.25 per credit hour for in-state students, \$35.36 per credit hour for out-of-state students), Technology (\$5.25 per credit hour), and Capital Improvement fee (\$6.76 per credit hour). As a measure of cost containment, our students are not required to pay other student fees such as the Activity and Service fee, Athletic fee, Health fee, and Transportation fee. However, online students who wish to utilize services covered by those fees are able to pay for the optional fee package and gain the same access as residential students.

## Tuition Revenue

Tuition for in-state online students is \$111.92 per credit hour, or 75% of the tuition rate for residential students, and has not changed since the inception of the program nearly five years ago. Our increasing population of out-of-state students currently pay \$500.00 per credit hour.

Tuition revenue is directly tied to metrics UF Online meticulously monitors, such as distinct headcount, course enrollment, and student credit hours, discussed later and visualized in Appendix A.

## Expenses

UF Online invests most of its funds in the units discussed above: academic programs, academic advising and student success, course production, enrollment services, marketing and recruitment, and central administration and operations. In addition, UF Online is required to transfer 10% of its tuition and appropriated revenue to the University of Florida in an Overhead Assessment. These funds, totaling over \$1,000,000 each year, are directed to General Administration and IT of the University of Florida, including but not limited to Finance and Accounting, Human Resources, University Police, Business Affairs, Environmental Health & Safety.

Other factors effecting the bottom line include tuition waivers provided to students and outstanding accounts receivables.

## Budget Forecasting and Projections 2019-2024

UF Online is ready to accomplish this next set of 5-year goals and related strategies with forecasted revenues, expenses and with targeted initiatives and investments. We project steady enrollment, tuition, headcount, and student credit hour (SCH) growth as depicted in the forecasting the follows.

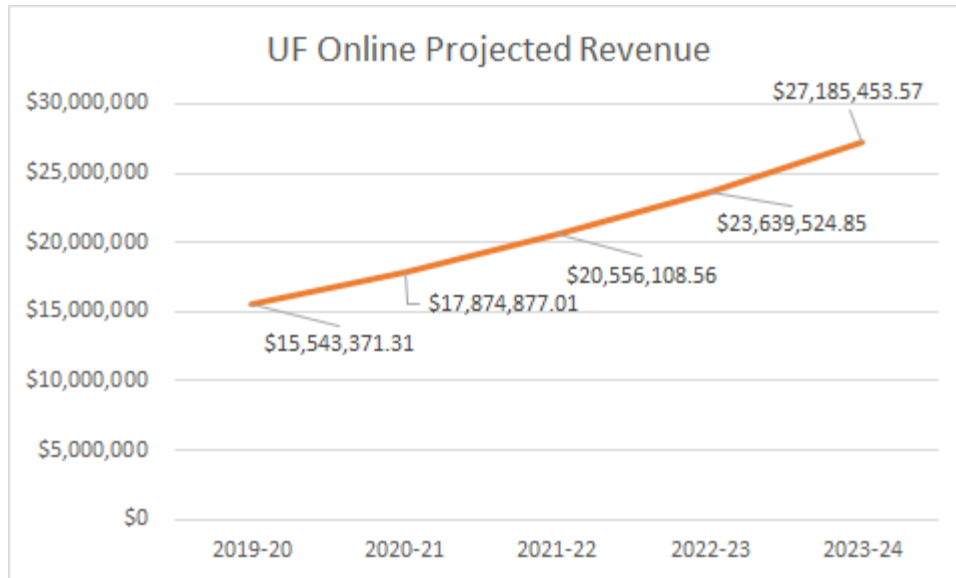
UF Online has created a 2019-2024 Overall Budget Profile, which can be found in Appendix B. It recounts UF projected revenue and increased commitment to the academic core of the program. As more money flows into the program, it is reinvested as a financial commitment to our core partners on campus, all to the benefit of our students.

UF Online is forecasting revenues, expenses, and fund balance as displayed in the charts below and in Appendix B. This forecast is the university’s initial budget, but the budget may evolve each year as UF Online matures undergraduate online offerings. Each year ahead we will revisit our strategies to maximize value for our students toward our mission. The model is in real dollars and assumes revenues will increase as expenses increase. Therefore, there is no adjustment for inflation in the model.

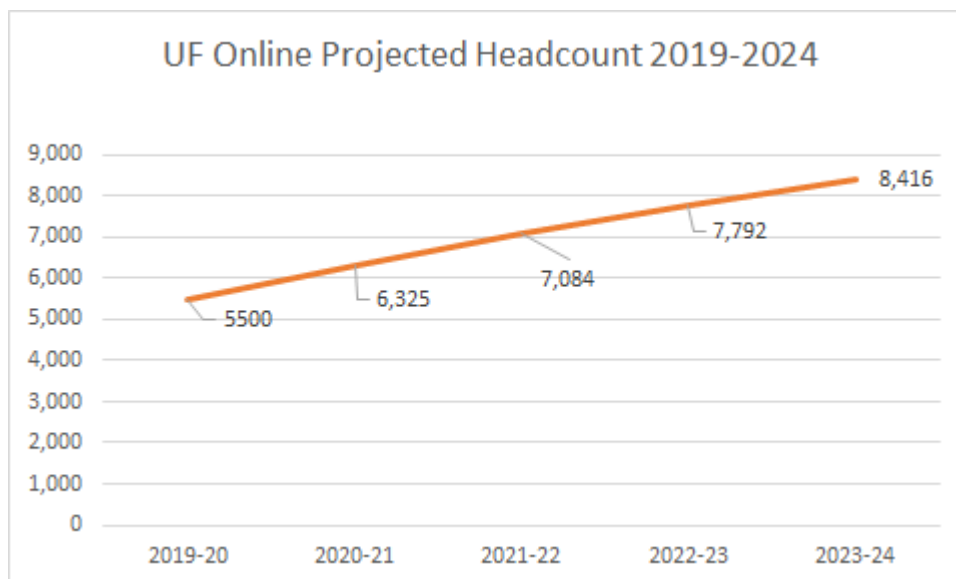
The following describes the assumptions used by the university in developing the forecast. The assumptions are the university’s reasonable estimates. In summary we project steady revenue in light of our lessons to date and planned strategies going forward. We intend to maximize investment in the academic core value for our students as tuition revenue rises.

	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024
<b>Total Projected Revenue</b>	\$ 20,543,371	\$ 22,874,877	\$ 25,556,109	\$ 28,639,525	\$ 32,185,454
<b>Total Projected Expenses</b>	\$ 19,737,526	\$ 22,025,800	\$ 24,786,248	\$ 27,722,810	\$ 31,457,264

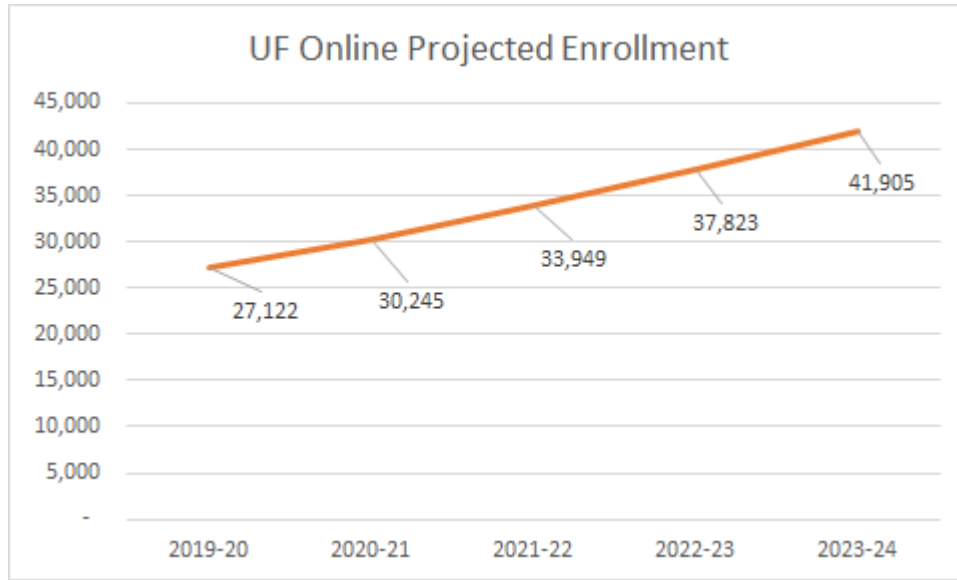
UF Online constantly monitors and revamps program measures, such as Revenue, Headcount, Enrollment, and Student Credit Hours (SCH), all of which are related. In addition to the metrics below, which are also covered in Appendix A,



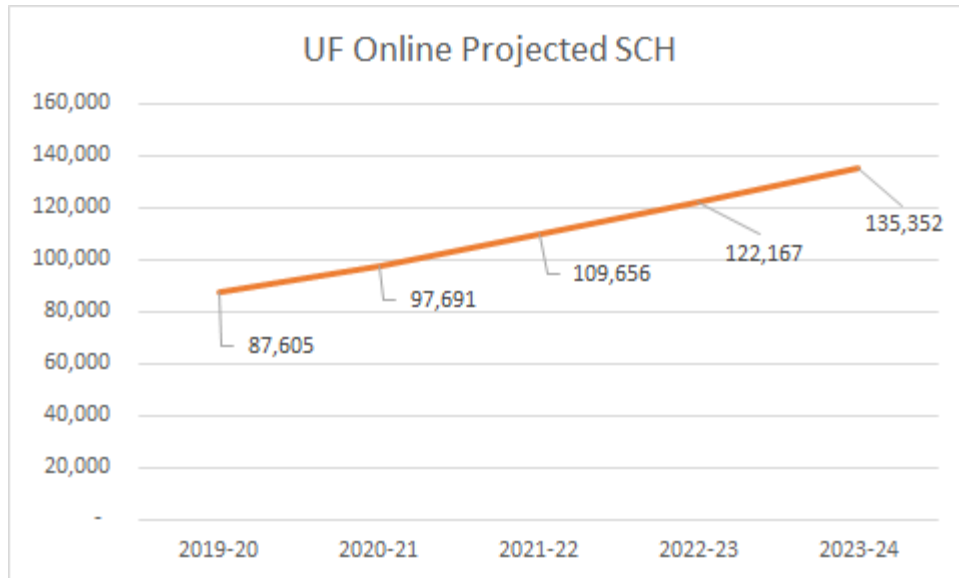
The projected influx of new and returning students translates to increased expected revenue over the next five years from tuition and appropriated funds. While we note demographic shifts are underway nationally over the next five-year period, we project steady growth in online enrollments and in particular in selective, high-quality online pathways such as UF Online. As mentioned previously, increased revenue will mirror increased expenses as the program continues to grow.



The model assumes the continuation of growth in UF Online enrollment of unique students, despite nation-wide downward trends in undergraduate enrollment. In addition, UF Online is projecting to enroll a greater number of out-of-state students through the UF Online Employer Pathways Program discussed in Goal 4. The growth in the program will also translate into greater costs, such as course delivery to the academic units, hiring of additional faculty, advisers, and recruiters, adding and enhancing courses, and more.



UF Online students have been enrolling in an average of over 3.2 courses per semester. We expect to see an upward trend in enrollments, directly correlated to the increasing headcount expected over the next five years. Academic advising must carefully plan enrollments of students in appropriate courses and sections. As UF Online predicts a growing population over the next year, it will commit more funding in the academic core of the program, including academic advising staff.



We project UF Online students to enroll in over 100,000 credit hours by 2022 and continue to climb as UF Online offers additional programs and courses in its catalog.

### Relating Expenses back to UF Online’s 5-year Goals

UF Online projected expenditures are strategically allocated and are directly tied to the 2019-2024 Goals discussed in Section IV as they relate to UF-Online’s continued expansion:

- Goal 1 – Increasing investments in delivery across UF’s colleges. By augmenting funding out to UF colleges, UF aims to ensure colleges support and grow faculty ranks to serve an ever-expanding online student body. This increased investment area will fund college efforts including departments with expanded effort plus a new campus-wide UF Online Research Fellows program, and overall excellent course delivery across UF’s colleges.
- Goal 2 – Increasing investments in expanded services for faculty via the centralized COIP team. We also project increased investment in academic integrity and specifically the need for additional proctoring services given our projected increasing headcount and student credit hours.
- Goal 3 – Increasing investments in campus centers that provide online students with academic support including tutoring. We will also make significant investments in lowering our student to academic advisor ratio from 1:250 to 1:100 by 2024 as part of our Academic Advising Initiative to drive student support, persistence, and completion.



- Goal 4 – Steady investments in Marketing and expanded recruitment investments to welcome highly-qualified students seeking a more versatile pathway to a degree from employer pathways but also feeder schools. Continued investment in the important One-Stop services for all UF Online students seeking admissions, financial aid, bursar and registrar services with one-stop support.
- Goal 5 – UF Online will maintain modest and flat investments in Administration and Operations to ensure a core operations analytic hub for college services but we intend to commit the majority of revenue monies to the academic core value instead: UF faculty needs, academic advising and high-quality academic content and pathways.

In creating the model in Appendix B, we have paid careful consideration to maximizing our limited resources while delivering the best benefit to our students.

## VI. Challenges and Opportunities

As we move energetically ahead we are driven by our mission to serve students eager to earn an online degree of distinction from the University of Florida. We must acknowledge however that this is a transformative time in higher education and we enter our next phase as part of that transformation underway. We see the rapid expansion and evolution of many innovative pathways and programs across the education landscape and it is fantastic news for students. We also prepare for demographic shifts and uncertain political forces. With these uncertainties in mind, we charge ahead mindful of the challenges and opportunities presented. These include:

- Remaining nimble as we continue to rapidly expand and grow as an online undergraduate experience, fully integrated into a traditional land-grant research university. UF Online will maintain a steady focus on our five-year goals, yet we require the latitude to revisit strategies and tactics in real time to accomplish our goals. We anticipate frequent check-ins with our Advisory Board to ensure continued engagement and alignment throughout our next phase.
- Having the data we need to make informed decisions. Our operations team will be focused acutely on the challenges of gathering and tracking relevant data and metrics to continually evaluate our progress toward our mission and to inform evolving tactics and strategies during these dynamic times at UF and within higher education at large.
- Maintaining and continually improving course quality to foster student learning and engagement, while we continue to rapidly expand our student population and academic advising cadre. Our plans are ambitious but our commitment to quality remain unchanged. Our challenge will be ensuring resources are flowing into all areas of the UF Online program to ensure our UF standards are maintained while we continue to expand.
- Learning more about our online students as we serve them. As presented earlier in our discussion of our online student profile, our students are dynamic, varied in location, major, work situation, home situation, and course load but common in their purpose: earning a UF degree. UF Online will continue to serve these students with an entire campuswide commitment, welcoming new Gators each semester. Yet we cannot rely on standard campus metrics or practices in all aspects of our work. We will be building and continually improving a new type of undergraduate funnel and enrollment forecasting model to guide our work. Similarly we are launching a new academic advising initiative to increase our advising cadre that will also diversify its attention (to enrolled students and students taking up to three semesters off before returning to UF Online) and it's skills set (cross training advisors in life and career coaching as well). We are well prepared to ensure each student has the courses he/she needs at every step on their journey to graduation with the guidance of a dedicated academic advisor. Over time we will build better mechanisms to measure and assess our progress, but campuses must work collaboratively to resist traditional benchmarks of success for these emerging and dynamic populations of life-long learners.

- Ongoing efforts to recalibrating UF campus services, hours and workforce composition to ensure a traditional campus can now serve an ever-expanding online, remote and diverse student body. Given UF Online is a campuswide commitment, change and transformation are underway across UF's services, teams and centers to serve the growing UF Online student population. We will continue this important work while serving an expanding population and we will work cohesively as One UF as we always have. In doing so, new workforce roles are emerging from instructional designers to academic advisors now merging with life coaches. It is a great time to work in higher education but it is not unusual for universities to continual reinvent their services to meet the needs of students and faculty alike.
- Continued attention on academic integrity and the unique challenges of fraud and abuse in the online learning environment. Finally security, identify management and limiting cheating are growing concerns in any digital environment and in particular in digital university programs. UF has a sound and clear honor code that translates well into the digital environment and our policies and practices will also continue to evolve to meet emerging threats. As part of our investment in course production support for faculty we anticipate greater reliance on COIP services to support faculty in their work to ensure the academic integrity of all online content and coursework.

The University of Florida is at the forefront of higher education in growing and now expanding a dynamic fully online undergraduate experience. We are excited for the years ahead and the opportunity to welcome more students and their families into the Gator Nation via UF Online. **Go gators!**

## **Appendices**

*UF Online Projections: 2019-2024*

*UF Online Overall Budget Profiles: 2019-2024*

*UF Course Quality Review: Quality Matters at a Glance*

*UF COIP Course Design and Production Process*

*UF Online Enrollment Trends and Out of State Trends: 2014-2018*

*UF Online Logic Model: 2019-2024*