

# CULTIVATING TOMORROW

**A Year of Vision and Impact**  
*UF/IFAS Annual Report FY2025*

**UF|IFAS**  
UNIVERSITY of FLORIDA





# GREETINGS FROM GAINESVILLE

2024 was a landmark year for UF/IFAS. Dr. Rob Ferl of the Department of Horticultural Sciences, and inaugural director of UF's new Astraeus Space Institute, made history as the first NASA-funded university researcher to conduct his own experiments in space. His return, marked by a proud display of a UF cap, inspired The Gator Nation and showcased our reach—literally beyond the Earth.

UF/IFAS Extension took a major step toward preparing the next generation of youth for lives of leadership when it secured state support for the renovation of 4-H Camp Cherry Lake.

The College of Agricultural and Life Sciences (CALS) celebrated a decade of transformative leadership under Dean Elaine Turner. During her tenure, CALS conferred nearly 30,000 degrees and launched signature initiatives like the Roche Teaching Scholars, CALS Mentor Academy, Teaching Enhancement Symposium, and the Florida Youth Institute. As she transitions back as a faculty member, her legacy continues to shape the future of agricultural education.

Looking ahead, UF/IFAS is driving innovation with the upcoming Center for Applied Artificial Intelligence in Agriculture—positioning Florida as the Silicon Valley of AgTech. Our new Crop Transformation Center is fast-tracking the development of citrus trees resilient to a disease that has challenged growers for nearly 20 years.

This momentum is powered by our exceptional faculty and staff, generous donors and stakeholders, robust public support, and the ambition and idealism of our students.

Join us: We're building a future where science, service, and sustainability lead the way.



*Image courtesy of Blue Origin.*



Sincerely,

  
Scott Angle

Senior Vice President for  
Agriculture and Natural Resources





# GROWING THE FUTURE

## FUN FACT!

CALS gives more than  
**\$1 million**  
in scholarships annually.



*Kati Migliaccio, Dean of the  
College of Agricultural and  
Life Sciences*

The College of Agricultural and Life Sciences (CALS) has a strong legacy of excellence—and I'm honored to take the helm. In my first six months as dean, following Dr. Elaine Turner's remarkable leadership, I've been constantly reminded that this legacy wasn't built by one person. We have incredible faculty who pour their energy into teaching, research and mentorship. Staff keep things running smoothly and find new ways to connect with students. Those students bring curiosity and drive.

This is all possible because of our alumni and partners who continue to support our work.

CALS is overflowing with expertise, creativity and commitment to students—that's what moves us forward. I'm excited about the opportunities ahead to ensure our programs stay aligned with industry needs, to give students more hands-on experiences, and to weave innovation and emerging technologies like AI into everything we do.

## Gator Tracks



This past year, CALS initiated a new program called the Gator Tracks Transfer Pathway. In partnership with seven state and community colleges around Florida, students can join this transfer pathway to gain direct access to a CALS advisor who guides them through prerequisite courses, connects them with CALS resources and events, and expedites their transfer admission decision to CALS. This is a great way to support transfer students to earn their bachelor's degree from the University of Florida and CALS. Go Gators!

## 30 years of ambassadors



In 2024–25, we celebrated our 30<sup>th</sup> CALS Ambassador team. Each year, this select group of students represents the college at a variety of events. Some visit high schools to talk to students about possible majors to choose. Some give campus tours to prospective students. Throughout the year, they all help staff college events, engage with donors and friends of CALS, and serve as peer recruiters for our programs.

[cals.ufl.edu/about/fast-facts](https://cals.ufl.edu/about/fast-facts)

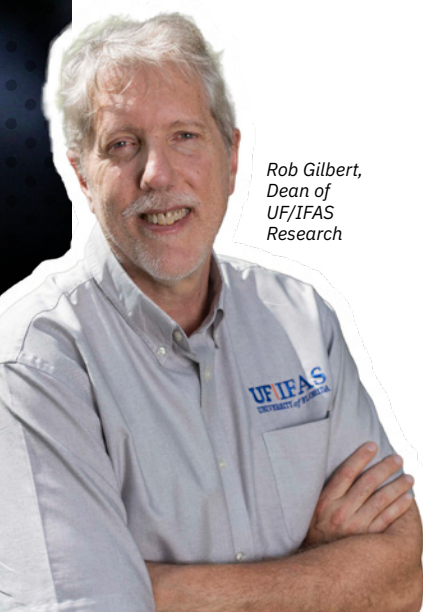


# SCIENCE THAT SERVES

Research spending means progress is being made in new discoveries, and UF/IFAS expenditures increased to \$287M in 2025. Looking forward, our team had a record year in new grants awarded, up 20% to \$201 million, setting up the next round of solution seeking. But what's most important is the impact we make in Florida and around the world.



**UF/IFAS blueberry** varieties make up more than **90%** of Florida's blueberry crop, providing the foundation for **\$415M** in annual economic impact for the state.



Rob Gilbert,  
Dean of  
UF/IFAS  
Research

## Key impacts for 2024-25

### Food is medicine



Our researchers found that only 1 in 10 adults meet the recommended daily intake of fruits and vegetables, and that the U.S. does not produce what's needed to support a healthy population or ensure national security. They are advancing a new framework harnessing accelerated plant breeding, personalized medicine, and community-engaged approaches to battle chronic disease and improve health with increased U.S. fruit and vegetable consumption and production.

### Progress in citrus research



Our citrus team is exploring new approaches to help manage citrus greening disease. In this promising discovery, they are testing a new type of citrus tree that shows potential resistance

to the insects that spread the disease, which has affected Florida's citrus industry since 2005.

### Helping horses can help people



A new treatment for uveitis in horses may also help people suffering the same disease, a leading cause of blindness in horses and in humans.

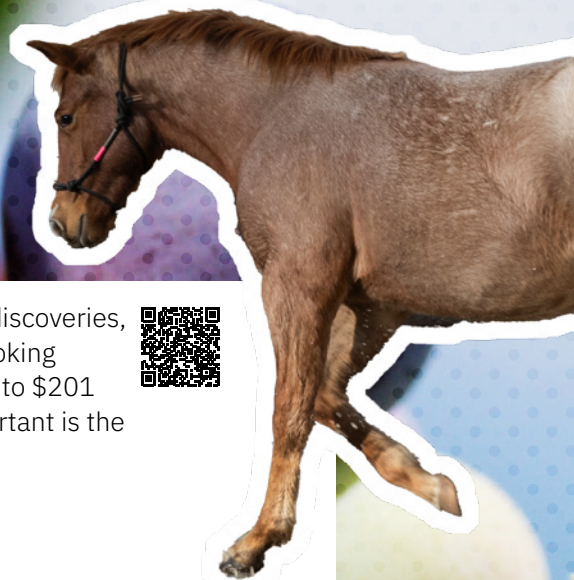
### Smarter crops, healthier people

Artificial Intelligence (AI) continues to dramatically power our work, accelerating plant breeding with innovations in citrus, blueberries, strawberries, coffee, vanilla, and other crops that meet grower needs and changing market demands, are resistant to problematic pests and diseases, and improve the sustainability of our farms and forests.

AI also contributes to improved human health through better mosquito control, disease prevention (e.g., autoimmune diseases and Alzheimer's), and understanding what drives human perception of flavor to boost consumption of nutritious foods.

### UF/IFAS continues to lead in scientist excellence, with an impressive nine new AAAS Fellows elected in 2024.

The most recent data on expenditures for agricultural and natural resources that UF sent the NSF Higher Education Research and Development survey (HERD) revealed an increase to \$287M in 2025. [nces.nsf.gov/surveys/higher-education-research-development/2023](https://nces.nsf.gov/surveys/higher-education-research-development/2023)





# EXTENSION IN ACTION

## FUN FACT!

UF/IFAS Extension county offices collected over **39,000 lbs. of peanut butter** for local food pantries during the 2024 Peanut Butter Challenge.

### Sowing Sustainability



WATCH THE SERIES

UF/IFAS Extension agents and specialists are working in tandem with growers to apply new technology that reduces their water use and improves water quality. Small improvements like soil moisture sensors, raised crop beds and advanced weather monitoring can help farmers dramatically cut their irrigation costs. Changes to fencing and grazing practices can keep livestock

away from wetlands and other sensitive water bodies. By showing how to economically employ new technology and sustainable practices, Extension experts are saving growers money and ensuring a safe and abundant water supply for all of us.

### Empowering first-time homebuyers

Owning a home is a dream for many, and UF/IFAS Extension's First-Time Homebuyers program has been helping hundreds of Floridians achieve this goal through financial education. HUD-certified Extension counselors use in-person and online workshops to teach individuals how to build wealth, make informed decisions, and prepare for long-term homeownership.

### Cultivating citizen scientists

A bioblitz is an event that focuses on identifying and recording all the living species in a specific area over a limited time. They are important for determining biodiversity and species populations, and they're also great learning opportunities for citizen scientists. In 2025, the UF/IFAS DeLuca Preserve Bioblitz brought together more than 100 participants to explore and document biodiversity, resulting in nearly 7,000 observations of 966 species. The event not only added 372 new species records for the preserve but also introduced 26 new community members to iNaturalist, demonstrating how UF/IFAS blends research and public engagement to build a more resilient Florida.

### Investing in Florida's youth

4-H is preparing a generation Beyond Ready for work and life. Investment in 4-H Camps is building critical capacity to reach more youth with immersive hands-on learning and year-round science-based programs. Through public legislative funding and donor support, more than \$8.4 million has been secured toward the revitalization of 4-H Camp Cherry Lake in Madison. Cherry Lake will focus on agriculture, technology and workforce development programs to empower youth for both existing and emerging careers.

*Andra Johnson, Dean of UF/IFAS Extension*



### Extension by the numbers (2024 Report)

**213,048**  
youth involved in Florida 4-H

**22,946**  
volunteers

**1.2 million**  
participants in Extension  
workshops and courses

**91,738**  
consultation visits to farms and  
other businesses



# PARTNERS IN PROGRESS

## Trailblazer honored

UF/IFAS is honored to have long-time passionate supporters as well as new friends joining the ranks. Their generosity and ideas keep us moving forward with confidence.

A new UF/IFAS professorship will honor James Edward “Jim” Handley, who led the Florida Cattlemen’s Association for 26 years. The Florida Cattlemen’s Foundation pledged \$1 million to establish the endowment, surprising Jim with the announcement at their June convention.

Jim’s lifelong dedication to Florida ranchers, agricultural youth, and UF makes this recognition especially fitting. The Handley Professorship, housed in the Department of Animal Sciences, will support teaching, research and Extension that directly benefit the state’s beef industry. Dr. Todd Thrift, a national leader in beef cattle management and a 24-year UF veteran, will be the inaugural recipient.

A proud UF alumnus, Jim has served on key agricultural boards and helped secure vital support for UF/IFAS. This professorship ensures his impact will continue for generations.

Left to right: Ken Griner, Henry Kempfer, Rob Gilbert, and Woody Larson.

## Supporting future CALS students

Thanks to the generosity of UF/IFAS College of Agricultural and Life Sciences alumni and friends, more than \$46,000 was raised this year to establish the **R. Elaine Turner Endowment Fund in CALS**, honoring Dr. Elaine Turner’s decade of service as dean (2014–2024). This fund supports college scholarships for **Florida Youth Institute**<sup>1</sup> — a weeklong, on-campus program for high school juniors and seniors which introduces them to issues and opportunities in global food security, agriculture, natural resources and the life sciences. With hands-on experiences and expert mentorship, these students are taking their first steps toward becoming Gators and changemakers. We are deeply grateful for the support in carrying forward Dean Turner’s legacy and investing in future CALS students.



R. Elaine Turner and Jordan Ruiz



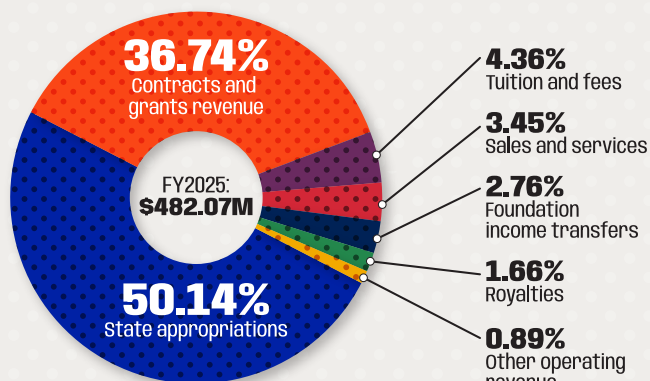
<sup>1</sup>[cals.ufl.edu/events/prospective/florida-youth-institute](https://cals.ufl.edu/events/prospective/florida-youth-institute)



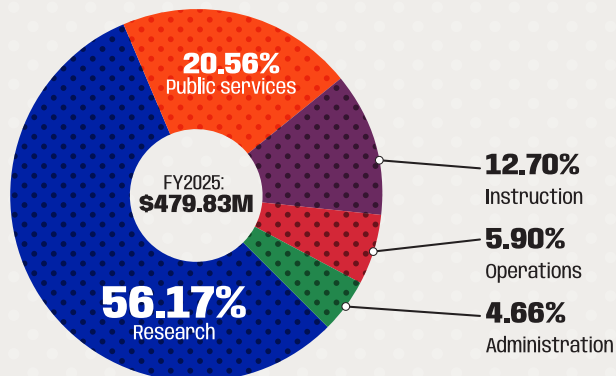


# DID YOU KNOW?

## Operating revenues (\$ in millions)



## Operating expenses (\$ in millions)



For more information, please contact [IFAS-IFA@ifas.ufl.edu](mailto:IFAS-IFA@ifas.ufl.edu).

Revenue and operating expenses represent a consolidated net position and exclude transfers between internal units.

The Statement of Revenue and Expenses is reported using the cash basis of accounting.

## Florida LAKEWATCH



UF's Florida LAKEWATCH program saved the state an estimated \$5M in 2024, and celebrated its 40<sup>th</sup> year of citizen science working for Florida's lakes.

## Tropical Aquaculture Laboratory

The Tropical Aquaculture Laboratory Disease Diagnostic Lab helps Florida fish farmers by determining causes of disease and recommending treatment and prevention. Producers report increased profits of \$2M–\$4M annually because of the lab.

## The Fungarium

The [UF Fungal Collection](#) houses 50,000 specimens of more than 10,000 fungi species and plays a vital role in global mycological research. In 2011, it began to digitize its collection, making it accessible online via the Mycoportal for researchers worldwide.

## Plant Diagnostic Centers

Plant diagnostic centers across Florida handle more than 5,000 samples a year from commercial and residential clients in all 67 counties in Florida, numerous states, the Caribbean and other regions of the world. Timely and accurate diagnosis and management recommendations collectively prevent over \$10 million in estimated crop losses in Florida.

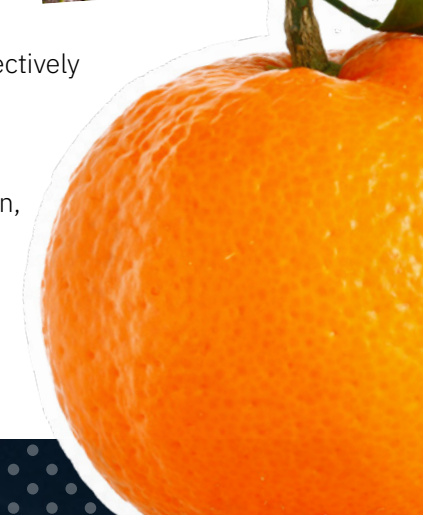
## Citrus Breeding Program

The Citrus Breeding Program has released 14 sweet orange, 16 mandarin, 4 grapefruit, 5 pummelo, 4 lemon, and 2 lime varieties, along with 18 new citrus rootstocks. These new releases offer growers improved fruit quality, and several demonstrate enhanced tolerance to citrus greening disease. Many of these varieties are currently being grown commercially by Florida growers.

## FUN FACT!

The UF/IFAS Bookstore is **50 years old!**

Shop online at  
[ifasbooks.ifas.ufl.edu](https://ifasbooks.ifas.ufl.edu)





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