

UCF50

1963 - 2013 YEARS

Celebrating our 'Hometown University' at 50

As community leaders who graduated from two "smaller" universities — Florida State University and the University of Florida — we take special pride in honoring the University of Central Florida, which today celebrates its 50th anniversary.

Our region's "hometown university," UCF has helped transform our once sleepy little town into a city and region of world renown. Charles Millican, UCF's first president, built the university in partnership with the then-developing Central Florida community.

Today, the extraordinary 21-year-and-counting tenure of President John C. Hitt has positioned UCF as America's leading partnership university and a national model for successful community collaborations.

UCF has grown to become the nation's second-largest university with nearly 60,000 students. Its growth is powered by quality students — last fall UCF ranked 12th nationally among public institutions in enrolling freshman National Merit Scholars. Each of the universities that attracted more of these prestigious students opened their doors before 1900!

This year, UCF will graduate more than 15,000 students — a school record. As most UCF alumni settle in Central Florida, it's no coincidence that last year *Forbes* magazine ranked Orlando eighth among U.S. cities "getting smarter the fastest."

Indeed, just last month a national study released by the New America Foundation concluded that with its many partnerships and emphasis on expanding students' access to a high-quality education, UCF is a "Next Generation University" that is a national model for 21st century higher education.

While its size is impressive, UCF doesn't aspire to be big; rather, it grows to meet the demands and needs of Central Florida. Providing access is important because a college degree has been, and continues to be, the single most important factor for a successful career and a better future for our communities.

At UCF, about one in four students is the first in her or his family to attend college. Imagine how their lives, the lives of their families and the quality of life in Central Florida are being transformed as these students reach for their diplomas.

UCF's ascent is one of the great success stories in American higher education. In a relatively short time, UCF emerged from scrub pine and dirt roads to become a major metropolitan research university of global impact, paralleling the rise to national prominence of Orlando and Orange County.

From a Seminole and a Gator who are proud to call ourselves "honorary" Knights: Happy 50th anniversary, UCF! And "Go Knights!"



Teresa Jacobs, FSU Class of '81
Mayor of Orange County



Buddy Dyer, UF Levin College of Law Class of '87
Mayor of Orlando

