



FYIFAS Week 1 – March 10th, 2023..... Only 56 days to go!

The 2023 regular legislative session officially began on Tuesday and it's pretty much a certainty that this session will prove to be fast and furious.

Opening day, Governor DeSantis, the Senate President Kathleen Passidomo, and the Speaker of the House Paul Renner laid out a wide variety of priorities and expectations for this year and higher education is one of the main topics.

Governor DeSantis is proposing a **record \$114.8 billion state budget**, which is an increase of over \$4.9 billion from the 2022-2023 state budget.

This was a great week for UF/IFAS and the agriculture industry. Florida Farm Bureau members came to Tallahassee for their annual day at the Capitol. Nobody tells the story of Florida Agriculture better than a farmer or rancher and your voices were heard!

The Capitol courtyard was alive with the sights and smells of the best flavors Florida has to offer at the Florida Farm Bureau's annual Taste of Florida Agriculture Reception. Commissioner of Agriculture Wilton Simpson, as well as many Senate and House members, also joined the festivities.

Sighted there amongst the finest of our homegrown produce, local honey, citrus, and flavorful beef were UF/IFAS's own Aquaculture Extension team providing delicious samples of regional clam dip.

We also had the pleasure of joining many Florida Forestry Association members from across the state as they highlighted key impacts of the industry and the important ecosystem services they provide for Florida.

Stakeholder engagement is essential in highlighting agriculture's most pressing issues and challenges as well as advocating for UF/IFAS as they made their visits to legislators and staff. We would like to thank the Florida Farm Bureau and Florida Forestry Association for their efforts and support of the UF/IFAS 2023 legislative priorities. It was great to see everyone!

Also, our very own Florida 4-H Youth had the amazing opportunity to present to the Senate Agriculture Committee on the positive impacts 4-H has had on their lives and the lives of the over 150,000 4-H Youth throughout the state of Florida. You can watch their presentation [here](#) starting at minute 13:26. Amazing job well done!

On the policy and appropriation front, there are numerous bills that have been filed impacting higher education. When the dust settles, we will highlight developments on several key pieces of legislation over the next few weeks.

Stay Tuned!



FYIFAS Week 2 – March 17th, 2023.....top of the roller coaster!

We have wrapped up week 2 of the Florida Legislative Session and bills are moving full steam ahead.

Higher education, agriculture, and natural resources policy has been a hot topic in the halls of the Florida capitol. A number of bills have been filed on these topics and we are following them intently as they progress through the legislative process- or more colloquially referred to as just “The Process.”

We are also tracking many proposed bills including addressing [campus food insecurity](#) and tackling [seagrass restoration](#) statewide.

We continue to meet with legislators and staff regarding UF/IFAS priorities and have received positive feedback. In addition, some of the projects we are working to get funded have received positive press this week such as the “Quantifying Ecosystem Services” project.

“Using artificial intelligence, scientists at UF are partnering with landowners and farmers to monitor and protect Florida natural and agricultural environments. With plans to measure the carbon dioxide captured by plants, soils and other natural resources, the researchers in UF’s Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences and the Herbert Wertheim College of Engineering are creating a network to help better understand fluctuations in the state’s ecosystems, and ultimately, to develop AI tools to preserve Florida lands for long-term use and enjoyment.”

Also, you can read more about the incredible work the University Florida is involved in [here](#).

Our next big hurdle - In the next week, we expect the chairs of the Senate and House appropriations subcommittees will release their budget proposals. We can count on getting a good idea of how UF/IFAS will fare this session, giving us our marching orders as to where to focus our efforts on the coming weeks.

With a healthy state budget we remain optimistic but are always prepared for challenges.

Lastly, boots and cowboy hats were a welcome and common sight throughout the Capitol this week. The Florida Cattlemen’s Association rode into town supporting a wide variety of legislative priorities including the UF/IFAS Workload funding, Ecosystem Services Project, and UF/IFAS Horse Teaching Unit.

Stay tuned! Next week’s addition of FYIFAS should be interesting.



FYIFAS Week 3 – March 24th, 2023..... First round

Every legislative session has its own personality and this year, I would describe it as a sprint to the finish and I would name this session “Ultrarapid.”

The Senate and House Appropriations Sub-committees just released their budget proposals on Wednesday. UF/IFAS has done fairly-well, but we have a lot of work to do.

Thankfully, the UF/IFAS Workload was fully funded in both the Senate and House education budget proposals. Most of our budget projects are in play but we need to work to get the numbers in better shape as we move through session.

It’s standard for the appropriations subcommittees to release their budget proposals in week 3. (*Appropriations subcommittees are responsible for different parts of the budget such as education, transportation, healthcare, etc.*) However, in a rare move, the Senate just released the Senate budget bill on Thursday - one day after the subcommittee proposals were released. The Senate budget bill is slated to be heard in the full Appropriations Committee next week.

The House Appropriations Committee released their version of the budget this morning and it is also slated to be heard next week.

It was nice to see many UF Agricultural Education and Communication students who made the trip up to Tallahassee this week.

We are looking forward to Gator Day at the Capitol on April 12th. We are exhibiting several exciting commodities and technologies that have been developed by UF/IFAS. Florida 4-H is also planning to bring youth and volunteers members from across Florida on April 19th. We will continue to update you as more details come out about their visits.



FYIFAS Week 4 – March 31st, 2023..... Things are moving.

The old adage that the “budget drives policy and that policy drives budget” has been in full display. This week was jam packed with policy bills finally having made their critical first committee stops this session, just as the final proposed budget numbers are hitting the desks of legislators.

During week 4 of 9, subcommittees start to close shop and stop hearing policy bills. If a bill has not been heard in a committee by this week, the likelihood of it making it across the finish line is slim to none. Many bills made this critical leap this week and things are moving in full swing with a consistent flow of bills moving through the process to the House and Senate chambers for final votes.

The budget process is quite an impressive orchestration. For example, there were over 2300 appropriation project requests submitted in the House alone and all are competing for the same funds.

The House and Senate Appropriations committees advanced their intended budget plans this past Tuesday. There is still a lot of ground to make up between the two proposals, with a difference of nearly \$700 million.

We are pleased to have a number of projects included in either the Senate or House proposed budgets meaning they are eligible to be included in budget negotiations. Over the next weeks we will be spending most of our efforts working to ensure the two proposals meet in the middle.

It was wonderful to engage with a great group of young agricultural leaders with the Florida Fruit and Vegetable Associations Emerging Leader Development Program. They are locked in on the latest when it comes to agriculture policy and UF/IFAS initiatives. Thank you for your advocacy and hope to see some of you in Tallahassee soon!

Gator Day 2023 is coming up fast! We are excited to showcase just a taste of what UF/IFAS has to offer on April 12th. If you are in the area, you are more than welcome to swing by and enjoy the Gator Day at the Capitol Celebration at 11 a.m. and following UFAA-sponsored lunch at 11:30 a.m. both in the Capitol Courtyard.



FYIFAS Week 5 – April 7th, 2023..... Hump Week, Halfway There.

It's the mid-point of the 2023 legislative session and the Senate and House have just passed their respective budgets. The good news is that nothing was changed in our budget requests and UF/IFAS is still in pretty good shape. Most of our budget issues are partially or fully funded in one or both bills. This is paramount as every funding request must be included in at least one bill to be a part of the negotiation for the final bill.

The next step is the starting point of the budget negotiation process. Leadership of the two Houses will determine the amount of funds to be allocated to each section (or silo) of the state budget. In addition, members will be appointed to the budget conference committee.

Meanwhile, the legislature has made a lot of progress during the first half of this session. Lawmakers have passed 19 bills and sent them to the Governor. In addition, several major initiatives have passed including a \$711 million affordable housing bill (SB 102) that was a priority for the Senate President.

Also, an expansion of the state's school voucher system that makes it universally accessible to Florida students (HB 1), a priority of the Speaker of the House has passed. Both bills have already been signed into law by the Governor.

The focus for legislative work in the second half of the session will begin to shift more toward floor sessions as the work of House and Senate committees winds down. Committees and subcommittees will continue to hold regular meetings through April 25.

Florida Legislative Session by Numbers:

Total Bills: 1,814
Amendments: 1,405

Total Votes: 1,687
Bills on Final Passage: 19

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FYIFAS Week 6 - April 14th, 2023..... GO Gators!

Gator Day 2023 was a resounding success! This year was the 62nd annual Gator Day, bringing together our amazing students, alumni, and faculty to celebrate the Gator Nation at the Florida Capitol. The historic halls were fully adorned in orange and blue and the excitement was tangible.



This year, we brought tantalizing sights, flavor, and smells with displays of UF/IFAS research on Florida grown finger limes from [CREC](#), vanilla from [TREC](#), blueberries developed from our [horticultural sciences](#) program, and honey researched at our [Honey Bee Lab](#). We also displayed our utilization of artificial intelligence, [CALS](#), and the

amazing reach and impact of [Florida 4-H](#) for Florida's Youth.

We received fantastic feedback and excitement around UF/IFAS's work for Florida Agriculture in research, extension, and teaching. Thank you to everyone involved in making the UF/IFAS Farmers Market at the Capitol possible!



That being said, 4-H day is coming up fast. On April 19th, we are excited to join the over 1000 planned attendees in showcasing the very best Florida 4-H has to offer. If you are in town, please come see us at the 4-H Reception. Details can be found [here](#).

With all the excitement going on, let us assure you, we are laser focused on the UF/IFAS budget as we continue to engage legislators and staff on our projects. There's not much to report on since last week but with only three weeks left until Sine Die, it is crunch time. There were numerous policy bills, some of which garnering hours of debate, passing through both chambers this week, so budget proceedings have been on hold, but the posturing has begun. We are anticipating the budget conferencing to kick off next week – but that could change in 5 minutes - so stay tuned!



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FYIFAS Week 8 – April 24th, 2023..... Play Ball!

There are less than 2 weeks, (11 days) (1 weekend) (270 hours) left in the 2023 Florida legislative session. The budget negotiations have begun. Allocations were released over the weekend and budget conference meetings have been going on all day.

These are the playoffs for legislators, staff, and lobbyists alike. The next 2 weeks will determine the success or failure of the appropriation project or policy they have been working on for the last 6 months. We are on 1-hour notice – which means we will get an email announcing a committee meeting 1 hour prior to the start time.

The no-joke rule is solidly in place, people are grumpy, their hands are cramped from holding their phones 24-hours a day and if they aren't talking on their phones, they are talking to themselves. I'm not joking – it's against the rules.

At this point, UF/IFAS is in good shape going into budget conference. The first run of negotiations across the budget silos has been presented today. All or part of our funding requests are in the first proposals, which is required to be considered for the final budget. In short, we're still in play!

Here is what we have on the field:

- UF/IFAS Workload (Base Budget)
- Nutrient Rate Funding
- Center for Applied Artificial Intelligence in Agriculture
- Microbiology Teaching Lab Expansion
- Southwest Florida Research and Education Center Update
- Animal Sciences Horse Teaching Unit

There are a few projects not on this list as they were submitted by legislators and each appropriation would be a significant benefit to UF/IFAS. There is a lot of work left to do, but we are feeling optimistic.

SO, it's that time again.....cross your fingers, find a 4-leaf clover (looking at you 4-H), light a candle, dust off your rabbit's foot, wish upon a falling star or whatever it is you do for good luck. We'll take it.





FYIFAS Week 9 - May 4th, 2023..... Record Setting Session!

You still there? We apologize for keeping you “left on read” and on the edge of your seats this past week and a half. But let me tell you, we have been quite busy!

We have been on the front lines advocating for many UF/IFAS priority projects, and then some. This year the total in a state budget has climbed to \$116 billion, the largest in Florida’s history. There are historic investments in Florida’s higher education system, environment, healthcare, rainy day funds, and just about every other silo as we shine bright into the future.

Once the budget is laid on legislators’ desks, the 72-hour waiting period begins before they can vote on the full budget known as the “General Appropriations Act”. The final House and Senate budget numbers were aligned Monday and all there is left to do is debate and vote the bill. Dare we say it, Legislative Session will end on time this year!

So, here are some of the long-awaited highlights of how UF/IFAS did in the FY 23-24 Budget:

- **\$3,862,872** recurring funding for UF/IFAS Workload
- **\$6,200,000** for the UF/IFAS Nutrient Rate Study (BMPs)
- **\$10,965,880** for the UF/IFAS Center for Artificial Intelligence
- **\$2,750,000** for the Main Campus Microbiology Teaching Laboratory Expansion
- **\$1,435,000** for a UF/IFAS Southwest Florida REC Expansion
- **\$1,992,650** for the Animal Sciences Horse Teaching Unit
- **\$1,997,280** for the UF/IFAS Millhopper Campus Lakewatch Building

We are thrilled and exceptionally grateful to have had this many UF/IFAS initiatives included in this year’s budget. We are also delighted to report that the legislature invested in the University of Florida as a whole, adopting remarkable investments to enhance overall operational support funding, construction efforts across campus and throughout the state.



None of this would be possible without the tremendous support and work of our Legislative champions & staff, UF leadership, and stakeholders. This year's investment into the University of Florida is a true testament to the incredible impacts of the Gator Nation throughout the State of Florida, the United States, and the world.

The job is not finished however, the next step is the Governor's desk for signature. We're currently working with the Governor's office as we champion the projects from the next budget hurdle, the dreaded line-item veto. The final approved budget goes into effect July 1.

Overall, we are sincerely grateful for the support and input you, our friends, have had on this year's session. We hope you will join us next year, for another potentially captivating, fascinating, riveting, completely engrossing (*ok, that may be a bit of exaggeration*) season of FYIFAS!

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