

SNRE niche

From the Director

We are pleased to present the Fall 2023 edition of the School of Natural Resources and Environment's Niche newsletter. The purpose of this newsletter is to connect with alumni, SNRE faculty and students, our UF partners and other stakeholders, and to highlight achievements from within our interdisciplinary undergraduate and graduate programs.

Our undergraduate program in Environmental Science started in 1995 and since then we have graduated more than 1,000 students. During 2023, our total enrollment reached more than 200 students. This year we graduated 43 students and welcomed 45 new students.

At present SNRE is home to 117 Interdisciplinary Ecology graduate students (17% M.S. and 83% Ph.D.). Our graduate programs started in 1999, and to date, we have graduated more than 550 students (54% M.S. and 46% Ph.D.). In 2023 we welcomed 24 new IEC students and graduated 18 IEC students. Thanks to our more than 300 affiliate faculty members who serve on graduate student committees and offer courses to support both our undergraduate and graduate programs.

Base funding for SNRE is provided by the CALS-Dean, IFAS-SVP, and Graduate School Dean. SNRE affiliate faculty provide matching support to graduate student assistantships. Students are also supported by fellowships from Fulbright, the National Science Foundation, the Wildlife Conservation Society, private donors, and others. Some international students are also supported by their governments. We are very appreciative of financial support from all these groups, which is vital to students' success and professional development.

To our alumni, please tell us your stories. We want to know how SNRE academic programs have influenced your professional lives.

For more information about SNRE, please contact Dr. K.R. Reddy at krr@ufl.edu.

We wish you and your family enjoyable and safe holidays and a happy new year.

Dr. K. Ramesh Reddy
Director, School of Natural Resources and Environment

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October 2024

**SNRE Research
Symposium**

**J. Wayne Reitz Union
Grand Ballroom**

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Spotlight on the Environmental Science B.A./B.S. Program

SNRE's interdisciplinary B.A. and B.S. in Environmental Science prepare our approximately 200 undergraduate students for a wide range of rewarding careers ranging from research to environmental law in government, academic, non-profit, and corporate settings. Coordinated by Dr. Danny Coenen, our undergraduate programs have recently been revised to place greater emphasis on experiential learning including research, internships, and studying abroad, as well as development of transferable skills such as AI, GIS, and leadership development. We have been hard at work behind the scenes to offer our students additional engaging learning opportunities. In addition to upcoming new courses, we are excited about launching SNRE's first study abroad experience, UF in Morocco - Leadership for Sustainability: Trends & Traditions, in summer 2024, developed by Dr. Ryan Good in partnership with the CALS Leadership Institute. Additionally, through our state core general education course EVR2001 - Introduction to Environmental Science - we reach over 800 students from departments across campus per academic year.



Photo collage courtesy of IEC PhD candidate Alex Baecher, who teaches Environmental Science Lab (EVS 3000L), which featured many new excursions to expose students to a variety of field methods and career possibilities. These included: electrofishing on Lake Alice; vegetation surveys at Morningside Nature Center; sampling aquatic turtles, amphibians, and macroinvertebrates at UF NATL; forest management at Ordway Swisher and Austin Carey; and many trips to meet biologists and practitioners across the USGS Wetland and Aquatic Science Center, NEON, Florida Museum of Natural History, Field and Fork, and the broader UF community.

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Photo credit: Philipp Maleko, former IEC graduate student

Summer and Fall 2023 New Graduate Students



Holly Abeels

Program: PhD

Chair: Jules Bruck, Landscape Architecture

Holly's research interest is community engagement around resiliency planning for climate change impacts.

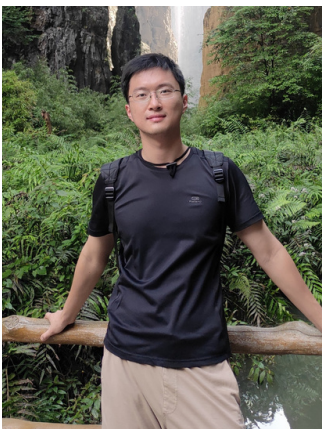


Finella Campanino

Program: PhD

Chair: Laura Reynolds, Soil, Water, and Ecosystem Sciences; Co-Chair: Savanna Barry, Nature Coast Biological Station

Finella's research is focused on seagrass ecology.



Haojie Cao

Program: PhD

Chair: Jiangxiao Qiu, Fort Lauderdale Research and Education Center

Haojie's research focuses on ecosystem services.



Wania Cardosa Gangerio

Program: PhD

Chair: Cynthia Simmons, Geography

Wania's research focuses on the recognition of traditional territories as a tool to address deforestation and promote human rights for Amazonian peoples.



Amanda Castaing

Program: MS

Chair: Stefan Gerber, Soil, Water, and Ecosystem Sciences; Co-Chair: Chris Wilson, Agronomy

Amanda's research aims to model carbon dynamics in the rhizosphere to assess the influence of various factors on carbon cycling processes.



Andrew Cinquini

Program: MS

Chair: Bill Hammond, Agronomy

Andrew's research interests are dendrochronology and tree ecophysiology in a changing climate.

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Photo credit: Trista Brophy, IEC PhD student

Summer and Fall 2023 New Graduate Students



Seyed Abolfazl Ebrahimi

Program: PhD

Chair: Matt Cohen, Forest, Fisheries, and Geomatics Sciences; Co-Chair: Jim Jawitz, Soil, Water and Ecosystem Sciences

Abolfazl studies spatial and temporal variation in water.



Madeline Estes

Program: MS

Chair: Carrie Adams, Environmental Horticulture

Madeline's research interests revolve around restoration ecology and optimizing seed-based revegetation in salt marsh ecosystems.



Oscar Godinez Gomez

Program: PhD

Chair: Rob Fletcher, Wildlife Ecology and Conservation

Oscar's research focus is spatial ecology, with emphasis on the study of loss, fragmentation and connectivity of tropical mammal habitats in Mexico.



Pietro Guerra Guarisco

Program: MS

Chair: Mark Clark, Soil, Water, and Ecosystem Sciences

Pietro is interested in wetland restoration and preservation in areas of urban and suburban development and how to improve community support for these efforts.



Shelby Kucharski

Program: PhD

Chair: Chris Wilson, Agronomy; Co-Chair: Stefan Gerber, Soil, Water and Ecosystem Sciences

Shelby's research focuses on the biogeochemical modeling of root-soil interactions and carbon dynamics as they relate to climate change.



Meng Bing Lin

Program: MS

Chair: Dail Laughinghouse, Agronomy

Meng's research is focused on mitigating harmful algal blooms and their toxins using bacterial-derived algacidal compounds.

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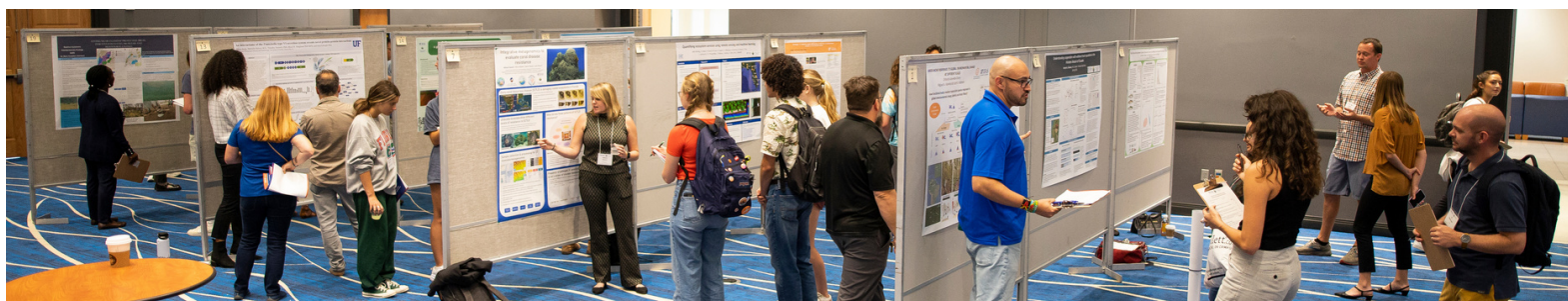


Photo: 2023 SNRE Research Symposium

Summer and Fall 2023 New Graduate Students



Samantha Lowe

Program: MS

Chair: Corey Callaghan, Wildlife Ecology and Conservation; Co-Chair: Nia Morales, Wildlife Ecology and Conservation

Samantha researches motivations for using the citizen science platform iNaturalist.



Bruno Rozzi

Program: PhD

Chair: Zachary Brym, Agronomy

Bruno's research focuses on land restoration and soil carbon sequestration by developing agroecosystems on reclaimed phosphate mines in Florida.

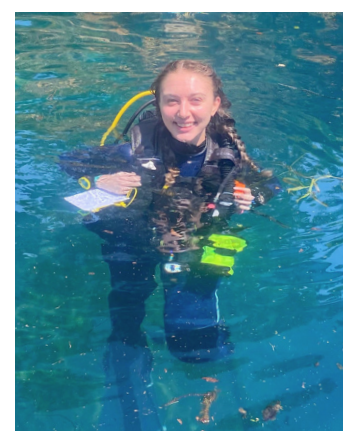


Suyash Sawant

Program: PhD

Chair: Kathryn Sieving, Wildlife Ecology and Conservation

Suyash will research the effects of urbanization and community composition on vocal communication and aggression in mixed-species flock birds.



Kathleen Schoenberger

Program: MS

Chair: David Kaplan, Engineering School of Sustainable Infrastructure and Environment

Kathleen's research examines how water flow affects primary producer community structure in Florida springs.



Megan Siemann

Program: PhD

Chair: David Chagaris, Forest, Fisheries, and Geomatics Sciences; Co-Chair: Will Patterson, Forest, Fisheries, and Geomatics Sciences

Megan is interested in how stable isotopes can be used to inform ecosystem models.



Zoe Stroosboscher

Program: PhD

Chair: Sandra Guzman, Agricultural and Biological Engineering

Zoe is investigating strategies for increasing the adoption of sustainable phosphorus behaviors in the Indian River Lagoon region, particularly in the agricultural sector.

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Photo credit: Anu Rai, IEC MS student

Summer and Fall 2023 New Graduate Students



Yukti Taneja

Program: PhD

Chair: Luke Flory, Agronomy

Yukti is studying the relative roles of mutualist and antagonist interactions in influencing biological invasions.



Kaitlyn Tucker

Program: PhD

Chair: Will Patterson, Forest, Fisheries, and Geomatics Sciences

Kaitlyn's research will determine whether the ratio of methylated to unmethylated DNA in living fish tissue can be used to accurately age reef fish.



Xinlin Wang

Program: MS

Chair: Lakesh Sharma, Soil, Water, and Ecosystem Sciences; Co-Chair: Yang Lin, Soil, Water, and Ecosystem Sciences

Xinlin is working to quantify the dissolved organic carbon leaching load.



Justin Weimorts

Program: PhD

Chair: Matt Whiles, Soil, Water, and Ecosystem Sciences; Co-Chair: Amanda Subalusky, Biology

Justin is studying the effects of animal diversity and abundance on nutrient cycling and ecosystem services.



Joel Wixson

Program: PhD

Chair: Joann Mossa, Geography

Joel's research focuses on Geographic Information Systems (GIS), computer modeling, and fishery science.



Derya Yesilkusak

Program: PhD

Chair: Tom Hctor, Landscape Architecture

Derya's research is focused on climate adaptation and sea level rise, Geographic Information Systems (GIS), and green infrastructure.

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Summer 2023 Graduates

PhD and MS, Interdisciplinary Ecology



DeVant'e Dawson, PhD
Chair: Julie Meyer, Soil, Water, and Ecosystem Sciences



Megan Donovan, PhD
Chair: Sam Smidt, Soil, Water, and Ecosystem Sciences



Nicholas Gengler, PhD
Chair: Lyn Branch, Wildlife Ecology and Conservation



Maggie Jones, PhD
Chair: Bob McCleery, Wildlife Ecology and Conservation



Diane Perry, PhD
Chair: Ed Camp, Forest, Fisheries and Geomatics Sciences



Esteban Rodofili, PhD
Chair: Vince Lecours, Forest, Fisheries and Geomatics Sciences



Owen Schneider, PhD
Chair: Ben Baiser, Wildlife Ecology and Conservation

Not pictured:

Ernesto Bastos Viveiros De Castro, PhD
Chair: Taylor Stein, Forest, Fisheries and Geomatic Sciences

Sebastian Mena, MS
Chair: Brett Scheffers, Wildlife Ecology and Conservation; Co-Chair: Rob Fletcher, Wildlife Ecology and Conservation

Anu Rai, MS
Chair: Nia Morales, Wildlife Ecology and Conservation

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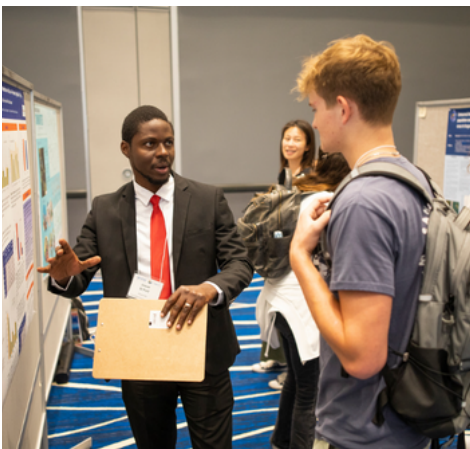
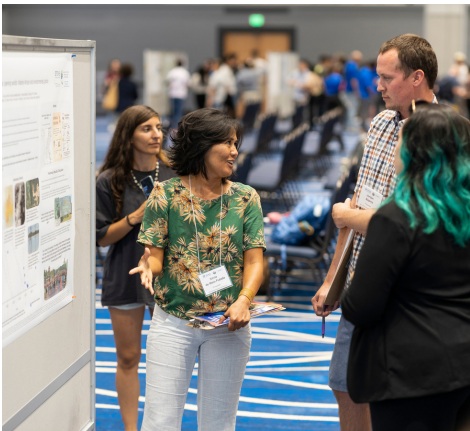


Photo credit: Vanessa Luna-Celino, IEC PhD student

Summer 2023 Graduates

BA and BS, Environmental Science

Shelby Beck, BA | Austin Burton, BA | Isabela Seidel, BS | Ariana Boland, BS | Paul DeHart, BS | Andrew Fishkin, BS | Gavin Manganiello, BS | Colleen Mondell, BS



Save the date!

2024 SNRE Research Symposium

OCTOBER 15, 2024

J. WAYNE REITZ UNION GRAND BALLROOM

UF IFAS
UNIVERSITY of FLORIDA



SCHOOL OF NATURAL
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ENVIRONMENT

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Photo credit: Ana Ykeuti Meiga, IEC PhD student

Graduate Student Awards

Doris and Earl Lowe and Verna Lowe Scholarship

Orlando Acevedo-Charry, Priyanka Hari Haran, Ashpreet Kaur, Saneer Lamichhane, Jenna Reimer, Natalia Teryda, Natalia Uribe Castañeda

Robin E. Nadeau Graduate Research Award

Hannah Gottesman, Vanessa Luna-Celino, Savannah Troy, Natalia Uribe Castañeda

IFAS/CALS Graduate Student Travel Grant

Yiyang Kang, Jenna Reimer, Rachel Walsh

Natural History Museum Travel Award

Orlando Acevedo-Charry, Rachel Walsh

Ron Magill Conservation Scholarship

Orlando Acevedo-Charry

Davidson Graduate Student Travel Scholarship

Orlando Acevedo-Charry

Coastal and Ocean Fellowship

Jordan Bajema

UF Biodiversity Institute Fellowship

Sinomar Ferreira da Fonseca, Jr., Akshay Vinod Anand

AOS & SCO-SOC Travel Award

Liz Hurtado

William Conner Student Travel Award

Yiyang Kang

Global Change Ecology Section Travel Grant

Yiyang Kang

Michael T. Morrow Environmental Scholarship

Ashpreet Kaur

SNRE Best Student Poster Presentation

Ashpreet Kaur

Minorities in Agriculture, Natural Resources, and Related Sciences First Prize Graduate Research Poster

Ashpreet Kaur

Research Abroad Grant for Doctoral Students

Beatrice Kyasiimire

Ofelia Anzola Memorial Scholarship

Angela Melidosian

Ecological Forecasting Initiative Unconference Travel Grant

Jeffrey Mintz

William C. and Bertha M. Cornett Fellowship

Amanda Muni-Morgan

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Photo credit: UF/IFAS

Graduate Student Awards

Biogeochemistry Graduate Fellows Program

Jenna Reimer

Water Institute Travel Award

Jenna Reimer

Botany in Action Fellowship

Lydia Soifer

Lewis and Clark Fund Grant

Richard Stanley

Maxwell/Hanrahan Foundation Field Research Grant

Richard Stanley

Open Doors Conference Grant

Natalia Uribe Castañeda

Research for Change Grant

Natalia Uribe Castañeda

IEC Coffee Chat!

On November 29, the SNRE Graduate Student Council hosted an IEC Coffee Chat in the Newins-Ziegler Breezeway as an informal opportunity for SNRE graduate students to get to know each other and learn about each other's research.

Pictured are some of the attendees (clockwise from top right): Oscar Godinez Gomez, Ana Yoko Ykeuti Meiga, Karen Bray, Yukti Taneja, Silvia Futada, Megan Siemann



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Spotlight on the 2023 SNRE Nadeau Graduate Research Award Winners

The Robin E. Nadeau Fund was established to support and promote research and education in SNRE. Funds can be used by Interdisciplinary Ecology graduate students to conduct research, purchase equipment, or travel to meetings or conferences. For information on how to apply, please contact Christy LaPlante at christyn@ufl.edu.

Savannah Troy



I conduct research in the lowveld acacia savanna ecosystems of Eswatini, which are a part of the Maputaland-Pondoland-Albany biodiversity hot spot of southeastern Africa. There are two key conservation threats to these highly diverse savanna systems that I am interested in: the rapid conversion of habitat into industrial agriculture and the encroachment of woody plants into open habitats. Besides the loss of savanna habitat when land is cleared, the presence of industrial agriculture next to native habitat can cause habitat degradation of the remaining savanna as some negative impacts may bleed across the boundary, such as pesticide and fertilizer pollution. Likewise, the conversion of open habitat into a thicket of woody shrubs is a degrading factor that reduces the amount of high-quality habitat available for species that are dependent on an open savanna environment. In this context, my dissertation research investigates how bird community composition and the foraging rates of insect-eating birds change with proximity to agriculture and level of woody shrub cover. At the time of this story's publication, I am in the field actively collecting data and am excited to share my research findings as I analyze my results over the coming semester.

Vanessa Luna Celino



My doctoral research and practitioner work focuses on community-based fire management and stakeholders' perceptions of fire governance in Peru. My research advances our understanding of the human-fire relationship by bringing theoretical and methodological approaches from multiple disciplines (ecology, geography, political sciences, and anthropology). The Peruvian Andes has a long history of anthropogenic fires, which have shaped the natural landscape over millennia. Here, fire is an important agricultural tool and the most affordable way to open farmlands and control undesirable vegetation and pests. However, as in many other tropical regions, agricultural burns are prohibited and are a significant problem when not adequately controlled. My research evaluates how some Quechua communities are self-organizing and adapting their fire-related practices to get the most benefits from their burns and reduce the risk of escaped fires. In collaboration with a local nonprofit organization, I organized two workshops on "locally-based fire management," that targeted local stakeholders representing the regional and local government, volunteer firefighters, and farmers. Participants discussed what actions were needed to promote effective community-based fire governance.

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Spotlight on the 2023 SNRE Nadeau Graduate Research Award Winners

Natalia Uribe-Castaneda



As a marine biologist, my journey includes 13 years of collaboration with coastal communities worldwide, dedicated to the restoration, management, and conservation of coastal and marine resources. In my PhD research, I am focused on enhancing community engagement in coral reef restoration. Employing social science and participatory research methods, I delve into the perspectives of communities residing in the proximity of two Marine Protected Areas—Laughing Bird Caye in Belize and the Seaflower Biosphere Reserve in Colombia.

My research has unearthed motivations within both communities to conserve and restore coral reefs. Recognizing the ecological importance and economic benefits of these vital ecosystems, they also acknowledge the looming threats. A fervent desire for educational initiatives, especially targeting the youth, is felt strongly in both communities. The communities stress the vital role of empowering local professionals and community members in leading restoration projects. This not only instills a sense of ownership and pride but also fosters economic empowerment through job creation and professional growth within the community.

Hannah Gottesman



As an Interdisciplinary Ecology doctoral candidate in a hybrid position between the University of Florida and Florida Fish and Wildlife Research Institute, I bridge institutions and fields to support sustainable fisheries management. My research is in the Movement Ecology and Reproductive Resilience lab led by my chair, Dr. Sue Lowerre-Barbieri, with Dr. Will Patterson as my co-chair. Many harvested fish have complex spatial ecology, using estuaries as nurseries but spawning in distant marine habitats from which their larvae disperse with ocean currents. Understanding individuals' lifetime movement patterns and their population-level effects on genetic diversity is important for management, but studying these processes across spatial and temporal scales is difficult and requires multiple methods. I am combining biogeochemistry, biophysical modeling, and population genetics to study the reproductive resilience of gag (*Mycteroperca microlepis*), a sex-changing grouper supporting major GOM fisheries. I am using otolith (i.e., ear stone) isotopes to assess the nursery origins of offshore spawning fish. I am pairing biophysical modeling and population genetics to investigate whether larval dispersal and spawning site selection have produced distinct genetic subunits. Lastly, I will test if spawning site fidelity differs by sex and how sex change may affect effective population size.

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Photo credit: UF/IFAS

Meet the Environmental Science Alliance

The Environmental Science Alliance is the official undergraduate student organization for current and prospective Environmental Science majors and minors at the University of Florida. The organization is led by the following elected officers:

- Diego River, President
- Paula Davo, Internal Vice President
- Tyler Hall, External Vice President
- Emily Reid, Secretary-Treasurer

To get involved, please contact Faculty Advisor Dr. Danny Coenen at dcoenen@ufl.edu.



Meet our Undergraduate Liaisons

SNRE Liaisons are upper-class Environmental Science students who assist the Environmental Science Alliance and SNRE with prospective student visits, recruitment, and acclimating new students to our school. They also offer drop-in mentoring services for fellow undergraduate students. Learn more about our [SNRE Liaisons](#).



Navya Natarajan



Brynn Fricke



Grace Elwell



Zachary Loveland



Anna Mavrodieva

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Photo credit: UF/IFAS

Meet our IEC Connectors



Orlando Acevedo-Charry
[Meet Orlando](#) | [Email Orlando](#)



Hernan Alvarez
[Meet Hernan](#) | [Email Hernan](#)



Silvia de Melo Futada
[Meet Silvia](#) | [Email Silvia](#)



Sarah Steele Cabrera
[Meet Sarah](#) | [Email Sarah](#)



Ana Yoko Ykeuti Meiga
[Meet Ana](#) | [Email Ana](#)



Akshay Vinod Anand
[Meet Akshay](#) | [Email Akshay](#)

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 IEC Connectors are a select, small group of diverse Interdisciplinary Ecology graduate students who help new graduate students become acclimated to the School of Natural Resources and Environment. New students should feel free to reach out to our Connectors with any questions.
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SNRE ALUMNI

We want to keep in touch with SNRE alumni as they work toward sustainable environment and human solutions for today's complex challenges.

If you are an SNRE alum, please use the link below to fill out a short form with your current contact information. You can use the comment section to include any updates about your personal or professional life. We look forward to hearing from you!

[Connect With Us](#)

Meet our Graduate Student Council



Natalia Uribe-Castañeda,
President



Shelby Kucharski,
Vice President



Silvia de Melo Futada,
Treasurer

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 The SNRE Graduate Student Council exists to promote interaction among graduate students. Join the Council's Microsoft Teams page for more information, or contact Natalia Uribe-Castañeda at nuribecastaneda@ufl.edu.
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Photo credit: UF/IFAS

Meet Our Faculty Advisory Council

The School of Natural Resources and Environment's Faculty Advisory Council (FAC) is made up of 15 affiliate faculty members who serve three-year staggered terms. The FAC advises the SNRE Director and staff on the formulation and execution of SNRE academic programs, plans, and policies. Learn more about the [Faculty Advisory Council](#).

Our current members are:

- Dr. Bette Loiselle (Chair), Director and Professor, Tropical Conservation and Development Program
- Dr. Mike Allen, Director and Professor, Nature Coast Biological Station
- Dr. Anita Anantharam, Associate Professor, Department of Gender, Sexualities, and Women's Studies
- Dr. Ben Baiser, Associate Professor, Wildlife Ecology and Conservation
- Dr. Luke Flory, Professor, Agronomy Department
- Dr. Basil Iannone, Assistant Professor, School of Forest, Fisheries, & Geomatics Sciences
- Dr. James Jawitz, Professor, Department of Soil, Water, and Ecosystem Sciences
- Dr. David Kaplan, Associate Professor, Engineering School of Sustainable Infrastructure and Environment
- Dr. Greg Kiker, Professor, Agricultural and Biological Engineering Department
- Dr. Jeremy Lichstein, Associate Professor, Biology Department
- Dr. Jamie Loizzo, Assistant Professor, Agricultural Education and Communication Department
- Dr. Robert McCleery, Professor, Wildlife Ecology and Conservation Department
- Dr. Stephen Perz, Chair and Professor, Sociology and Criminology & Law Department
- Dr. Dorota Porazinska, Assistant Professor, Entomology and Nematology Department
- Dr. Sadie Ryan, Associate Professor, Geography Department

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Photo credit: UF/IFAS

Welcome New Affiliate Faculty Members

SNRE has more than 300 affiliate faculty members from across UF who serve as chairs and co-chairs on our graduate students' committees. We are pleased to welcome these new members:

- Dr. Carolina Baruzzi, Assistant Professor, Wildlife Ecology and Conservation, North Florida REC
- Dr. Jules Bruck, Professor, School of Landscape Architecture & Planning
- Dr. Corey Callaghan, Assistant Professor, Wildlife Ecology and Conservation, Fort Lauderdale REC
- Dr. Daniel Contreras, Assistant Professor, Anthropology
- Dr. Jose Dubeux, Agronomy, North Florida REC
- Dr. Emma Matcham, Assistant Professor, Agronomy
- Dr. Golmar Golmohamamadi, Assistant Professor, Soil, Water, and Ecosystem Sciences, Range Cattle REC
- Dr. Gerrit Hoogenboom, Professor, Agricultural and Biological Engineering
- Dr. Sandra Guzman, Assistant Professor, Agricultural and Biological Engineering
- Dr. Sadie Hundemer, Assistant Professor, Agricultural Education and Communication
- Dr. Jasmeet Judge, Professor, Agricultural and Biological Engineering
- Dr. James Xinde Ji, Assistant Professor, Food and Resource Economics
- Dr. Lorenzo Rossi, Professor, Horticultural Sciences, Indian River REC
- Dr. Andrew Short, Professor, Entomology and Nematology
- Dr. Maria Silveira, Professor, Soil, Water, and Ecosystem Sciences, Range Cattle REC
- Dr. Sarah Strauss, Professor, Soil, Water, and Ecosystem Sciences, Southwest Florida REC
- Dr. Weizhe Weng, Assistant Professor, Food and Resource Economics
- Dr. Chang Zhao, Assistant Professor, Agronomy

To see a full list of our affiliate faculty, please [visit our website](#).

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GIVING

Donor gifts from alumni and friends are a boost to our academic programs and without their support, we would not be able to maintain a high level of academic excellence. We sincerely thank our alumni and friends for their generous support of SNRE programs. Please donate today.

ABOUT THIS NEWSLETTER

This newsletter is a biannual update from the School of Natural Resources and Environment. For questions, comments, or submissions, please contact Stephanie Castellano at scastellano@ufl.edu or Christy LaPlante at christyn@ufl.edu.

Thank you for reading!



Happy holidays

from the

**School of Natural Resources
and Environment!**

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