
UCF Forum

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UCF Forum Opinion Series to begin 6th Year with New Columnists

By Gene Kruckemyer
UCF Forum columnist
Thursday, August 17, 2017

The UCF Forum opinion series on Wednesday will begin its sixth year of columnists sharing their commentary on social issues, ethics, life lessons, personal observations, world affairs and other topics.

Nine columnists – faculty, staff and one student – will take turns offering their thoughts in the weekly series for the next 12 months.

They will replace the current batch of writers who for the past year have shared their insight on topics such as: [“Even in a Crowd, Protest is a Personal Journey,”](#) [“There’s More Than \\$ Involved When it Comes to Understanding Costs of Fracking,”](#) [“Maybe Colleges Should Take a Lesson from Zoos”](#) and [“Try Leaving Your Comfort Zone — You Might Learn Something About Yourself.”](#)

For their time and contributions to the UCF Forum this past year, thank you **Ali Gordon** (Department of Mechanical & Aerospace Engineering), **Germaine Graham** (LEAD Scholars Academy), **Bruce Janz** (Department of Philosophy), **Gerrod Lambrecht** (UCF football operations), **Carolyn A. Massiah** (College of Business), **Amanda Osorio** (junior majoring in humanities and cultural studies), **Meg Scharf** (UCF Libraries), **Jim Smith** (UCF Valencia Osceola Campus), and **Nathan Vink** (Outdoor Adventure).

A new variety of viewpoints and experiences will be brought to the series by the upcoming columnists who have backgrounds in diversity, sociology, engineering, public relations and other fields.

Here are the columnists who will share their opinions next:

Manoj Chopra

Manoj Chopra is a professor of civil engineering in UCF’s Department of Civil, Environmental and Construction Engineering. He was born in Delhi, India, moved to the United States to complete his graduate studies at the University of Buffalo, and came to UCF in 1993. He is a registered professional engineer and his research areas include

sinkholes, bridge foundations, soil erosion and sediment control, pervious pavements, and geo-environmental engineering. He shared the 2001 Excellence in Environmental Engineering award by NASA for his patented work in innovative groundwater-cleanup techniques, and has received several awards for his teaching, including four Teaching Incentive Program awards and the UCF Excellence in Undergraduate Teaching award. He has served as faculty representative on the Florida Board of Governors and the UCF Board of Trustees. He serves as the lead on research space on campus and is the NCAA faculty athletics representative for UCF, responsible for student-athlete eligibility, academic success and development. He can be reached at Manoj.Chopra@ucf.edu.

Jim Clark

Jim Clark is a lecturer in UCF's Department of History specializing in Florida and 20th Century United States history. He began teaching at UCF in 1987 as an adjunct while working in the journalism field. In 1998 he earned his doctorate in Florida history from the University of Florida, and joined the UCF faculty the following year. He is the author of nine books, and the editor of three more, and has been honored by the Florida Historical Society for his articles in the *Florida Historical Quarterly*. He is a frequent contributor to newspaper opinion pages and has served on the boards of the Florida Humanities Council and the Orlando Philharmonic Orchestra. He earned his undergraduate degree from Lenoir-Rhyne College and his master's from Stetson University. He can be reached at James.Clark@ucf.edu.

Joan McCain

Joan McCain is an associate instructor and program coordinator of the advertising/public relations major in UCF's Nicholson School of Communication. She has 30 years of experience as a promotional writer, working in advertising agencies and PR firms, and she frequently speaks and conducts workshops on writing and creativity. She is a double UCF alumni and a huge Knights fan, attending every home football game and many basketball and baseball games. She and her husband, Mark, have two children in college. She can be reached at Joan.McCain@ucf.edu.

Adam Meyer

Adam Meyer is executive director of UCF's Student Accessibility Services office and Inclusive Education Services. He also worked in education for students with disabilities at Eastern Michigan University and Saint Louis University, and previously was involved in the intellectual-disability field for 10 years. He was part of a completed national U.S. Department of Education grant that explored how social justice could be more regularly incorporated into the operations of disability-services offices. He serves on the Association for Higher Education and Disability Board of Directors and has presented at the association's past eight conferences. He has been married 13 years and has four sons. He can be reached at Adam.Meyer@ucf.edu.

Kim Nassoij

Kim Nassoioy is the associate director of UCF's Creative School for Children and has been an educator for 28 years. She holds a bachelor's degree in English language arts education with a minor in English. She developed the childcare program at St. Vincent's Academy in Orlando, where she was director for 19 years. She returned to her alma mater, UCF, in 2010, to join the Creative School for Children. She enjoys working with the children and families the school serves, as well as the university students who participate at the Creative School. She can be reached at Kimberly.Nassoioy@ucf.edu.

Christal Peterson

Christal Peterson is a member of the President's Leadership Council and a graduate student in UCF's DeVos Sports Business Management Program after completing her undergraduate degree in health science pre-clinical at UCF. While an undergraduate, she was on the UCF track and field team and twice was named second team All-American. During her sophomore year, she had an injury that forced her to sit out the end of the year but with the help of mentors she said she realized how impactful the platform as an athlete can be. She served as president of the Student-Athlete Advisory Committee and initiated opportunities in the community, such as a partnership with the Boys & Girls Club-East Altamonte. She also works for the Student-Athlete Welfare and Development office and has goals of becoming a senior associate athletic director in college athletics. She can be reached at chhpeterston@knights.ucf.edu.

Fernando Rivera

Fernando I. Rivera is an associate professor of sociology at UCF. His research interests and activities are in health/medical sociology, disasters, and race and ethnicity. His published work has investigated how different mechanisms are related to certain health and mental health outcomes with a particular emphasis on Latino populations. His disaster research has explored the investigation of factors associated with resilience and restoration. Other publications have investigated the Puerto Rican diaspora in Florida. He earned his master's and Ph.D. in sociology from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and his bachelor's degree in sociology from the University of Puerto Rico-Mayagüez. He also completed a National Institute of Mental Health-sponsored post-doctoral fellowship at the Institute for Health, Health Care Policy and Aging Research at Rutgers University. He can be reached at Fernando.Rivera@ucf.edu.

Lisa Roney

Lisa Roney has taught English and creative writing for 25 years and has been at UCF since 2003. She is the author of *Sweet Invisible Body* (a memoir about growing up with diabetes), *The Best Possible Bad Luck* (a chapbook of poetry), *Serious Daring* (a craft guide), as well as essays, fiction, poetry, and literary criticism in magazines and journals such as *Harper's*, *The Seneca Review*, *Inside Higher Ed*, *Numéro Cinq*, and *Saw Palm*. Since August 2015, she has been editor and director of UCF's national literary magazine, *The Florida Review*, and in 2017 launched *Aquifer: The Florida Review Online*. She has been a curricular innovator, most recently in leading efforts to establish a certificate program in editing and publishing, and has worked to foster positive student experiences, including serving several years on the Student Conduct Review

Board and as advisor to The Cypress Dome Society. She can be reached at Lisa.Roney@ucf.edu.

Barbara E. Thompson

Barbara E. Thompson is the associate director of UCF's Office of Diversity and Inclusion. She has designed and facilitated learning experiences on numerous topics related to diversity and inclusion for more than 25 years and has worked at UCF for 10 years. She earned her bachelor's and master's degrees in psychology from Florida Atlantic University, and has made several conference presentations and publications related to human memory and concept development. She is a certified public accountant and practiced as a tax professional for eight years. She and her husband of almost 30 years, Jim, are enthusiastic Knights fans. They enjoy tailgating and attending UCF football and basketball games. She can be reached at Barbara.Thompson@ucf.edu.

The UCF Forum is a project of the UCF News & Information office and is posted each Wednesday on the [UCF Today](#) website. Columns also appear on various other platforms locally and nationally, such as the Huffington Post. The columns are read by the authors on WUCF-FM (89.9) on Sunday mornings between 7:50 and 8 a.m., and are archived as podcasts by the radio station.

All of the UCF Forums since they began – more than 250 by individuals from all over the university – are kept in the UCF Libraries' [STARS](#) digital repository. The chronological list can also be searched by author or topic.