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**For Immediate Release:**

April 13, 2018

**A new home for the Pride of the Sunshine**

*Gator Marching Band will have a new permanent practice facility this fall*

**Gainesville, Fla.**—The Pride of Sunshine has a long history of bringing the sound and spirit to the Gator Nation. Since 1913, the sweat, skills and passion of the Gator Marching Band students have breathed enthusiasm into University of Florida events.

The marching band has practiced all over campus for the past 105 years. Now, the band will have a permanent state-of-the-art practice facility to call home.

An official groundbreaking ceremony was held on April 11, 2018 at 2 p.m. Gator Marching Band Director Jay Watkins and UF Director of Bands David Waybright joined band members, College of the Arts Dean Lucinda Lavelli, UF Provost Joseph Glover, University Athletic Director Scott Stricklin and School of Music Director Kevin Orr in celebration.

“The students of the Gator Marching Band work almost year-round to represent and support the university and are some of the hardest working students on this campus,” Watkins said. “This new facility will provide current and future students a safe, dedicated teaching area to allow these students to reach another level of excellence.”

The new facility, which will be located on Gator Marching Band Field at 1273 Gale Lemerand Drive, will be completed in two phases. Phase 1 will include a new practice field, lighting for evening practices and an outdoor pavilion. Phase 2, which will begin when additional funding is secured, will encompass a research and teaching building with workrooms, instrument storage space, an ice machine and restrooms.

Band members will now be able to rehearse on an NCAA-regulated artificial turf field that mirrors the game day performance space and is built with proper drainage and adequate lighting. The 5,000-square-foot outdoor pavilion will provide shelter from Florida’s inclement weather.

“The Gator Marching Band expresses the unbridled enthusiasm for the Gators’ pursuit of excellence,” said Lucinda Lavelli, dean of the College of the Arts. “I am grateful for the ongoing support of our provost, athletic director, School of Music and band leadership, and the Gator Band Alumni Association for making this field a reality.”

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Projected for completion by October 2018, phase 1 of the project costs \$2.4 million and is funded by the Office of the Provost and University Athletic Association. Private support is needed to realize phase 2 of the facility.

“The Gator Band Alumni Association is excited to finally see this project begin,” said Robin Oegerle, president of the GBAA. “As dedicated Gator Band alumni, we look forward to supporting the future of the project.”

The Gator Band joins the Florida Gators at all football games, including championships and bowl games, as well as other university events. Band members are ambassadors for the Gator Nation on a national and international scale, having traveled to London for the 2012 Olympics. The program was also the winner of the Sudler Trophy in 2013.

Students from the band represent over 100 majors on campus and balance classes, work and internships with a rigorous rehearsal schedule.

“When we first heard of the possibility of a facility being designed specifically for the Gator Band, we couldn’t believe it,” said Rachel Hidalgo, a third-year music major in combination with pre-physical therapy and Gator Band drum major for the 2018-19 season. “It is so exciting to hear that we will have a place that we can call our own. We look forward to creating more music and rehearsing to make game days special here at the University of Florida.”

As the university achieves top 10 status, the band contributes to its growing preeminence.

“The marching band is vital to the Gator Nation,” said Joseph Glover, UF provost and senior vice president. “As the university strives for preeminence, this new facility allows the band to continue reaching new heights that contribute to our rising status.”

### **About the UF School of Music**

The School of Music is one of the University of Florida College of the Arts’ three institutionally-accredited schools. The School of Music plays an important role in the academic life of the University and the community. The school’s programs provide broad-based instruction in performance, composition, history and literature and music disciplines, through a strong curriculum as well as through professional experiences such as ensembles and internships. UF students also have the opportunity to join more than a dozen music ensembles, including jazz bands, the University Choir, the University Symphony Orchestra and the “Pride of the Sunshine” Fightin’ Gator Marching Band. To learn more, visit [www.arts.ufl.edu/music](http://www.arts.ufl.edu/music).

**About the UF College of the Arts**

The College of the Arts, previously known as the College of Fine Arts, is one the 16 colleges and more than 150 research centers and institutes at the University of Florida in Gainesville, Florida. The College of the Arts offers baccalaureate, master's and Ph.D. degree programs in its three fully-accredited schools — the School of Art and Art History, School of Music and School of Theatre and Dance. The college is home to the Center for Arts in Medicine, Center for World Arts, Digital Worlds Institute, University Galleries and the New World School of the Arts in Miami. More than 100 faculty members and more than 1,220 students work together daily to engage, inspire and create. The college hosts more than 300 performances, exhibitions and events each year. Faculty and students also exhibit and perform at other local, national and international venues. To learn more, visit [www.arts.ufl.edu](http://www.arts.ufl.edu).

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