

## University of Florida Advisory Board of the City of Gainesville

### **Abstract:**

- The UF Advisory Board will contain seven (7) student members from Gainesville institutions of higher learning
- The board will be overseen by Florida Blue Key
- The City Commission can gain better insight into the needs of the student population
- The UF Advisory Board will help promote civic engagement, create a greater understanding and awareness of the City Commission, and facilitate student participation in municipal government
- The board shall meet with City Commissioners and government staff whenever possible to gain insight into their work and share that knowledge with the student population

The University of Florida (UF) Advisory Board is an advisory board composed of UF and other Gainesville-based higher education students that will provide insight into the student perspective for the Gainesville City Commission and its affiliated advisory and regulatory boards, as well as other local and community organizations.

With the UF student body making up nearly forty percent of Gainesville's total population, this UF Advisory Board will promote civic engagement and civic education within a key demographic of Gainesville. This board will promote student civic engagement by offering real-world experience working with and learning from elected and advisory bodies; educating students about the role that the Gainesville City Commission plays in city administration and governance; increasing communication between the UF student body and the Gainesville City Commission; increasing student involvement with the City of Gainesville by actively recruiting for various city internship positions; enhancing education in regards to government and civics; and by allowing students to disseminate the information they have learned to their peers in the student community.

This UF Advisory Board will enable students to communicate their concerns regarding local matters that affect them directly with the City Commission, and it will help students directly participate in local government. In this role, students on this board will be in a unique position to make decisions and potentially take action to improve the city. Not only will this board increase student involvement and education, but it will also create a student leadership corps which will be able to disseminate information about the City Commission's doings to the larger student body. By doing this and recruiting for possible city internships, this board will have a positive impact on the UF student body and the City Commission as well.

The Gainesville City Commission will also benefit from the establishment of the UF Advisory Board. By interacting directly with students and hearing their concerns, the commission will be more representative of the community as a whole by gaining insight into the issues that affect the student population. Hearing these student concerns, the Gainesville City Commission will be able to improve upon services which directly impact the student body in Gainesville. Additionally, the City Commission will be in a unique position to encourage student to actively engage in the political process, and this board will be a perfect avenue for student involvement.

When it comes to overseeing the UF Advisory Board, the role will fall to Florida Blue Key. An independent, politically unaffiliated organization, Florida Blue Key's Civic Engagement Division will create the proposed board and oversee its operations. The Director of this Division will work directly with the members of the UF Advisory Board as well as the members of the Gainesville City Commission to foster a better understanding of local issues that directly affect the student population in Gainesville.

The board itself will be composed of seven full members and two alternates. Of the seven full members, there will be an appointed Chair, an appointed Vice-Chair, an appointed Secretary, and four Members-at-Large. The Chair, Vice-Chair, and Secretary will be appointed every February and shall serve one term. Of the seven full members, two seats will be allocated to represent non-UF students, if possible. The Chair shall act as a liaison between the UF Advisory Board and the Gainesville City Commission. The Chair or his or her designee will regularly attend City Commission meetings and report on the activities, findings, and suggestions of the UF Advisory Board. The Vice-Chair will preside in the absence of the Chair and will serve as the clerk in the absence of the Secretary, who will serve as clerk at all meetings and will take minutes of the Advisory Board's activities. The minutes will be made available to the student body within 72 hours of the conclusion of the UF Advisory Board meeting in order to promote education and transparency. The board itself shall meet on a bi-weekly basis and shall meet with at least one member of the Gainesville City Commission or member of the city government per month (at the discretion and availability of the individual commissioners or other municipal employees).

Each term of the members of the UF Advisory Board shall be one year in length and last from February 1<sup>st</sup> until February 1<sup>st</sup> of the following year. In the case of a vacancy, one of the alternates shall become a full member and the Director of Civic Engagement shall appoint a new member to serve as an alternate. If a member of the Advisory Board will not be in Gainesville for the summer semester, one of the alternates will fill his or her seat until the end of that summer semester. If necessary, temporary UF Advisory Board members will be appointed by the Director of Civic Engagement.

Positions will be open to all students of all majors and years enrolled at the University of Florida or another association of higher learning in Gainesville with a minimum G.P.A. of 2.5. Students should have a proven record of leadership and

community involvement, and should be willing to learn about the workings of local government.