

Spring 2026 / Volume 14



Sustainability Studies Newsletter



LETTER FROM THE EDITORS

As we begin Spring 2026, it feels right to start with some good news from our Sustainability Studies community.

This semester's awards feature students and faculty whose work reflects the program's commitments to addressing the complex challenges of ecological health, community resilience, and economic vitality.

We are pleased to announce the 2026-2027 Sustainability Studies Course Development Award to Dr. Ron Chandler, who will teach a new course on understanding sustainability through participatory research. We also congratulate recipients of the Spring 2026 Sustainability Studies Student Research Award: Ana Ferreira, majoring in Sustainability Studies & Anthropology, and Jade Hua, whose work bridges Philosophy & Ecosystem Services.

We are fortunate to work alongside a community of thoughtful, creative, and active individuals. This newsletter offers only a glimpse of Sustainability Studies in action. We applaud our award recipients as well as the many others who stand out for their commitment to making a positive difference locally and globally.

IN THIS EDITION:

Upcoming Events

Sustainable Gators:

- Student Spotlight
- Alumni Spotlight
- Faculty Spotlight

Art + Media

Nature Spots

Glocal Gainesville

Meet the Editors



UPCOMING EVENTS



Climate Communications Summit: Learn about climate change's impact on real estate on Feb. 5, 2026, from 1-3 p.m. at the Reitz Union Auditorium. This event is free and open to the public. For more information, visit the College of Journalism's website by clicking [here](#).

Public Interest Environmental Conference - Conservation in an Age of Change: Deepen your understanding of environmental legislation on Feb. 12, 2026, and Feb. 13 at the Levin College of Law. Register by 5:30 p.m. Feb. 6, 2026. Free for Sustainability Studies students. For more information, go to <https://ufpiec.org/>.

Professor Amy Stein will host a preliminary Zoom meeting for sustainability students to prepare for PIEC on Feb. 10, 2026, from 3-3:50 p.m. Contact gbillesbach@ufl.edu to RSVP.



Photograph from [UF College of Journalism](#)

Lunch with BA in Sustainability Studies and Gulf Scholars Students: Mar. 2, 2026, 12-1:30 p.m. at O'Neill Reading Room, Pugh Hall

Opening the Doors of Environmental Perception (Lecture): Strengthen your understanding of the environment through environmental education, ecological imagination, and perceptual reciprocity with [Mitchell Thomashow](#). This lecture follows the lunch on Mar. 2, 2026, and will take place in Smathers Room 100 4-5 p.m.

UF CAIRES and Bachelor of Arts in Sustainability Studies Experiential Learning Poster Symposium: Explore students' learning projects through this open-house style symposium on Apr. 23, 2026, time TBD in Smathers Room 100. Contact gbillesbach@ufl.edu for more information.





Sustainable Gators: Student Spotlight



[Check out Addison on LinkedIn!](#)



[Read the full Invading Sea editorial here!](#)



[Fall 2025 Highlight: Abigail Trachtenberg](#)

Addison Hall

Addison Hall is a second-year Sustainability Studies student passionate about marine science, political science, and conservation, hoping to pursue a career in environmental law. Back in November, Addison wrote an opinion editorial for her Facets of Sustainability Class. She assessed an organization seeking to utilize geoengineering, or the technological modification of the climate, as a solution to the extreme environmental crises that we face today. It was then published in *The Invading Sea*, a nonpartisan source for news, commentary and educational content about climate change and other environmental issues affecting Florida.



“Sustainability is about caring for and respecting the world that provides us with the ability to live meaningful lives.”


THE INVADING SEA

FLORIDA AND THE CLIMATE CRISIS

 Connect with [Sofía](#) on LinkedIn!

 Read the full story on our [website!](#)

 Fall 2025 Alumni Highlight: [Cameron Delgado](#)

 Summer 2025 Alumni Highlight: [Max Chesnes](#)

Sustainable Gators: Alumni Spotlight



Sofía Aviles

Sofía Aviles graduated from UF in 2025 where she earned a double major in Sustainability Studies and Political Science, with minors in Economics and Agricultural and Natural Resource Law. She is continuing her education at Vermont Law and Graduate School as an Environmental Mission Scholar in their JD/Master's in Energy Regulation and Law program. By pursuing higher education in energy, Aviles will be making a direct impact in the realm of green policy. Learn more about Aviles' journey at UF and her passions to specialize in energy law by reading the full story on our website.



Alumni Network

The Gator Sustainability Studies Alumni Network on LinkedIn connects alumni and current students with job opportunities, news updates and sustainable career and lifestyle advice. Join [here](#) to learn more!





Sustainable Gators: Faculty Spotlight

✿ Contact Dr. Chandler:
ronchandler@ufl.edu

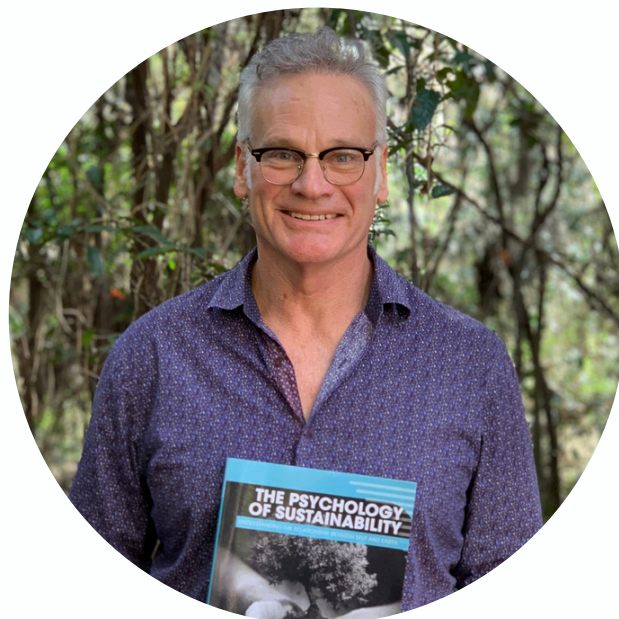
✿ [Read the full interview on our website!](#)

✿ Fall 2025 Faculty Spotlight:
[Anna Peterson](#)

✿ Summer 2025 Faculty Spotlight:
[Mark Brenner](#)

Dr. Ron Chandler

Ron Chandler is a Senior Instructional Professor and Undergraduate Coordinator in the Psychology Department. He is a pioneer in the field of Sustainability Psychology, which highlights the relationship between human ecology and pro-environmental behavior. He is also the Cofounder and President of the Conservation Initiative for the Asian Elephant (CIFAE) and recently won the 2026-2027 Sustainability Studies Course Development Award. He prioritizes compassion and optimism despite today's climate and has a passion for inspiring students to make the world a better place. Read more about Dr. Chandler's hopeful perspective on our website.



Fall Course Recommendations

PSY4930 - Understanding the Human Experience of Sustainability through Participatory Action Research

Beginning Fall 2026, Dr. Chandler will lead students to become participant researchers in field excursions and group collaborations to address complex problems sustainably.

ART + MEDIA



Dr. Gabby Salazar



Gabby Salazar is an award-winning storyteller, photojournalist, and social scientist. In light of her efforts, she has been named BBC Young Wildlife Photographer of the Year and a National Geographic Explorer, among other accolades. In 2022, she earned her PhD at UF and is now teaching a graduate-level course on conservation media. She is also passionate about environmental education, community outreach, and sustainability research. Read more about Dr. Salazar's incredible ongoing journey in the full story on our website.

🌸 See Dr. Salazar's [website](#) and [Instagram](#)!

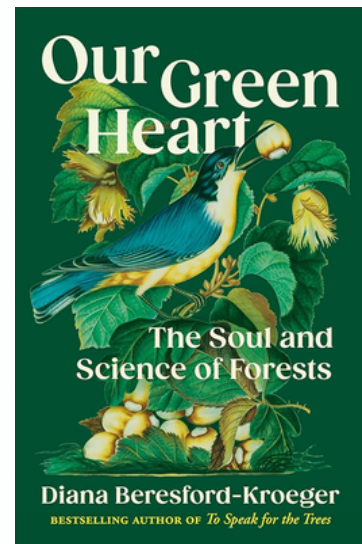
🌸 [Read the full interview on our website!](#)



Reading With Riley

Reading with Riley is a book club hosted by Sustainability Studies Newsletter Editor, Riley Harper. This semester, the novel is **Our Green Heart: The Soul and Science of Forests** by Diana Beresford-Kroeger. The book is about the importance of forests for climate change mitigation from the combined perspectives of modern science and Irish Druidic culture. The book is split into thirds, so there will be three meetings: February 16, March 23 and April 20 from 4-5 pm at [The Lynx Books](#).

Please email Riley (riley.harper@ufl.edu) or UF Sustainability Studies (gbillesbach@ufl.edu) to RSVP and learn more information about the first section of the book. All are welcome!



NATURE SPOTS

Split Rock Conservation Area

Split Rock Conservation Area is a quiet, beautiful, green space just minutes from Gainesville, with a past that is intertwined with the city's development. Once the site of a small house and limestone pool, the area has since been reclaimed by nature and preserved as a public conservation space. Today, its forested trails and exposed rock formations offer a glimpse into how human history and natural spaces coexist in North Central Florida.



Photographs from the [Florida Museum of Natural History](#)



[Read the full article on our website!](#)



GLOCAL GAINESVILLE

Vegan Gator Foodtruck

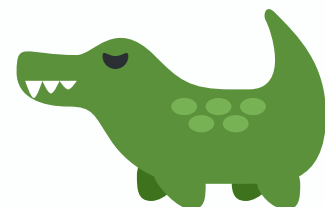


Vegan Gator Food Truck is serving up plant-based comfort food that proves vegan eats can be just as satisfying and indulgent as traditional dishes. Offering everything from stacked burgers and crispy cauliflower wings to loaded fries and rotating specials, every plate is specially crafted to deliver big flavors with a smaller environmental footprint. Whether you're fully vegan or just curious to try something new, Vegan Gator is the perfect spot to indulge locally. Keep an eye on their social media to catch where they'll be popping up next around Gainesville.

glo·cal
/glōkəl/
adjective

reflecting or characterized
by both local and global
considerations.

- 🌸 Locations vary!
- 🌸 Check out their [Instagram](#) and [Facebook!](#)
- 🌸 [Read the full story on Vegan Gator on our website!](#)





GLOCAL GAINESVILLE

Giving Garden – A Working Food Farm

According to Feeding America, food insecurity in Alachua County has been rising for years. As climate change worsens, food insecurity will escalate because more extreme weather will impact crop yields and increase food prices.

In fall 2025, the Gainesville Giving Garden merged with local nonprofit Working Food to increase access to food, education, and seeds in Alachua. By uniting, the organizations demonstrate how community can increase resilience for our food systems. Learn more about the volunteering and composting programs on their website!

- 🌸 Check out the [Giving Garden's](#) and [Working Food's](#) website!
- 🌸 Find the [Giving Garden](#) and [Working Food](#) on Instagram!
- 🌸 [Read the full story on our website!](#)



Photograph from the [Gainesville Giving Garden](#).



MEET THE EDITORS



Michelle La Roche



Paige Hughes



Dr. Glen Billesbach



Riley Harper

Where to find us:

Instagram: @ufsustainability

Website: sustainability.clas.ufl.edu/