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and Senior Vice President

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March 23, 2015

The Honorable Barack Obama
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Obama,

We are excited to participate in **#uifresh (University Innovation Freshmen)**, an initiative spearheaded by the University Innovation Fellows as a means to expand the participation of incoming first-year students into STEM disciplines. The program will help young students see problems as opportunities that should be approached with fresh eyes and an entrepreneurial mindset. As part of the initiative, University Innovation Fellows will work with the UF College of Engineering Innovation Institute to develop and deliver modules in design thinking, creativity and innovation. These modules will be featured in a UF Core general education curriculum that connects first-year students to peer communities of innovators in STEM. This is delivered within the context of rebuilding coastal communities post-extreme events for optimum recovery and resiliency using a human centered design approach.

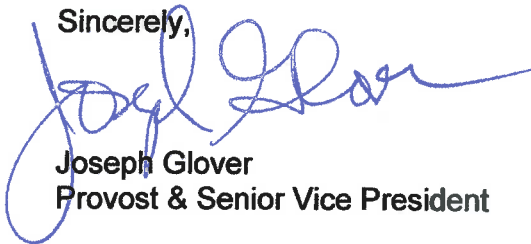
The initiative was developed in response to findings published by the President's Council of Advisors on Science and Technology, in a report titled "Engage to Excel: Producing One Million Additional College Graduates With Degrees in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics."¹ The report indicates that 60% of U.S. freshmen (in aggregate) who arrive to college intending to major in STEM, change majors to non-STEM disciplines over time. The report also cites the importance of the student experience that is connected to a community of STEM professionals and meaningful relationships with both peers and instructors, as a key factor in reducing departures from STEM fields.

We will work with our University Innovation Fellows to implement meaningful experiential learning opportunities in support of the national goal of reducing the percentage of STEM attrition by half in five years.

¹ https://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/microsites/ostp/pcast-engage-to-excel-final_feb.pdf

We believe students can have a powerful impact in driving student engagement in STEM, and we are excited to work with the University Innovation Fellows, a program of the NSF-funded National Center for Engineering Pathways to Innovation (Epicenter), to enhance STEM attraction and retention to ultimately meet U.S. workforce needs and strengthen our national competitiveness.

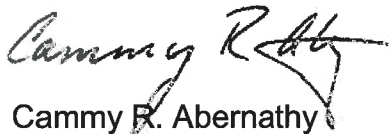
Sincerely,



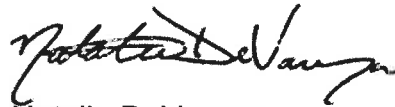
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