

HISTORY

The Machen Florida Opportunity Scholars Program supports low-income students who are first in their families to attend college. The University of Florida is committed to financially supporting academically-talented students who might not otherwise attend UF because of financial barriers. National studies have shown that students from low socio-economic backgrounds can be deterred from enrolling in a four-year college or university because of fear of debt and concerns that working while in school could hinder their chances for academic success. Many of these students opt instead to enroll in community colleges or choose not to attend college at all.



In 2005, President Emeritus Bernie Machen proposed creation of the Florida Opportunity Scholars program. Dr. Machen explained, “We believe there are significant numbers of students who can be admitted to UF, but who either don’t apply or don’t enroll because of the costs associated with attending college away from home. These students currently either don’t go to college or go to a local community college. We want them at the University of Florida!” Dr. Machen believes that UF, the state’s flagship university, has a responsibility to all Florida’s citizens, and that all academically deserving students should have an opportunity to attend UF.

In the fall of 2006, the program enrolled their first class of Machen Florida Opportunity Scholars. Students selected for the scholarship were accepted as first-time in college freshmen undergraduates, Florida residents, first in their family to enroll in college and have total household incomes of less than \$40,000 annually. The program provides not only financial support, but scholars receive comprehensive academic support, financial literacy education, social connections, and leadership development as a part of their University of Florida experience. Combining financial support and structured programmatic support make it unique nationally and highly successful.

In the fall of 2012 the program was renamed in honor of Dr. Bernie and Chris Machen at the request of an anonymous donor who gave \$10 million to support Florida Opportunity Scholars. To date, the Machen Florida Opportunity Scholars program has been awarded to over 3,500 UF students.

The first graduating class of Opportunity Scholars crossed the stage in 2010 and to date, the program has graduated nearly 2,000 students. Currently, there are 1,259 Machen Florida Opportunity Scholars at UF and a typical recipient comes from a household with an average income of \$18,408 a year. With an average GPA of 3.25, Machen Florida Opportunity Scholars are making the most of their college experience and they are eager to give back. Many graduates have already made financial contributions to the program as well as interacted with current scholars through our Featured Alumni Talk Program. **For more information about the program, please visit <http://fos.ufsa.ufl.edu/> or contact Courtnie Nichols at (352) 392-8078.**

VISION

To ensure a vibrant future for the state of Florida by leading in the transformation of public higher education. A self-sustaining Machen Florida Opportunity Scholars program will serve as the cornerstone of that endeavor by enabling qualified Florida high school graduates to attend the state's flagship university, regardless of their socio-economic status. By supporting low-income, first-generation college students, the program will help Florida families rise out of economic hardships, make it possible for talented young people to reach their promise, improve communities and create a stronger workforce.

MISSION

The Machen Florida Opportunity Scholars Program provides financial resources and individual support with the primary goal of graduating first-generation, low-income undergraduate students. By addressing systemic barriers and challenges, we provide a full grant and scholarship financial aid package as well as a comprehensive support program to ensure students thrive at UF. We help students develop valuable college success strategies, build confidence, understand their first-generation identity, connect to peer and professional mentors, and access campus resources which prepare them for a successful college career and meaningful post-graduate life.

