

**GATOR RECON:**  
**UFAMA MONTHLY NEWS**

**January 2026**

Learn more: [www.gatormilitary.org](http://www.gatormilitary.org)



## HAPPY NEW YEAR

from the UFAMA Communications Team to all of our members and military affiliated alumni!

### **ESSENTIAL EVENTS-BANQUET RECAP**

This past November, the second annual UFAMA Banquet took place at Emerson Alumni Hall in Gainesville, FL. We were honored by guest speaker Steve Spurrier, presented six awards to outstanding members of the Military Gator Community, and inducted our first honoree into the Hall of Fame, William Emerson. Find more details on our award winners at [www.gatormilitary.org](http://www.gatormilitary.org)!



## **SERVICE MEMBER OF THE YEAR**

Cmdr. James "JB" Walsh, USN

Jacksonville, FL



## **VETERAN OF THE YEAR**

Gregory Weiss

Jupiter, FL



## **RESERVIST OF THE YEAR**

Lt. Jamal Sowell, USNR

Orlando, FL



## **FAMILY MEMBER OF THE YEAR**

Melissa Campbell

Jacksonville, FL



## DEPT. OF WAR CIVILIAN OF THE YEAR

David Koch

Albuquerque, NM



## LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT

Lt. Jamal Sowell, USNR, Orlando, FL.

Jamal is a lifetime Gator, USMC Afghanistan War Vet, Pat Tillman Scholar, and current Naval Officer. He is a 3rd generation military service member. As a student Jamal was UF student body president. He has recently served on the UFAA Board of Directors from 2018-2024. Currently he is a Lieutenant in the U.S. Navy Reserve, working as an intelligence officer. Jamal's deep connection of service with

the university has made a lasting impact on the students of UF and exemplifies the best of the Gator Nation!

## HALL OF FAME INAUGURAL INDUCTION



William "Bill" Emerson was inducted into the University of Florida Association of Military Alumni Hall of Fame as the inaugural recipient of the award in recognition of his distinguished military service and significant contributions to the University of Florida. Jake Emerson, Emerson's grandson, accepted the award on his late grandfather's behalf.

## Introducing OPLIGN — Career Access at Zero Cost

This year we're tackling one of the biggest challenges our members face after graduation or transition; career opportunity and access. UFAMA is excited to introduce a powerful solution called OPLIGN, a zero-cost, fully automated platform that:

- Matches members instantly to internships and jobs from 10,000+ employers
- Uses a data-resume to highlight military skills and experience
- Helps alumni and employers connect directly where 85% of real hiring occurs

- Allows UFAMA-affiliated employers to post roles and immediately reach our network

This partnership directly advances our mission to support, engage, and sustain the success of Gator military alumni. And best of all, it's free for our members. More information and sign-up instructions can be found at our website below under the resources link.

[LEARN MORE](#)

## CONNECTING COMMUNITIES

Gator Club® Liaisons serve as the ultimate connection between the local Gator Club® in each region and UFAMA's worldwide support network. Shoutout to the following three Liaisons for going above and beyond with their engagement and support of our mission:



**Warren Corpus**  
Palm Beach County  
Gator Club®



**Frenchie Bisiaux**  
Marion County Gator Club®



**Ryan Quinn**  
Gator Club® of Historic St. Augustine

## SHARE YOUR STORIES

We want to hear from you! We always encourage and appreciate stories of service from our military-affiliated UF alumni. Supporting our members is our specialty, and we aim to give credit where it's due! Share with us for a spotlight in future newsletters and on our social media accounts.



**Not a member?  
Join the UF Alumni  
Association today!**

Select affiliation with UFAMA when  
you sign up online or with the Gator  
Nation App!

**JOIN!**

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