

GATOR RECON

University of Florida Association of Military Alumni newsletter for Gator veterans and UF military-affiliated alumni

April 2026

www.gatormilitary.org



Important Update: Military Reunion Weekend Dates Still to Be Finalized

The dates for UF's 2026 Military Reunion Weekend, which were previously advertised in this newsletter as Nov. 19-22, are in flux and must **still be finalized by the UF Alumni Association**. Please stay tuned and we will provide updates on the confirmed dates as soon as possible.

UFAMA Scholarships Deadline Extended

UFAMA is offering \$5,000 in scholarships to five incoming University of Florida freshmen with military, veteran, DoD, and/or ROTC affiliations, including those meaningfully influenced or inspired by military service.

The application deadline has been **extended to April 24**, so eligible freshmen are urged to apply now via the application form on the [UFAMA website](#).

Any questions, please contact scholarships@gatormilitary.org.

Alumni Spotlight

Alan Thompson

Alan Thompson wanted to be a Gator since he was a kid, even if it took him some time to get there.

Family came first for Thompson, an 18-year veteran of the U.S. Army and Air Force, as he entered the military during his senior year of high school due to the birth of his son.

Thanks to the military's tuition assistance benefits, he was able to continue his education while he served. The opportunity for Thompson to officially become a Gator came thanks to UF's online programs.

While working toward his Bachelor of Arts in Business Administration, he said there was a time he thought he might not make it through.

“In Dr. Banko's Accounting class, I remember being on the border of dropping out from UF because it was one of the hardest things I've done since graduating from Basic Training and deploying,” Thompson said.

Thompson said he had to make “a hard commitment to significantly increase my study time, and to seek extra help to understand the concepts.”

Getting through the tough academic challenge made graduation day in 2021 that much sweeter.



He said it was a top 5 moment of his life “to accomplish something some of my own family told me wouldn't be possible and to know that I was graduating from a Top 5 University and accomplishing something that no one in my family had ever done before, even at the age of 30.”

Thompson's journey as a Gator reached an exciting milestone in February, as he was named one of the [Gators 40 Under 40](#).

“I'm thankful for the opportunity to be recognized as a Gators 40 Under 40 Honoree, an accolade I've been interested in since it was announced,” Thompson said.

Thompson's 40 Under 40 profile highlighted his accomplishments, like the founding of “Stingray Branding, a full-service marketing agency launched in 2008 that has guided more than 600 brands across South Carolina.”

Thompson has also helped give back to UF professionally. Gator Collective was the original NIL group for UF that was closed and then Thompson helped with the launch of Florida Victorious to replace it.

Thompson said he is very proud to be part of UF, as the University's values remind him of the Air Force's core values.

“Being a Gator was, is, and will always be one of my proudest accomplishments,” Thompson said. “... I'm proud to say I'm a Gator and look forward to many more memories thanks to UF. Go Gators!”

Who's Raising the Bar? Nominate a Gator

Know any military-affiliated alumni who are making waves in their community, workplace or industry? Send a note to contact@gatormilitary.org and the Gator Recon staff will handle the rest.

We're always looking to highlight the unsung heroes in our ranks!

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