



Path to Preeminence: Five-year Benchmarking Plan

University of Central Florida

2023

In accordance with UCF’s status as an emerging preeminent state research university and UCF’s newly released *Unleashing Potential* strategic plan, the university submits the following five-year plan for achieving full preeminence status to the Board of Governors.

UCF’s plan will achieve full preeminence within five years.

In addition to the state’s preeminent metrics, another indicator of national excellence is the Carnegie Classifications of Institutions of Higher Education. UCF is classified in the highest possible ranking of R1: Doctoral Universities – Very High Research Activity. This ranking was awarded to only 3.7 percent of all evaluated institutions and was achieved by only 107 public institutions. Additionally, UCF is one of only 64 public, R1 institutions that also hold the optional Carnegie Community Engagement Classification of “Curricular Engagement and Outreach and Partnerships.” The pairing of these classifications is recognition of UCF’s commitment to teaching, research, and service.

Preeminence Metrics Achieved

In 2022, UCF achieved eight of the 12 preeminent metrics as defined in Florida Statute 1001.7065 qualifying UCF for the “Emerging Preeminence” designation. The eight metrics are detailed in Table 1, including current performance and a five-year projection.

UCF’s newly approved strategic plan, *Unleashing Potential*, has embedded the preeminent metrics among the various goals included within the plan.

The university and its leadership will remain diligent in the continued improvement of our performance in these eight metrics.

Table 1: Preeminent Metrics Achieved			
	Benchmark	UCF 2022	UCF 2027
Average GPA and SAT Score (for incoming freshman in Fall semester)	4.0 GPA 1200 SAT	4.3 1317	4.3 1317
Public University Ranking	Top 50 in 2 or more publications	3	4
Freshman Retention Rate (Summer-Fall Full-time FTIC)	90%	92%	93%
National Academy Memberships	>= 6	8	10
Non-Medical Science & Engineering Research Expenditures (\$M)	\$150M	\$167	\$225
Number of Broad Disciplines Ranked in Top 100 for Research Expenditures	5 in Top 100	6	7
Utility Patents Awarded (over 3-year period)	100	156	141
Doctoral Degrees Awarded Annually	400	510	540

Metrics That Require Steady Work

This plan outlines how UCF will achieve an additional three metrics (for a total of 11 of 12) to attain the full preeminent state research university designation by 2027. The university continues to make investments and strategic improvements designed to improve the performance in these areas. Table 2 details the metrics where UCF's performance is below the preeminent benchmark and presents the most recent performance and a 2027 projection. Details in each section below will highlight recent investments.

	Benchmark	UCF 2022	UCF 2027
Four-year Graduation Rate (Summer-Fall Full-time FTIC)	60%	50%	65%
Science & Engineering Research Expenditures (\$M)	>= \$200M	\$182	\$265
Number of Post-Doctoral Appointees	200	142	210
Endowment Size (\$M)	\$500M	\$201	\$290

Four-year Graduation Rate

The preeminent benchmark requires a 60 percent four-year graduation rate. UCF achieved a 50 percent graduation rate in 2022 (2017-21 cohort). Improving this metric remains a critical goal embedded within UCF's *Unleashing Potential* strategic plan and is included also monitored within each college through specific, college-based targets. Preliminary data for 2023 indicates an increase to 54.6 percent.

UCF has multiple initiatives focused on improving student success including intentional advising, predictive analytics, and curricular analytics. In 2022, UCF restructured creating an inaugural Senior Vice President for Student Success and Engagement while dedicating an additional \$3 million in new recurring investments toward orientation programming, support modules for STEM courses, increasing class section volume, and additional advisors. The projected target for four-year graduation is 65 percent by 2027.

Science and Engineering Research Expenditures

The preeminent benchmark requires \$200 million in science and engineering research expenditures. UCF had \$182 million in science and engineering research expenditures as of 2022 (2020-21 fiscal year). *Unleashing Potential* has incorporated the Total R&D Expenditures metric of \$239 million with a target of \$350 million by 2027 (increasing 46 percent).

UCF has already achieved two related preeminent metrics with \$150 million in non-medical science and engineering research expenditures and six of eight research disciplines with expenditures in the top 100 among both public and private institutions. Achieving these metrics demonstrates UCF's national performance in STEM-research expenditures. During fiscal year 2022, UCF reallocated \$7 million recurring and \$26 million non-recurring dollars toward research equipment, infrastructure, and longer-term innovations designed to have a substantial impact. Areas such as infectious disease and travel health, digital twin, space education and industrialization, zero-carbon energy, artificial intelligence, and next-gen computing hardware benefited from recurring investments. The projection for total science and engineering research expenditures is \$265 million by 2027.

Post-Doctoral Appointees

The preeminent benchmark requires 200 post-doctoral appointees. UCF had 142 reported post-doctoral appointees in 2022 (Fall 2020 data). The metric is embedded within the *Unleashing Potential* strategic

plan. During fiscal year 2022, UCF reallocated \$1 million into initiatives designed to revitalize and grow our post-doctoral appointees' program. The projection for this metric is to steadily increase and have 225 post-doctoral appointees supporting UCF research by 2027.

Endowment Size

The preeminent benchmark requires \$500 million in endowment. UCF had \$201 million in endowment in 2022 (2020-21 fiscal year). UCF is committed to growing our endowment and have increased the value by 37 percent over the last five years. This metric is included in *Unleashing Potential* strategic plan along with annual fundraising. The projection for this metric is \$290 million in 2027, and we do not anticipate meeting the preeminent benchmark.

UCF's Strategic Plan

Unleashing Potential, approved in 2022, update the university's mission, aspirations, priorities, and areas of focus. The plan specifically highlights UCF's aspiration of becoming a Top 50 public research university and a designated preeminent university by 2027.

The updated UCF mission declares that "UCF is a public research university invested in unleashing the potential within every individual, enriching the human experience, through inclusion, discovery and innovation, and propelling broad-based prosperity for the many communities we serve."

The five-year plan highlights twenty-four metrics across four priorities, including Student Success and Well-Being; Discovery and Exploration; Community and Culture; and Innovation and Sustainability. As UCF continues to pursue excellence in these areas, attainment of additional preeminence metrics will be a byproduct of our everyday advances.

Conclusion

The University of Central Florida is grateful to the Florida Legislature and the Board of Governors for their support of the preeminent and emerging preeminent programs. The designation enhances UCF's national prominence and demonstrates the state's commitment to nurture the best higher education system in the nation.