

2023-2024 UF WATER INSTITUTE

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PEOPLE

This year, the Water Institute underwent significant personnel turnover and, for the first time since its founding in 2006, experienced a leadership change. This transition signals a new era for the Institute, introducing fresh perspectives and innovative strategies.

Meet the New Team!

Matt Cohen, Interim Director



Dr. Matt Cohen was appointed Interim Director in October 2023. He is a professor of forest hydrology in the School of Forest, Fisheries, and Geomatics Sciences, with nearly 20 years of experience addressing water resource and ecosystem science challenges in Florida and globally. Dr. Cohen has been deeply involved in the Water Institute since its inception, serving as Chair of the Faculty Advisory Committee, advising two cohorts of Water Institute Graduate Fellows, and being selected as an inaugural Water Institute Faculty Fellow.

Paloma Carton de Grammont, Assistant Director



Dr. Paloma Carton de Grammont, with twenty years of experience in interdisciplinary natural resource collaboration, serves as Assistant Director. She leads Stakeholder Engagement, Inclusive Excellence, Outreach, and Communications, and she manages Student Involvement. Since 2018, she has fostered partnerships among faculty, staff, external collaborators, and stakeholders, playing a key role in securing and executing funded research projects.

Darlene Velez, Research Coordinator III



Darlene Velez, an Environmental Scientist and Facilitator with over 20 years of experience, joined the Water Institute in November 2023. She specializes in environmental ecology, particularly water chemistry and hydrology of rivers, springs, and estuaries. An alumna of the Natural Resources Leadership Institute, Darlene now focuses on interdisciplinary project coordination, stakeholder engagement, and overseeing the Florida Water and Climate Alliance (FloridaWCA).

Sarah Marc, Communications and Event Specialist



Sarah Marc joined the Water Institute in September 2023 after graduating from UF with a B.S. in Environmental Science. Her expertise in communication and event planning comes from previously collaborating with UF/IFAS Extension. As Communications and Event Specialist, Sarah takes the lead in crafting and executing communication strategies to advance the Water Institute's mission, while also spearheading the planning of in-person and virtual events.

Max Williams, Research Administration Liaison



Max Williams is the Director of Research Administration. He earned his BA from the University of Virginia and his Masters of Agribusiness from the University of Florida. Max is a Certified Research Administrator and has worked as the lead administrator in the Department of Astronomy in CLAS. Most recently, he served as the fiscal officer for several business units, including Agricultural and Biological Engineering and the Program for Resource Efficient Communities in IFAS, and the Water Institute in the Office of Research.

Rob de Rooij, Research Assistant Scientist



Rob earned his Doctor of Science degree at the Centre of Hydrogeology, University of Neuchatel (Switzerland) in 2007. His research includes the development of a particle-tracking and finite difference scheme for complex flow systems. Currently, his focus is on developing and testing methods to generate random 2-D and 3-D conduit networks to incorporate into watershed scale flow and transport models, and test coupled discrete-continuum flow and transport models for the Silver Springs basin in Florida.

Nathan Reaver, Research Assistant Scientist



Nathan holds a B.S. and M.S. degree in Bioengineering from the University of Toledo. He earned his Ph.D. and M.E. in Environmental Engineering Sciences from the University of Florida in 2018. Some of his research interests include: the intersection of water, energy, food, and the environment; complex system dynamics; ecosystem dynamics and restoration; and how scientific inferences are obtained from data. At the Water Institute, he focuses on understanding hydrological, ecological, and social dynamics in karst watersheds.

Ambassadors 2023-2024

Water Institute Ambassadors work closely with staff to enrich the graduate student community by organizing events, supporting the Water Institute Symposium, and fostering engagement among students from on and off-campus facilities.



Paul Donsky

Paul is a PhD student in Forest Resources and Conservation, and serves as a Graduate Research Assistant at UF Ecohydrology Lab and is a Board Member of the Ichetucknee Alliance. His research focuses on Florida's springs and their evolving ecological conditions. Paul excels in stakeholder engagement, public education, and event planning, demonstrating a strong dedication to ecological awareness and preservation.



Gabrielle Quadrado

Gabi is a PhD student in Geography, and studies interactions of climate change, urbanization, and human impacts on coastal processes and hazards. In 2021-2022, she served as graduate representative of the DEI Committee in her department, organizing student events. Gabi has expertise in science communication, public outreach, and academic event planning.

Farewell to Dr. Graham



After seventeen years of serving as the director of the Water Institute, Dr. Wendy Graham stepped down to take on the role of Division Director for the Division of Research, Innovation, Synergies, and Education (RISE) in the Directorate for Geosciences (GEO) at the National Science Foundation. As the founding director, Dr. Graham, who was pivotal in launching the Water Institute, created and nurtured an intellectually stimulating, cross-disciplinary environment that fosters collaboration and innovation. Under her leadership, the Water Institute emerged as a leader in facilitating and coordinating convergent, transdisciplinary research, education, and outreach programs critical to understanding and providing solutions to long-standing and emerging water issues of state, national, and global importance. These initiatives enhanced the UF community, influenced statewide water policy, and impacted national and international research initiatives. Examples of her legacy include the Water Institute Biannual Symposium, the Florida Water and Climate Alliance, and the Water Institute Graduate Fellows program. She leaves behind a strong, respected institute primed to meet and overcome future challenges.

Our Affiliated Faculty

Individual UF faculty affiliation with the Water Institute is through voluntary registration. Affiliate Faculty members retain their positions in their tenure departments where all administrative and performance review functions are carried out. [Water Institute Affiliate Faculty](#) can vote on Water Institute governance issues and receive support through our award programs.

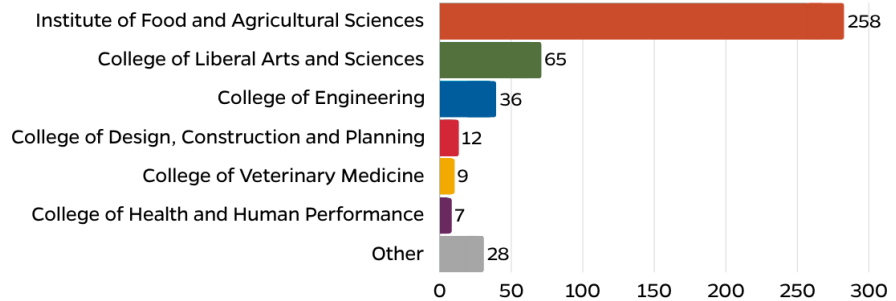
The Water Institute supports its Affiliate Faculty in the following ways:

- Facilitates networking opportunities with water-related colleagues, partners, and stakeholders across the state.
- Creates lasting interdisciplinary research, extension, and education teams, which enhance external grant.
- Provides proposal development support and expert coordination and facilitation of projects and teams.
- Identifies opportunities and offers funding through its awards programs.
- Recognizes achievements and contributions, which amplifies faculty visibility and impact.

Summary of Faculty Membership by College and Other Academic Units

417 Affiliated Faculty

from more than 80
Departments and Centers
across 11 Colleges



The Faculty Advisory Committee

The Water Institute [Faculty Advisory Committee](#) (FAC) consists of 15 members from Affiliate Faculty. Ten members are elected by the Water Institute Affiliate Faculty, serving staggered 3-year terms. The remaining five members are appointed by the Water Institute Director to ensure diverse representation across disciplines, demographics, and locations. The FAC provides guidance to the Water Institute Director and staff on the development and implementation of programs, plans, and policies.

2023-2024 Water Institute Faculty Advisory Committee

2021-2024

<i>Christine Angelini</i>	ESSIE, College of Engineering
<i>Mark Brenner</i>	Geological Sciences, CLAS
<i>Dail Laughinghouse</i>	Agronomy, Fort Lauderdale Research and Education Center, IFAS
<i>Mary Lusk</i>	Soil, Water, and Ecosystem Sciences, Gulf Coast Research & Education Center, IFAS

2022-2025

<i>Christa Court</i>	Department of Food and Resources Economics, IFAS
<i>Lisa Krinsky</i>	Florida Sea Grant, IFAS Extension
<i>Katy Serafin</i>	Geography, CLAS
<i>Jason von Meding</i>	M. E. Rinker Sr. School of Construction Management, College of Design, Construction and Planning

2023-2026

<i>Mike Allen</i>	Fisheries and Aquatic Sciences, IFAS
<i>Bridget Baker</i>	Wildlife Ecology and Conservation, IFAS
<i>Johana Engström</i>	Geography, CLAS
<i>David Kaplan (Chair)</i>	ESSIE, College of Engineering
<i>Tara Sabo-Attwood (Past Chair)</i>	Environmental and Global Health, College of Public Health and Health Professions
<i>Matt Whiles</i>	Soil, Water, and Ecosystem Sciences, IFAS

Water Institute Faculty Fellows

The [UF Water Institute Faculty Fellows Program](#) recognizes UF faculty who are making outstanding contributions to interdisciplinary research, extension, and education water programs. The award aims to recognize recent contributions that significantly advance UF's interdisciplinary communities of water-related science and provide incentives for Fellows' continued contributions to the goals of the Water Institute. The Faculty Fellow awards are for three academic years. Awarded faculty are recognized at an Awards Ceremony, featured in a UF-Water Institute Seminar, active in coordinating interdisciplinary proposals, and serve as ambassadors for the Water Institute.

Active Faculty Fellows

Distinguished Faculty Fellow

Early Career Faculty Fellow

2023



[Dr. Micheal Allen](#)
Forest, Fisheries, and
Geomatics Sciences,
UF/IFAS



[Dr. Vivek Sharma](#)
Agricultural and Biological
Engineering, UF/IFAS

2022



[Dr. Christa Court](#)
Food and Resources
Economics Department,
UF/IFAS



[Dr. Samuel Smidt](#) (left UF)
Former Assistant Professor
Soil, Water, and Ecosystem
Sciences, UF/IFAS

2021



[Dr. Lisa Krinsky](#)
Indian River Research
and Education Center
and Florida Sea Grant,
UF/IFAS



[Dr. Jiangxiao Qiu](#)
Forest, Fisheries, and
Geomatics Sciences, Fort
Lauderdale Research and
Education Center, UF/IFAS