

UNDERGRADUATE LIBRARY ADVISORS PROGRAM 2023-2024

JASMINE SIMMONS / STUDENT SUCCESS LIBRARIAN



Fig. 1: Annika explaining some of the Libraries materials at one of the three Fall Fest 2023 table stops.



Fig. 2: Rebekkah at Fall Fest 2023 Event.

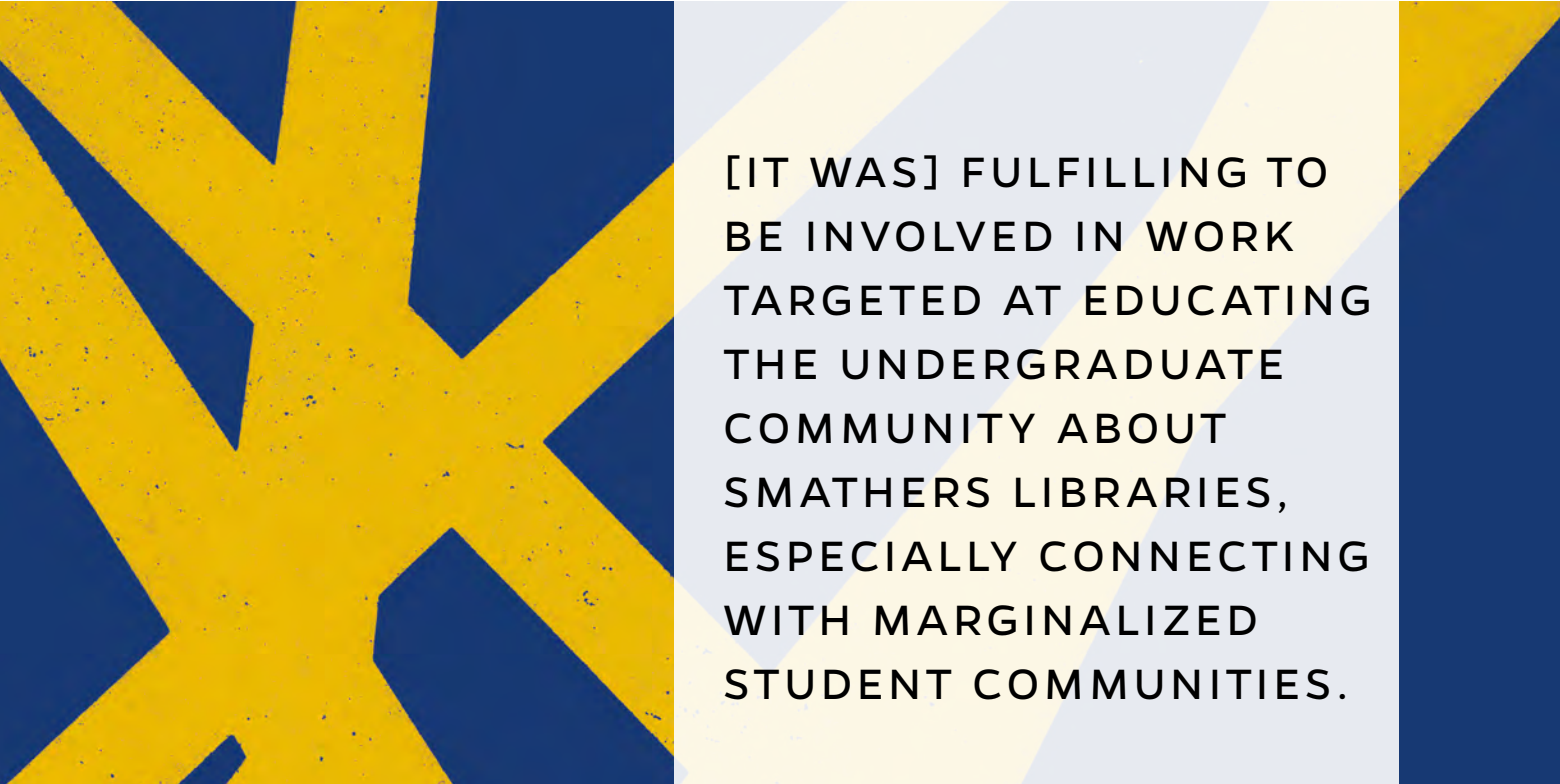
Throughout the 2023–2024 academic year, the Undergraduate Library Advisors (ULAs)—Sophia Medina, Annika Cruz, Braulio Quintana, and Rebekkah Hudson—led by coordinators Jasmine Simmons and Patricia Takacs embarked on a journey aimed at boosting student engagement with the George A. Smathers Libraries. The ULA peer mentor program, which initially began in summer 2021, was designed to increase undergraduate student engagement with Smathers Libraries by training a cohort of student leaders to represent, promote, and teach library services to their peers. The ULAs completed rigorous training sessions focused on becoming familiar with library resources and services and information literacy, met with library associates in various departments, and visited all the branch locations.

One particularly significant event that the ULA cohort attended well into their roles was the Student Success Strategic Planning Retreat, which happened in October 2023. There, the ULAs engaged in meaningful conversations with library associates from different branches and shared their perspectives on what student success means to them as well as how they perceive the libraries supporting student learning and achievement. The ULAs shared outreach ideas and suggestions to help better communicate with students on campus and offered insightful feedback, which helped to shape a comprehensive outreach and communication plan for the Smathers Libraries Student Success Program.

With their newfound knowledge of the libraries and enthusiasm, the ULAs jumped right into campus-wide outreach efforts. Notable among these efforts was their participation in events like the Transfer Preview Involvement Fair, Fall Fest, and First Gen Day. The ULAs worked together to curate titles in the Smathers Libraries collection for a digital first-generation reading list. They designed promotional flyers for library-wide tabling opportunities and campus events and actively engaged with their peers while sharing information about the myriad services offered by the libraries. They were instrumental in assisting with these tabling efforts and successfully placed the Smathers Libraries in spaces we hadn't traditionally been in before. For instance, they managed a pop-up table for an event hosted by the UF student organization National Society of Black Physicists, co-sponsored by Marston Science Library, to showcase literature that was either written by or featured the lived experiences of black and African Americans in STEM, as well as hosted a Smathers Libraries table at SwampCon and Gatorwell's Stress Less event in early spring of 2024.



Fig. 3: Sophia at First Gen Day 2023 gesturing toward the handout about Marston and explaining that it is one of six Libraries on campus.



[IT WAS] FULFILLING TO BE INVOLVED IN WORK TARGETED AT EDUCATING THE UNDERGRADUATE COMMUNITY ABOUT SMATHERS LIBRARIES, ESPECIALLY CONNECTING WITH MARGINALIZED STUDENT COMMUNITIES.

Throughout the year, the ULAs engaged in 10 tabling opportunities where they had face-to-face encounters with over 1,600 of their peers from various student populations to promote Smathers Libraries. Moreover, they assisted with the content creation for social media; most notable is their three-part street-style interview videos that gained over 25,000 views (and counting) and 900 likes between UFLIB Instagram and Twitter, created as a fun engagement strategy to help increase awareness of the Libraries. ULAs also designed informative resource flyers and much more as they explored innovative outreach and marketing strategies to use to connect their peers to the libraries.

Individually, the ULAs took on projects that had a lasting impression on the institution. Annika Cruz's endeavor to incorporate student publications into the Libraries'


digital collection demonstrates her commitment to advocating for the preservation and presentation of student work. Meanwhile, Sophia Medina created the George A. Smathers Reading Room at SwampCon, which gave students a unique opportunity to explore the library's sci-fi collection in a dynamic setting. Reflecting on their experiences, the ULAs acknowledged a strong sense of achievement and personal growth. Braulio Quintana, for example, mentioned how fulfilling it was to be involved in work targeted at educating the undergraduate community about Smathers Libraries, especially connecting with marginalized student communities. Overall, the ULAs' work provides evidence of student leadership in academic libraries and the vital role that they can play in influencing how libraries support the academic success and well-being of the student population. 

Fig.4: 2023-2024 ULA - left to right - Patricia Takacs (advisor) Sophia Medina (ULA), Braulio Quintana (ULA), Jasmine Simmons (Student Success Librarian and Lead Advisor), Rebekkah Hudson (ULA), and Annika Cruz (ULA).



IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO SHARE ANY PROJECT IDEAS, SUGGESTIONS, OR RESOURCES THAT YOU BELIEVE COULD CONTRIBUTE TO THE ULA PROGRAM, OR IF YOU SIMPLY HAVE QUESTIONS ABOUT IT, PLEASE CONTACT JASMINE AT JSIMMONS3@UFL.EDU.