

STRATEGIC PLAN

2026 – 2031

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Introduction

Since opening in 1990, the Harn Museum of Art at the University of Florida has been a cornerstone of the Greater Gainesville arts and culture ecosystem. In addition to serving the students and faculty of the University, the Harn is the most prominent fine art museum in the greater North Central Florida region and demonstrates its commitment to being a cultural resource through its free admission and educational activities. The museum is known as a trusted resource and for its high quality and relevant exhibitions, many of which have toured across the United States.

The Harn's collections consist of nearly 14,000 works of art. They focus on African, Asian, modern and contemporary art, and photography with representation of Ancient American and Oceanic art, and a growing collection of prints and drawings before 1850. In 2020, the Harn received The Florida Art Collection, Gift of Samuel and Roberta Vickers, an extensive collection of Florida-themed

paintings, drawings and watercolors that includes many prominent American artists from the late 19th to the mid-20th centuries.

This gift of art led to planning for a 20,000-square-foot addition, which ultimately became a renovation project of existing administrative space within the museum due to rising construction costs. In 2025 the Harn began a major renovation of administrative spaces into 3,600 square feet of new exhibition space along with updating the nearly 1,000 square-foot-Bishop Study Center into an area that can be used more frequently by university students and classes to analyze and engage with the Harn's collection. Slated to open in the Fall of 2026, this renovation will allow visitors to encounter art immediately upon their arrival, with the first exhibition in the new gallery space titled *Beyond the Brush: The Florida Art Collection, Gift of Samuel H. and Roberta T. Vickers*.



Planning Process and Methodology

In August of 2024, the Harn established a Planning Team for the Harn Museum's next 5-year Strategic Plan (2026 – 2031).¹ This group met regularly to discuss progress on the 2020 – 2025 plan and to set the stage for the 2026 – 2031 plan. During these meetings, the Planning Team agreed that a combination of focus groups, town halls, surveys, peer research and cross-departmental discussions with staff would help to best assess progress to date as well as areas of focus for the next plan's goals.²

Key Takeaways from the 2020 – 2025 Plan

In the past five years, the Harn has made significant progress towards achieving the goals of the 2020 – 2025 Strategic Plan. This is in large part due to cross-departmental teamwork grounded in the mission of the Harn to inspire, educate and enrich people's lives through art.

¹ Planning Team staff are listed in "Appendix 1" of this document.

² Aggregated summaries from the various methods of data collection are kept on the Harn Museum's Sharepoint site for the planning team's reference.

GOAL 1

Inspire connection, creativity, and inquiry by aligning and enhancing the museum's exhibition and public programming portfolio.

Major successes towards this goal include:

Developing and implementing a more centralized process for sustaining a multi-year portfolio of exhibitions, allowing the Harn to ensure a right-sized budget and consider staffing resources in a timely manner

Acquiring The Florida Art Collection, Gift of Samuel H. and Roberta T. Vickers, which more than doubled the Harn's Modern Art collection and brought in 700 new artists (200 of whom are women)

Creating programming around The Florida Art Collection and displaying the collection in St. Augustine at the UF Governor's House Cultural Center and Museum, providing additional opportunities for the public to engage with the museum's exhibitions

Acquiring a major gift in 2024 of 337 modern and contemporary prints from Jerry and Anne Godsey that greatly enriched the Harn's collection of Japanese prints

The Harn intends to build upon these successes—in particular, the idea of further aligning the exhibition and public programming portfolio to strengthen the Harn's brand in the 2026 – 2031 Strategic Plan.

GOAL 2

Expand UF students' intellectual development and professional skills by growing and deepening art-centered contributions to academic life across disciplines while continuing to serve the Gainesville community by engaging students in community-facing programs.

Major successes towards this goal include:

Creating the new role of Student Engagement Manager, who oversees the student internship program, the Museum University Student Engagement (MUSE) program, and Creatives-in-Residence program along with a portfolio of public programs to proactively engage and mentor students

Mandating that all internships be paid with a stipend of \$2,500 for each student intern accepted to the program, formalizing the internship program and experience, and engaging student interns in public programming to connect them with the community and hands-on job experience

The Harn intends to build upon these successes—in particular, deepening student engagement and UF partnerships for meaningful student outcomes in the 2026 – 2031 Strategic Plan.



GOAL 3

Become a campus and community destination by enhancing the Harn's visibility and visitor experience.

Major successes towards this goal include:

Establishing the new Director of Visitor Engagement role that now oversees Visitor Services, Rentals, the Museum Store, and visitor intercept surveys

Beginning and sustaining visitor intercept surveys through the Collaboration for Ongoing Visitor Experience Studies (COVES), resulting in more concrete data about our visitors and seeing, on average, positive visitor experiences at the Harn

Expanding the museum's hours to include evening hours on Thursdays with the introduction of the Art After Dark program series, allowing for more opportunities for visitors to come to the museum and yielding in attendance numbers that are higher than pre-COVID numbers

Upgrading the Harn's website platform and branding thus improving the digital experience for the museum's audience

Increasing the percentage of the collection that is digitized and available on the Harn's website from 4% to 80%, resulting in a higher number of inquiries about the collection from scholars across the world as well as local educators and students

The Harn intends to build upon these successes—in particular, the idea of being a “third place”³ to foster a sense of community in the 2026 – 2031 Strategic Plan.

GOAL 4

Enable the success of the Harn's vision by strengthening the museum's financial and managerial platform.

Major successes towards this goal include:

Building the foundations for key initiatives that took place in Goals 1-3 by reorganizing staffing where needed and fundraising (e.g. establishing funding for paid internships, digitization initiatives, intercept surveys, and Art After Dark programming)

Evaluating and streamlining budget and financial processes across the museum to allow departments to be more knowledgeable and empowered regarding departmental budgets

Changes to the plan and this goal include:

Pivoting from creating a 20,000-square-foot addition to a renovation project of existing administrative space within the museum due to rising construction costs

Delaying the rollout of a paid membership program due to staff turnover at the Harn as well as changes to the University of Florida Foundation's Customer Relationship Management (CRM) platform

The Harn intends to both build upon these successes and adapt to the changes as detailed in several of the goals of 2026 – 2031 Strategic Plan.

³ In the 1980s, Ray Oldenburg, a professor of sociology and anthropology at the University of West Florida, coined the term “third place” to refer to a space separate from one's home (first space) and work (second place). Oldenburg defined third places as pubs, cafés, churches, parks, beauty parlors, main streets and museums and considered these spaces to be the anchors of a community. Oldenburg suggested that third places provide informal and neutral gathering spaces for civic involvement and social connection.



2026 – 2031 **STRATEGIC PLAN**

Mission Statement

The University of Florida's Harn Museum of Art's mission is to inspire, educate and enrich people's lives through art.

The Harn uses the power of the visual arts to open conversations about our shared cultural history and pressing contemporary issues through exhibitions, collections, scholarship and programming of the highest caliber. The Harn strives to develop an academic community of creative, divergent thinkers in collaboration with the University of Florida, and fosters joy and community by welcoming students, UF faculty and staff and local residents to engage with art.

Vision, Values & Guiding Principles

The vision for the Harn's 2026 – 2031 Strategic Plan is grounded in the following overarching values and guiding principles:

Creating a Welcoming and Inclusive "Third Place"

As a "third place" connector for the campus and community, the Harn serves as an anchor for the greater Gainesville community where people from all walks of life feel welcome and at home during their visits. By positioning itself as an integral part of every UF student's academic journey, the Harn embraces all members of the surrounding community and pledges to serve individuals regardless of race, ethnicity, ability, sexual orientation, or socioeconomic status. The Harn commits to being a free and accessible space that engages a vibrant, wide-ranging group of individuals, making visitors feel connected to their community.





Partnering for Impact

As an academic engine within the university and a catalyst for engagement and well-being, the Harn partners with a wide range of constituents and stakeholders across both the campus and the community to achieve impact. The museum practices authentic and targeted collaboration and strives to understand the needs of partners ensuring that the Harn remains a relevant community asset.

Producing Professional and Artistically Excellent Experiences

The Harn continues to deliver pre-professional training for students through its paid internship program while also providing singular art experiences through world-class exhibitions and programming for all visitors to the museum. As the most prominent professional-caliber art museum in the North Central Florida region, the Harn is committed to providing the campus and community with stellar exhibitions, collections, and programs, and the museum aspires to extend its reach beyond its walls with traveling exhibitions and a wide-reaching online presence.

Fostering Intellectual Freedom and Openness

The Harn believes in the spirit of civic dialogue and academic debate. As an educational institution, it is therefore committed to acting as a platform for open dialogue, debate and discussion about difficult and potentially controversial topics through a balanced lens consisting of art from creators across the globe.

GOAL 1

Increase and deepen student engagement with the Harn Museum of Art.

Looking back to the past several strategic plans of the museum, there has been a focused effort to connect with University of Florida students and faculty, specifically with the creation of the Curator of Academic Programs and Student Engagement Manager roles at the Harn and programs like Museum Nights. Building on the success of those initiatives, the museum has successfully created and sustains many programs including: a paid internship program, university class-specific programs for nearly all of the sixteen UF colleges, and the student volunteer group, the MUSEs. The next plan will build

on that success by increasing and deepening student engagement. In a proactive stance, the museum will formalize a portfolio of student educational engagement opportunities that will appeal to faculty and students from a broad range of disciplines, for instance bringing wellness and creativity into discussions about the museum's collection and exhibitions. The Harn will use quantitative metrics like UF class attendance figures as well as the breadth of colleges reached through the program portfolio and qualitative surveys of student satisfaction.



The Harn will also work to further strengthen connections for students that they will carry with them into their future careers. One program established in the 2020-2025 strategic plan, the paid internship program, will be formalized with a curriculum that is consistent across various departments of the museum. The Harn will also strive to extend internship opportunities to all

departments across the museum. This strategy will be measured by the number of student interns as well as program evaluations that measure the student's engagement during their time with the Harn. Follow-up surveys which will measure the effect of the Harn internship in the future careers of these students.



STRATEGY 1

Create a portfolio of meaningful partnerships across the University of Florida

STRATEGY 2

Strengthen meaningful connections for students that they will carry with them into their future careers in any field they pursue



GOAL 2

Foster a sense of community and wellbeing.

Goal two of this plan strives to enrich the visitor experience and foster a sense of community and wellbeing by creating a “third place” through improved amenities at the museum.

The Harn will transform beyond a traditional gallery space into a vibrant, welcoming third place where visitors can relax, recharge, connect, and foster individual wellbeing. This will include enhancing on-site amenities such as a coffee bar in the entryway of

the museum as well as creating inviting outdoor spaces enlivened by beautiful landscape features and contemporary sculpture. The “Art After Dark” evenings, which include the Museum Nights program will be streamlined, offering themed nights that blend art, culture, and community in a relaxed setting. Complementing the museum’s interior spaces, a dedicated landscape program will create and maintain manicured outdoor areas for the display of sculpture

and create natural environments promoting a serene and restorative atmosphere. Finally, the Harn will further define its commitment to visitor health by embedding wellness into the visitor experience: from thoughtfully designed paths and quiet nooks to wellness programs in collaboration with partners across the University of Florida.

The Harn will study quantitative data such as total visitor attendance and specific program attendance figures as well as a mixture of quantitative and qualitative data through the COVES survey. Additionally, more focused data collection will measure the effect of the art museum, viewing as well as creating art, on visitor's wellbeing.



STRATEGY 1

Enhance Visitor amenities including: installation of a new coffee bar, enhancing outdoor gardens with contemporary sculpture, and building interactive opportunities throughout the museum

STRATEGY 2

Streamline the “Art After Dark” program

STRATEGY 3

Promote and encourage individual wellbeing at the Harn

GOAL 3

Strengthen the Harn's brand.

Research conducted for this strategic plan, such as intercept surveys as well as university-wide surveys, reveal that there are many segments of the Harn's potential audience that still do not know very much, if anything about the Harn Museum of Art. The relative newness of the museum to the university as well as the transient faculty and student populations inherent in any university present on-going challenges for the museum's brand recognition. Strengthening the brand of the museum as well as the reach of communications, through on campus and travelling

exhibitions as well as focused community outreach, will help solidify the Harn's importance to the community and reputation as a world-class academic art museum. The Harn seeks to deepen its impact across North Central Florida by expanding the range and caliber of the special loan exhibitions it hosts, thereby increasing public awareness of its purpose and mission. By exhibiting a wide range of high-profile loan exhibitions, the Harn can attract a broader audience and nurture a richer cultural dialogue within the region. The Harn also plans to





leverage its permanent collection and curatorial expertise to develop scholarly exhibitions that can travel throughout Florida and occasionally nationwide. Coupled with a concerted effort to mobilize a skilled docent corps, these strategies aim to broaden the Harn's community reach, enhance interpretive education, and solidify its role as an essential cultural hub in Florida.

The Harn will study quantitative data such as total visitor attendance and specific program attendance figures as well as a mixture of quantitative and qualitative data through the COVES survey.

STRATEGY 1

Increase awareness of the Harn across North Central Florida by further broadening the types of special loan exhibitions brought to the Harn

STRATEGY 2

Leverage the Harn's permanent collection and curatorial expertise through original scholarly exhibitions and exhibiting the Florida collection statewide

STRATEGY 3

Leverage the expertise and strength of the Harn staff and docents to expand the museum's reach in the community



GOAL 4

Elevate the Harn's status as a premier university art museum by improving the physical plant and strengthening the museum's workforce.

The museum plans to revitalize its physical footprint by renovating 3,600 sq ft of existing space into new galleries, upgrading the Bishop Study Center, installing a coffee bar, installing advanced security systems, and replacing HVAC units throughout the building. These infrastructure improvements will create a more engaging visitor experience and improve operational efficiency. Simultaneously the museum will build a stronger workforce,

increasing staff numbers and implementing retention initiatives to keep pace with rising program demands from university students and the Greater Gainesville community. In parallel, the institution will conduct a comprehensive audit of its financial systems to secure sustainable growth, ensuring that budgets, revenue streams, and funding strategies remain robust and adaptable to future challenges.

The Harn will use metrics such as renovation completion rate, visitor space utilization, security incident reduction, HVAC energy savings and incident reductions, to measure success for the first strategy. The factors used to measure the strategy centered on staff growth will be the following: growth in number of full time staff; turnover rates; staff satisfaction rates; professional development opportunities; and training completion.

To continue the excellent programs at the Harn, the museum will have to strategically increase the revenue streams into the organization while remaining free, as the museum's founders intended. The Harn will measure success in the increased number and amounts of endowments to the museum; funding mix diversification, which together will ensure the museum's facilities, workforce, and finances support its growth and mission.



STRATEGY 1

Improve the physical infrastructure of the museum by renovating 3,600 sq ft of existing space into galleries; enhancing the Bishop Study Center; improving the museum's security technology; and upgrading the HVAC units across the building

STRATEGY 2

Increase the staffing and strengthen staff retention at the museum in order to meet the demand in programming from university students and the Greater Gainesville community

STRATEGY 3

Interrogate the museum's financial infrastructure in order to ensure the growth and financial stability of the organization

Appendix

The Planning Team for the Harn’s 2026-2031 Strategic Plan consisted of the below members of the executive team:

Lee Anne Chesterfield, PhD	Director
Deborah Bednarz	Human Resources Manager
Perihan Brown	Financial and Accounting Analyst
Salina Cardias	Director of Visitor Engagement
Jody Green	Deputy Director
Alli Hudson	Associate Director of Development
Dulce Román	Chief Curator and Curator of Modern Art
Eric Segal, PhD	Director of Education and Curator of Academic Programs
Fausto Silva	Building Maintenance and Security Supervisor
Jess Uelsmann	Senior Registrar
Tami Wroath	Director of Marketing and Public Relations
Lind Archipov	Director of Advancement





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