



Strategic Plan 2022-2025

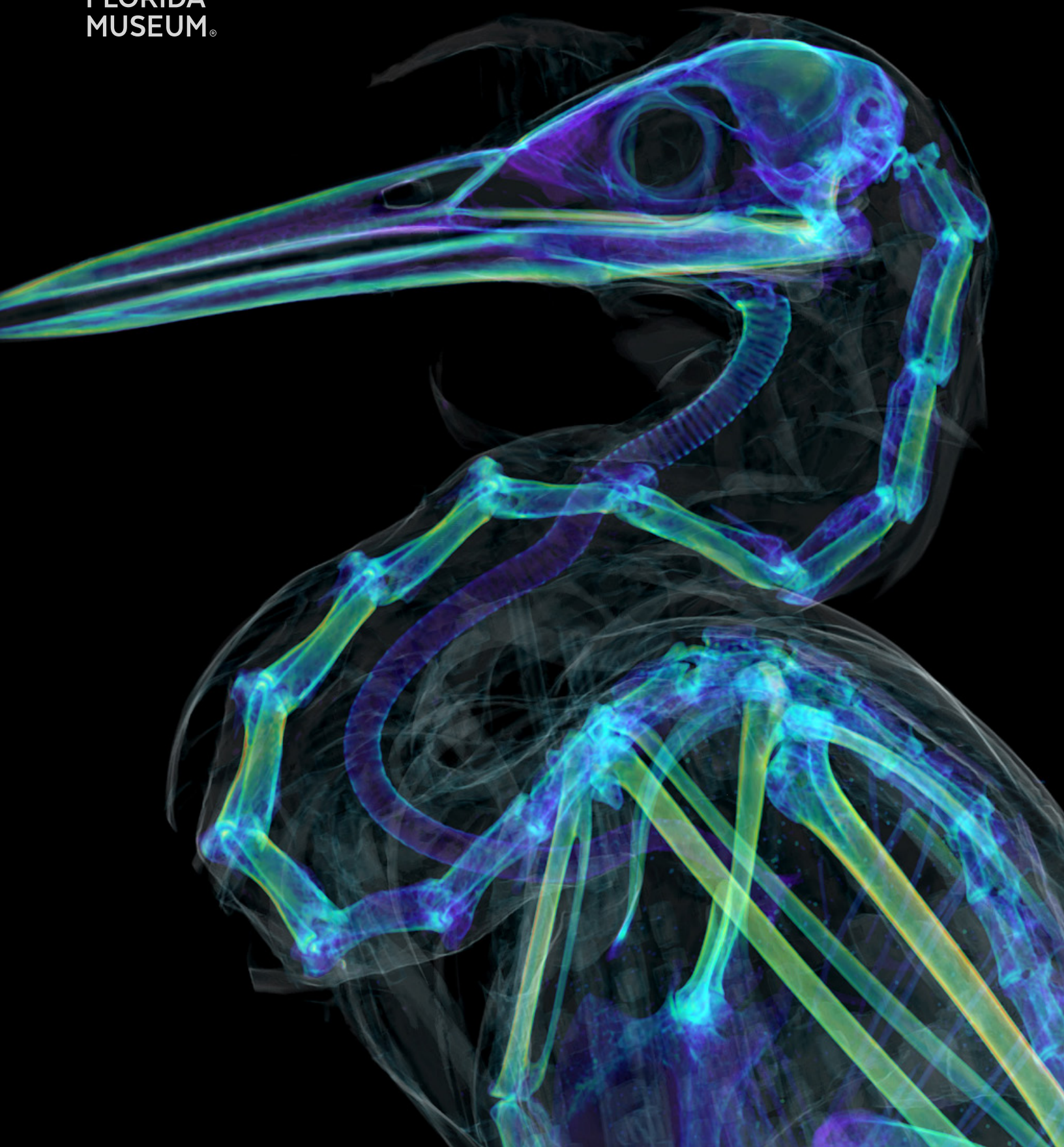






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Executive Summary

The Florida Museum of Natural History has served as the official natural history museum for the state of Florida for more than a century (1917) and as the University of Florida's museum since 1906.

Today the museum cares for more than 40 million specimens and objects, welcomes nearly a quarter million visitors annually and ranks among the top three university-based natural history museums in the nation, with active collecting, research, education and outreach programs.

Major priorities for the near future include: complete a special collections facility near our Powell Hall site at the UF Cultural Plaza, expected in 2022; secure state matching funds for an addition to Powell Hall to house the new Thompson Earth Systems Institute and expand public engagement facilities; hire top-flight faculty and staff to lead the museum's participation in the UF artificial intelligence initiative; renovate several permanent exhibition halls to reflect the interests and concerns of our visitors; become a more diverse, inclusive, equitable institution; and raise endowment funds to support museum priorities.

Executive Summary

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the museum community over the last few years is well documented. At the Florida Museum of Natural History, it disrupted our normal strategic planning schedule, but also provided us with more time for thoughtful conversations, introspection, and a newfound dedication to resilience. We began the strategic planning process with Lord Cultural Resources, Inc. in September 2019. The pandemic and lockdown of the University of Florida in March 2020 forced us to discontinue working with Lord. In Fall 2020 we resumed strategic planning (remotely) under the facilitation of Tricia Bachus and Irma Alvarez of UF Human Resources. Their work concluded in Summer 2021 and this final plan was developed thereafter.

Our new strategic plan for 2022 — 2025 is focused around four main pillars or themes: **Relevance, People, Unity, and Excellence & Sustainability**. These themes reflect the museum's desire to pursue professional excellence at all levels, but also to focus internally on the people who work at the museum as well as the audiences we serve.

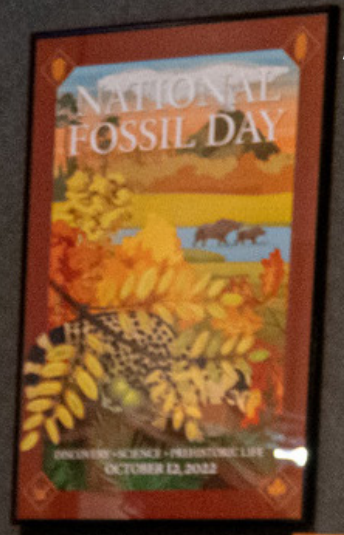
Influenced by environmental, societal and political events of the past several years, this plan charts a path forward unlike any other this museum has followed, honoring the traditional pursuit of excellence while expanding a commitment to remain relevant as an institution, to build a culture of equity and inclusion, and integrate shared priorities and practices across all divisions of the museum.



overlooked in favor
and fossils, yet they
ancient ecosystems.

ord is full of large flora and fauna
talks about Earth's history, but they
all big stories. In fact, they reveal
ancient environments than their
reports — such as what kinds of
al features were present, sediment
ature requirements, and amount
ion. This is because most of life's
small. Being large is energetically
difficult to maintain, so evolution
the minute. Small fossils may be
ed and identify, but they round out
ecosystem picture.

at your affection
fossils in
table







Vision

We inspire people to care about life on Earth and help shape a world in which nature and culture enrich every person.

Mission

We investigate, document and interpret biological and cultural heritage, fostering deep connections between people and the natural world through inspirational education and outreach.

Tagline

Inspiring people to care about life on Earth



Key Strengths

- World-class collection of more than 40 million biological, paleontological and archaeological specimens and objects assembled over 130 years
- Distinguished faculty curators recognized for professional leadership and excellence in research, outreach, teaching, and mentoring
- College-level unit within a comprehensive, AAU Research I university ranked among the Top 5 major public universities in the U.S.
- Extensive collaborations with allied UF colleges and departments
- Thriving exhibition and outreach programs with statewide impact
- Leading the national effort (NSF) to aggregate and mobilize the nation's digital biocollection data (iDigBio)
- Emerging leader in the application of artificial intelligence (AI), cyberinfrastructure and big data in museum contexts
- Large and dedicated corps of community and student volunteers
- Florida's official state museum of natural history for over a century





Key Strengths

- Active engagement with UF's 55,000+ student body, developing the next generation of scientists and museum professionals
- Dedicated to fostering public awareness, interest, engagement and understanding of natural and cultural sciences
- Welcoming and accessible center for community engagement
- Top 3 university-based natural history museum based on faculty, collections, publications and grants
- McGuire Center for Lepidoptera and Biodiversity is the worldwide leader in Lepidoptera research and education
- Thompson Earth Systems Institute leads communication about Earth's systems of air, water, land and life, their complex interactions, and human impacts upon them
- Randell Research Center promotes cultural heritage and recognition of Florida's Indigenous history
- Engaging diverse museum visitors from local communities, all Florida counties and all states

Institutional Culture, Core Values and Ethics

The Florida Museum of Natural History's mission and culture are grounded in a set of core values and ethics principles. While self-determined, these values and principles reflect the charge to all museums as promulgated by the American Alliance of Museums' Code of Ethics for Museums, paraphrased as follows:

Taken as a whole, museum collections and exhibition materials represent the world's natural and cultural common heritage. As stewards of that heritage, museums are compelled to advance an understanding of all natural forms and of the human experience. It is incumbent upon museums to be resources for humankind and in all their activities to foster an informed appreciation of the rich and diverse world we have inherited. It is also incumbent upon them to preserve that inheritance for posterity.





Stemi DV4

What is the
source rock for
each sand?

Looking at samples in
microscope, try to
answer questions
Lift up for answers



Our Core Values



IDEA — The Museum embraces the centrality of inclusion, diversity, equity and accessibility in creating a just, sustainable and equitable community as an essential component of our institution and of society more broadly.



Discovery — The museum conducts scientific investigations, primarily through fieldwork and collections-based research, to discover the evolutionary history of our natural world and explore its intimate relationship with humankind.



Curiosity — The Museum inspires people of all ages and backgrounds, activating curiosity and facilitating exploration of cultural heritage and biological diversity to foster deep learning and nourish minds and spirits.



Engagement — The Museum contributes to a fair, sustainable and resilient future by engaging with diverse audiences and addressing many of the most pressing issues of our time, encouraging interactions that are positive, inclusive and accessible to all.

A photograph of a forest scene. In the foreground, there are several large, thick tree trunks with rough, textured bark. The ground is covered with fallen leaves and pine needles. In the background, more trees are visible, and a body of water reflects the trees and the sky. The overall tone is natural and serene.

Ethical Conduct and the Public Trust

The Museum honors its ethical contract with the public by providing candid, substantive and scientifically sound learning opportunities; safeguarding the museum holdings for future generations; consistently promoting public service by putting its visitors first, as guests; involving community voices; performing outreach and other public services; and listening to its constituents and considering their comments and suggestions.

The Museum promotes an environment that encourages all staff to be ethical, courteous, helpful, professional and nondiscriminatory with coworkers and guests while seeking to inform, communicate and collaborate with each other and with constituents in effective and meaningful ways.

World Issues the Museum Addresses

- Climate change
- Evolution
- Biodiversity documentation, loss and extinction
- Invasive species
- Decolonizing museum collections and associated interpretation
- Endangered species and conservation
- Environmental management and sustainability
- Public understanding of science
- Cultural heritage and change
- Water and air quality

Strategic Goals and Objectives



A. Relevance:

Expand impactful engagement with all audiences; amplify Florida Museum leadership in the scientific community; enhance participation in UF's academic mission

1. Lead and innovate in scientific research and communication to address pressing issues of our time

- Leverage collections and academic expertise to address grand scientific challenges and emerging world issues, effectively engaging audiences from all backgrounds with the broader impacts of science on society
- Actively pursue grants, awards, recognitions to support research, UF students, and raise stature of the Florida Museum and University
- Integrate pressing societal issues into museum programs
- Plan museum expansion to accommodate the Thompson Earth Systems Institute



2. Increase collaboration and partnerships with allies on and off campus

- Create new partnerships with private sector and government agencies
- Expand research collaborations with cognate UF departments and other colleges, universities and museums throughout Florida
- Increase educational programming for underrepresented audiences

3. Educate the next generation of scientists and lifelong learners

- Expand outreach and programming to maximize impact for university, local and Florida communities
- Grow virtual delivery and assets
- Create opportunities for K-16 students to learn about museum careers
- Align teaching and graduate education goals with affiliate departments and increase support for UF graduate students through funded Museum Assistantships
- Create Florida Museum paid intern program to provide research and broader impacts experience for UF undergraduate students
- Develop UF undergraduate courses and mentoring to expose more undergraduates to the museum and its mission

Strategic Goals and Objectives

B. People:

Build a culture that values inclusion, diversity, equity and accessibility in every aspect of its operation



1. Recruit and hire purposefully to develop a workforce that reflects Florida's population
 - Create rubrics for hiring/retention with measurable outcomes
 - Identify and implement best practices for inclusive hiring
 - Create a museum diversity statement
 - Hire or appoint a chief diversity officer
 - Center the value of welcoming, ethical treatment for all



2. Increase equity in salary, space, staffing

- Conduct equity survey of faculty and staff and communicate results
- Use survey results to strategize equity salary adjustments
- Work toward a living wage for OPS employees
- Expand mentoring opportunities

3. Centralize museum IDEA efforts

- Increase visibility of underrepresented groups throughout the Florida Museum
- Decolonize collections and exhibitions
- Support NAGPRA program and foster relationships with Indigenous populations
- Ensure website and social media content are accessible, inclusive and equitable

Strategic Goals and Objectives

C. Unity:

Integrate the missions of research, collections, education and outreach to engage and serve diverse audiences

1. Achieve consensus on institutional priorities for the near future

- Major capital projects (buildings, exhibit galleries)
- Identify unifying themes for research, collections, education and interpretation
- Succession planning for institutional leadership transitions



2. Increase internal collaboration to bridge physical distances and break down divisional silos

- Engage Natural History in Powell Hall expansion and exhibit gallery renovations
- Mainstream TESI into museum programming and NH broader impacts
- Launch and foster a sustainable *Science Up-Close* initiative
- Increase opportunities for interaction among groups
- Conduct monthly virtual or in-person “field trips” to collections, research labs, EPP, centers and institutes
- Improve internal communications

Strategic Goals and Objectives

D. Excellence & Sustainability:

Ensure museum programs, teaching mission, research labs, collections and people are sustainably supported to achieve institutional excellence

1. Evaluate programs for effectiveness and impact
 - Analyze ROI in terms of mission and impact
 - Reassess marketing and earned income strategies
2. Achieve fiscal, programmatic and infrastructure sustainability
 - Align budget with priorities
 - Develop fundraising goals and strategies
 - Endowed positions for curators and critical staff



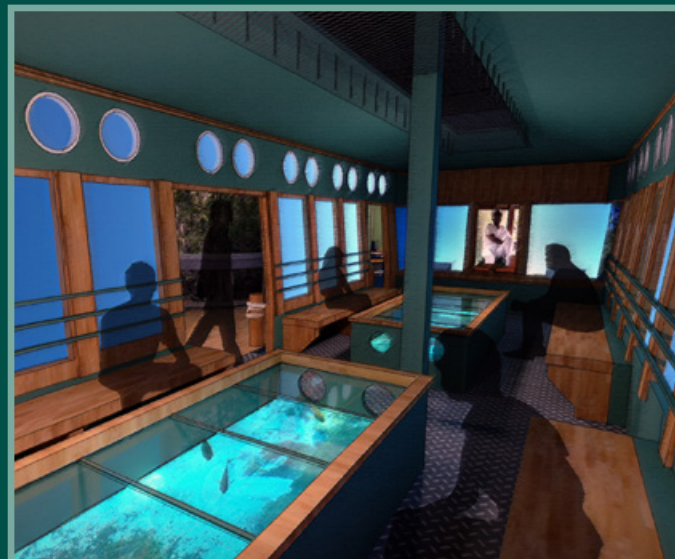
- Endowed graduate student assistantships
 - Endowments to support physical and digital collections and research labs
 - Endowments to support EPP and TESI
 - Endowments to support IDEA initiatives
 - Develop sustainability plan for managing space allocations, storage requirements, funding and maintenance for virtual and digital collections
 - Develop guidelines/plan for collections growth and acquisitions
 - Fund and implement permanent exhibit renovations
 - Develop business plan for sustainability of Powell Hall expansion
 - Explore innovative funding models to ensure sustainability of TESI and EPP
 - Centralize resources for greater synergy and efficiency
 - Invest in state-of-the-art technologies
- ### **3. Improve external communications to engage stakeholders and raise awareness**
- Increase capacity for public relations campaigns
 - Increase capacity for science communications and outreach

Strategic Milestones: 2022-2025



2022

- Construction of special collections facility (UF 640) completed
- Move of wet collections to UF 640 initiated
- Reallocation plan developed for vacated spaces in Dickinson Hall
- First homegrown exhibit in *Science Up-Close* initiative opens
- AAM reaccreditation self-study documents submitted; onsite AAM reviewer visit completed
- Architect for the proposed addition to Powell Hall hired
- Curators of Ornithology and AI in natural history & biodiversity hired
- Launch Florida Museum internship program
- Action plan developed following analysis of two museum-wide climate surveys
- NAGPRA coordinator/bioarchaeologist hired; NAGPRA protocols and a NAGPRA committee established
- IDEA consultant identified and contracted to facilitate discussion and center IDEA efforts
- Design and funding of Florida Water exhibit completed; construction initiated
- Meaningful collaborations with Seminole Tribe of Florida and Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of Florida developed in anticipation of South Florida Hall renovation
- Museum Directors Council reinvented



Strategic Milestones: 2022-2025

2023

- Reaccreditation from AAM achieved
- Completed move into new special collections facility (UF 640)
- Curators of Lepidoptera and/or Mammalogy hired
- Fundraising campaign launched for Florida Museum graduate student assistantships
- Fundraising campaign launched for Florida Museum internship program
- *Second Science Up-Close* exhibit developed and opened
- Traveling exhibit leased and opened
- Fundraising for the proposed addition to Powell Hall completed; engaged with UF lobby team
- Permanent funding secured to stabilize TESI/SEFS budget
- Construction of Florida Water exhibit completed and opened
- National Museum Advisory Council established
- Succession planning for leadership transitions initiated





2024

- Space vacated in Dickinson Hall renovated and reoccupied
- Continued fundraising for Florida Museum graduate student assistantships
- Continued fundraising for Florida Museum internship program
- Chief Diversity Officer/Community Engagement Officer hired
- Third *Science Up-Close* exhibit developed and opened
- Renovations to South Florida Hall funded and started
- Architectural plans for proposed addition to Powell Hall finalized and approved

2025

- Fourth *Science Up-Close* exhibit developed and opened
- Continued fundraising for Florida Museum graduate student assistantships
- Continued fundraising for Florida Museum internship program
- Construction of new addition at Powell Hall initiated
- Develop a new strategic plan



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