

Florida State University Ukraine Task Force

ANNUAL REPORT 2025

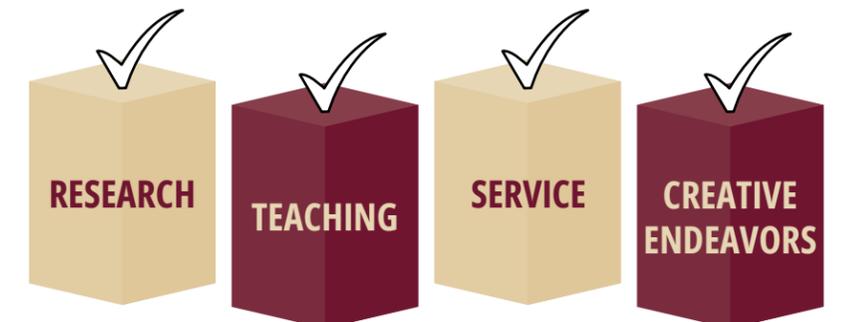


UKRAINE TASK FORCE

Florida State University's Ukraine Task Force (UTF)

Florida State University's (FSU) Ukraine Task Force (UTF) was established in 2022 by Dr. James Clark, Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs. The committee was charged with creating new educational partnerships with Ukrainian higher education institutions and exploring how these relationships could advance FSU's mission of research, teaching, creative endeavors, and service. The Office of the Provost identified Ukraine as a country of strategic interest because it provides members of the university community with an opportunity to research and engage with peers living in a unique environment while also advancing FSU's overall internationalization strategy. The UTF is led by **Dr. Vilma Elisa Fuentes**, an associate in research at the Learning Systems Institute (LSI), in partnership with **Dr. Anna Romanova**, a Ukrainian-born researcher at LSI. Both collaborate with FSU faculty and staff across multiple colleges, institutes, and divisions. The UTF advances the university's mission by:

- Developing new and strengthen existing higher education partnerships in Ukraine,
- Pursuing research and development grants together with Ukrainian counterparts;
- Establishing new research projects that lead to the creation of new knowledge;
- Teaching students about Ukrainian language, history, culture, and foreign relations; and
- Supporting creative endeavors with private and governmental agencies.



In addition to advancing the FSU mission, the UTF also helps advance the university's 2023-2027 strategic plan. Specifically, it advances the following goals and objectives:

STRATEGIC GOALS

1

EXPANDING RESEARCH & ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

Objective 2: Catalyze translational scholarship, arts, and research that will address grand challenges.



2

ENSURING STUDENT SUCCESS ON CAMPUS AND BEYOND

Objective 4: Bolster student's co-curricular and career development opportunities



3

COMMITTING TO INCLUSIVE EXCELLENCE AND CIVIL DISCOURSE

Objective 2: Increase international engagement and cultural competencies for students, faculty and staff



4

ENHANCING OUR BRAND TO REFLECT INSTITUTIONAL EXCELLENCE

Objective 1: Focus the FSU brand to bolster our reputation, stakeholder and partner relationships, and quality



..... Summary of UTF activities in 2025

<div style="font-size: 36px; font-weight: bold; color: #008000;">30</div> <p>Engagements with HEIs</p> <p>UTF members engaged 17 Ukrainian universities and 13 Ukrainian colleges.</p>	<div style="font-size: 36px; font-weight: bold; color: #FFD700;">5</div> <p>Sponsored Research</p> <p>FSU faculty and administrators submitted three grant applications and HELPED implement two International Visitor Leadership Programs for Ukraine.</p>	<div style="font-size: 36px; font-weight: bold; color: #008000;">13</div> <p>Lectures + Conferences</p> <p>FSU faculty and staff participated in 13 lecture and conference events.</p>
<div style="font-size: 36px; font-weight: bold; color: #FFD700;">17</div> <p>Education Events</p> <p>The UTF organized 17 education events for FSU students and FSU faculty offered five courses with significant Ukrainian content.</p>	<div style="font-size: 36px; font-weight: bold; color: #008000;">5</div> <p>Creative Endeavors</p> <p>The UTF has worked with FSU Opening Nights and community groups to support five major creative endeavors.</p>	<div style="font-size: 36px; font-weight: bold; color: #FFD700;">21</div> <p>Ukrainian Visitors</p> <p>FSU hosted 21 Ukrainians on campus, including the head of a Noble Peace Prize institution and the American Society for Microbiology Ambassador to Ukraine</p>

ENGAGEMENT WITH UKRAINIAN COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

Members of the UTF have engaged students, faculty, and administrators from a total of 30 Ukrainian colleges and universities during 2025. The detailed list is as follows:

17 Ukrainian Universities

- Beketov National University of Urban Economics in Kharkiv
- Bohdan Khmelnytskyi National Border Guard Academy
- Boris Grinchenko Kyiv Metropolitan University
- Dnipro State Medical University
- Kherson State University
- Kremenchuk National University
- KROK University
- Kyiv University of Culture
- Lviv National Polytechnic University
- National Academy of Internal Affairs of Ukraine
- National Aviation University in Kyiv
- National University Kyiv Mohyla Academy
- National University Poltava Polytechnic
- National University of Ukraine on Physical Education and Sport
- Oles Honchar Dnipro National University
- Taras Shevchenko Kyiv National University
- State University of Trade and Economics in Kyiv

13 Ukrainian Colleges

- Automotive and Road Professional College of Lviv Polytechnic University
- Cherkassy College of Business
- Chernivtsi Transportation College
- College of Economics, Law and Information Technologies at "KROK" University
- College of Kremenchuk National Ostrohradskyi University
- Khmelnytskyi Polytechnic College of the National University Lviv Polytechnic

- Kovel Industrial and Economic College
- Kyiv College of Light Industry
- Mariupol Construction College relocated to Khmelnytskyi
- Rivne Autotransport College
- Rivne College of Information Technology
- Technical College of the National Forestry University
- Technical College for Ivan Puluj Ternopil National Technical University

5 New MOUs Signed

- Dnipro State Medical University
- Lviv Polytechnic National University
- National University Kyiv Mohyla Academy
- O.M. Beketov National University in Kharkiv
- State University of Trade and Economics in Kyiv

3 Existing MOUs supported

- Bhodan Khmelnytskyi National Academy of the State Border Guard Service of Ukraine
- Kyiv Aviation Institute
- Taras Shevchenko Kyiv National University

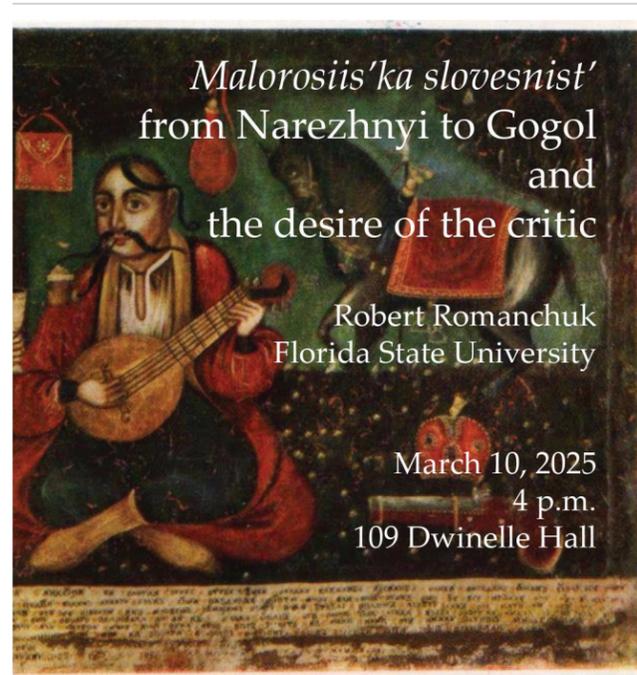


13 LECTURE AND CONFERENCE EVENTS

Slavic Literary Works

March 10, 2025

Dr. Robert Romanchuk, Pribic Family Associate Professor of Slavic in the Department of Modern Languages and Linguistics, delivered a presentation at the University of California at Berkeley on March 10, 2025 focused on the work of Russian and Ukrainian literary works..



Combating Human Trafficking in Ukraine and the United States

June 19, 2025

The UTF participated in a conference titled, Combating Human Trafficking in Ukraine and the United States: Lessons Learned and Current Challenges. Approximately 250 people attended the hybrid conference.



Education Without Stress

September 2025

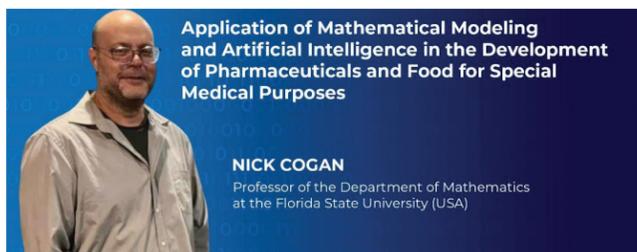
UTF members supported Ukrainian partners as they launched a virtual training course titled, “Education Without Stress” for Ukrainian educators. The project was funded by the U.S. Embassy in Kyiv and implemented by a Ukrainian non-governmental organization. Over 1,000 Ukrainian educators completed the course in 2025.



Book Launch in Ukraine

September 17, 2025

Dr. Yoder-Maina launched the Ukrainian translation of her book, *Healing is What Makes Peace Work*. Over 1000 copies of the book were distributed to 20 Ukrainian partner colleges and universities. During the event, Dr. Angi Yoder-Maina delivered a presentation. Over 700 people attended the hybrid event.



National University of Trade and Economics Lecture

October 9, 2025

Dr. Nicholas Cogan, Associate Professor of Mathematics, delivered a lecture titled, “Applications of Mathematical Modeling and Artificial Intelligence in the Development of Pharmaceuticals and Food for Special Medical Purposes,” at Kyiv National University of Trade and Economics.

Computer Aided Disease Treatment and Drug Development

October 7, 2025

Dr. Nicholas Cogan, Associate Professor of Mathematics, delivered a lecture titled, “Computer Aided Disease Treatment and Drug Development,” at Taras Shevchenko Kyiv National University on October 7, 2025.



At-risk Mental Health Support of Ukrainian Educational Institutions

October 9, 2025

UTF co-hosted a conference titled, “At-risk Mental Health Support of Ukrainian Educational Institutions.” The event included approximately 260 attendees, including six FSU researchers and faculty members, and one representative from Ukraine’s Ministry of Education and Science.

Lecture at National Academy of the State Border Guard Service of Ukraine

November 6, 2025

Dr. Vilma Fuentes, Program Director of the FSU Ukraine Task Force, delivered a presentation titled, “Developing Policies, Practices, and Procedures to Prevent Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment in Higher Education” at a conference titled, “Development of the Mentorship in the Security and Defense Sectors,” organized by the Bohdan Khmelnytskyi National Academy of the State Border Guard Service of Ukraine.

Lecture at Kherson State University, Temporarily Relocated to Ivano-Frankivsk

November 13-14, 2025

Dr. Anna Romanova and a Ukrainian colleague, Dr. Valentyna Burak, delivered a presentation titled, “Innovative Approaches to the Formation of a Tourism Product in The Context of Decentralization” at the international conference, “Strategic Priorities for the Development of the Economy, Management, Service Sector and Law in the Context of Integration Processes.” The event was organized by Kherson State University, a university internally displaced and temporarily relocated to Ivano-Frankivsk, Ukraine.

Recreational Tourism as a Tool for the Psychosocial Rehabilitation of Military Veterans

November 21, 2025

FSU researchers explore tourism as a tool for economic and mental health recovery in crisis zones

BY: **LOGAN LOWERY** | PUBLISHED: OCTOBER 29, 2025 | 9:29 AM | SHARE:  



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International Scientific Conference

December 8, 2025

Dr. Vilma Fuentes served as a keynote speaker and delivered a welcome speech at the international scientific conference “Artificial Intelligence: Sustainable Development of Education, Science, and Business Industry,” organized by O. M. Beketov National University of Urban Economy in Kharkiv.



PUBLIC HEALTH	
Moderators: Olena Maslova (Ukraine), Violetta Yanyshvska (Ukraine), Sean McGinley (USA)	
Academic building 3, room 107	
12 th -12 th	Sean MCGINLEY (USA) HOSPITALITY AND RECOVERY
12 th -12 th	Svitlana HOZAK (Ukraine), Olena YELIZAROVA (Ukraine) ADAPTIVE COPING STRATEGIES OF STUDENTS UNDER WARTIME STRESS
12 th -13 th	Anna ZHARA (Ukraine) COMPREHENSIVE REHABILITATION OF MILITARY IN PUBLIC HEALTH SYSTEM
13 th -13 th	Serhii FUTORNYYI (Ukraine), Olena MASLOVA (Ukraine) PHYSICAL CULTURE AS A RESPONSE TO COMBINED STRESS (MILITARY AND ENVIRONMENTAL) FOR CHILDREN WITH HEARING IMPAIRMENTS
13 th -13 th	Natalia KONDRATIUK (Ukraine), Ivan CHERVYNSKYIY (Ukraine) OVERCOMING BARRIERS: PSYCHOSOCIAL CHALLENGES IN ACCESSING HEALTHCARE AMONG INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS IN UKRAINE
DISCUSSION PANEL	

Scan or click for the full story



Dr. Anna Romanova, a researcher at the Learning Systems Institute, delivered a virtual presentation titled, “Recreational Tourism as a Tool for the Psychosocial Rehabilitation of Military Veterans,” at the International Scientific Conference titled, “Cultural Heritage and Natural Resource Potential in the Development of Tourism and Communities: Scientific Foundations, Practices, and Collaboration” organized by Taras Shevchenko Kyiv National University.

Hospitality and Recovery: A Discussion For Rising Ukraine

November 20, 2025

Dr. Sean McGinley, Associate Professor and Director of International Programs in the Dedman College of Hospitality, delivered a presentation titled, “Hospitality and Recovery: A Discussion For Rising Ukraine” at the International Scientific

Conference, “Topical Issues of Sports Medicine.” The event was organized by the National University of Ukraine on Physical Education and Sport on November 19-20, 2025.



“Actual Issues of Philological Science and Pedagogical Practice”

December 11, 2025

Dr. Dina Vyortkina, Assistant Dean for Innovation and Instructional Technology Enhancement at Anne’s College, delivered a virtual presentation titled, “AI in Education,” at the International Scientific and Practical Conference. Dr. Anna Romanova, a researcher at LSI, delivered a virtual presentation as well.

UKRAINIANS HOSTED AT FSU

2
NGO Leaders

4
Musicians

5
University Professors

10
Higher Education Leaders

FSU hosted 21 Ukrainian educators, higher education leaders, and students during 2025.



Dr. Dmytro Stepanyky

Scan or click for the full story



DakhaBrakha

Scan or click for the full story



Dr. Serhiy Kvit

Scan or click for the full story



Two Bridge USA Ukrainian Academic Fellows Visited FSU

Scan or click for the full story



Oleksandra Matviichuk

Scan or click for the full story



ENGAGING FSU STUDENTS: 17 EVENTS, LECTURES, ACTIVITIES

Courses

During 2025, FSU faculty offered several courses that helped advance students' understanding of Ukraine's language, literature, culture, history, and role in the world

1. RUW5930 Gogol and Ukrainian Romanticism
2. SLL1122 Ukrainian 2 (new course)
3. SLL2220 Intermediate Ukrainian (new course)
4. SLL3510 The Slavic Vampire
5. INR and CPO courses related to Ukraine, Russia and Eastern Europe



Oleksandra Matviichuk

February 10, 2025

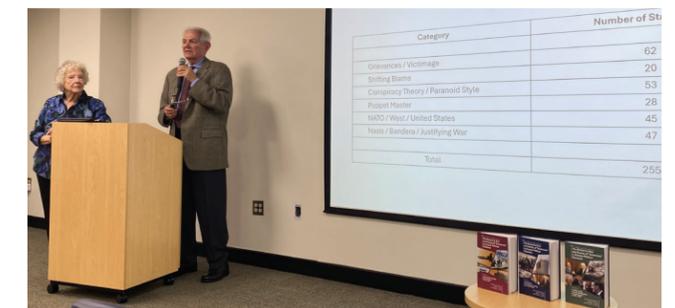
Oleksandra Matviichuk, one of the most prominent human rights defenders in Ukraine and head of the 2022 Nobel Prize winning Center for Civil Liberties (CCL), delivered a presentation titled, "Defending Democracy and Ukraine's Fight for Freedom." This was followed by a fireside chat with Dr. Timothy Chapin, Dean of the College of Social Science and Public Policy, and Vilma Fuentes, program director of the FSU Ukraine Task Force.



Nataliya Melnyk

February 19, 2025

Nataliya Melnyk, executive director of the Bendukidze Free Market Center in Kyiv, visited FSU in February 2025 to engage with faculty and students, deliver class lectures, and share her insights about life in Ukraine.



Dr. Marilyn Young and Dr. Michael Launer | March 4, 2025

FSU emeriti professors, Dr. Marilyn Young and Dr. Michael Launer, delivered a presentation about their latest book, *The Rhetorical Rise and Demise of "Democracy" in Russian Political Discourse – Volume Four: The Demise of "Democracy" after Putin's Return to Power*, in the Bradley Reading Room at Strozier Library. The book is part of a four volume set that analyzes the political discourse of Vladimir Putin.

Hybrid Student Conference June 28, 2024

Students in Dr. Robert Romanchuk’s Epic Songs course participated in a hybrid conference with students from Yuriy Kondriatuk National University Poltava Polytechnic on April 2. Students delivered presentation on different Ukrainian literary works.



Undergraduate Research Opportunity Project | April 1, 2024

Six FSU students participated in a Undergraduate Research Opportunity Project (UROP). Under the leadership of Dr. Eric Ligouri, Associate Dean of the Jim Moran College of Entrepreneurship, the students researched entrepreneurship and resilience in wartime Ukraine. The students shared their research findings at the UROP Symposium on April 1, 2025.



Entrepreneurship Symposium

April 5-6, 2025

Five of the FSU students who participated in the UROP project on Ukrainian entrepreneurship attended a Social Justice and Social Entrepreneurship Symposium at Morehouse College on April 5 and 6, 2025. The students delivered a presentation summarizing their research findings.



Dr. Dmytro Stepanskyi

May 14-15, 2025

Dr. Dmytro Stepanskyi, Head of the Department of Microbiology, Virology, Immunology and Epidemiology at Dnipro State Medical University, delivered a lecture at the FSU College of Medicine titled, “Wartime Public Health in Ukraine: Navigating Risks, Gaps, and Resilience.”



Dr. Anastasiya Andrianova October 23, 2024

Dr. Anastasiya Andrianova, a professor of English from North Dakota State University in Fargo, delivered two lectures titled, “I am Transforming... The Environmental Impact of the Russia-Ukraine War through Contemporary First Person Narrative” and “Mavkas, Wild Robots & Other Oddkin: Environmentalism in Ukrainian and US American Popular Culture.”

Dr. Serhiy Kvit | November 19, 2025

Dr. Serhiy Kvit, President of National University Kyiv Mohyla Academy and Ukraine’s Former Minister of Education and Science, delivered a presentation titled, “Establishment / Reformation of Education Reform in Independent Ukraine: Objectives and Challenges.” He discussed the process



Ukrainian Witches vs. Romanian Vampires

October 25, 2024

Dr. Anna Romanova, a researcher at the Learning Systems Institute, and Dr. Vincent Joos, a Professor of Cultural Anthropology, delivered a Halloween lecture titled, “Ukrainian Witches vs. Romanian Vampires.” The event was co-sponsored by the UTF, Center for Global Engagement, and Department of Modern Languages and Linguistics.



of education reform that Ukraine has been undergoing during the past eleven years, its relationship to the 2014 Revolution of Dignity, and its importance for Ukraine’s future development and integration into the European Union.

Translate-A-Thon

December 1, 2025

Graduate students and faculty from FSU and Oles Honchar State University in Dnipro participated in a Translate-A-Thon. Working on the model of the hackathon, bi-national teams worked together in real time to translate two poems simultaneously: “Hope” by Lesya Ukrainka and “Hope is the Thing with Feathers” by Emily Dickenson. The event continued FSU’s commitment to advance teaching and learning as well as creative endeavors with international partners



From Hackathon to IDEA Grant

Amber Losciale and Jas Chawla, two FSU students who competed in the 2024 hackathon with Taras Shevchenko Kyiv National University, used that experience to develop a proposal and submit an IDEA Grant. Their funded project titled, “Reconaut: Leveraging Drone Technology & Machine Learning for Post-Disaster Building,” was implemented over the summer. David Merrick, the director of the Emergency Management and Homeland Security Program, served as their mentor. The students were featured in the 2025 President’s Showcase of Research Excellence.

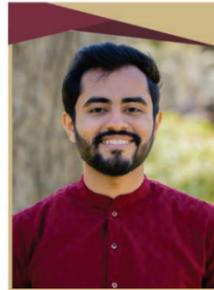
Jas Chawla and Amber Losciale

Poster Presentation, Ballrooms A-D

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Reconaut: Leveraging Drone Technology & Machine Learning for Post-Disaster Building

Prof. David Merrick



Jas Chawla Computer Science

Jas Chawla is a Computer Science major who is passionate about blending technology with real-world impact. His journey into computer vision began at the Machine Learning Lab at Florida State University, where he explored the same tools and ideas that researchers use to push the field forward. What excites Jas most is transforming cutting-edge technology into something people can actually use. After graduation, he plans to keep building Reconaut, a venture he started with Amber through their Idea Grant project, while also sharing research on the effectiveness of their model. To stay grounded in both learning and creating, Jas will continue his studies online at Georgia Tech—making space for his entrepreneurial goals while still growing as a technologist.



Amber Losciale Cyber Criminology

Amber is a Cyber-Criminology major pursuing certificates in Intelligence Studies, Emergency Management & Homeland Security, and Crime and Intelligence Analysis. She began her research journey as a research assistant in UROP and is currently developing an Honors in the Major thesis focused on sociodemographic characteristics of online and offline behaviors. She has balanced academic scholarship, occupational expertise, and campus engagement, having previously been a Marching Chief while maintaining three jobs. Her plans following the completion of her IDEA grant project include expanding it into a startup, Reconaut, that integrates research and practical application. She intends to further refine the project, publish academic findings, and continue building it beyond the grant. She anticipates graduating in Spring 2026 with aspirations to pursue a career with an investigative bureau combatting internet crimes against children following graduate school.

CREATIVE ENDEAVORS

Ukraine: War and Resistance Photo Exhibit | February 24, 2025

FSU organized a photos exhibit called, “Ukraine: War and Resistance.” This is a traveling exhibit organized by Fulbright Ukraine and the Institute of International Education (IIE) Kyiv Office. The event was hosted by FSU Opening Nights at their main offices on College Avenue. The event included a welcome by Provost Jim Clark, American and Ukrainian speakers, video presentations from Ukrainian partner universities, and the photo exhibit.



DakhaBrakha Concert

August 24, 2025

FSU’s Opening Nights hosted the Ukrainian folk punk band, DakhaBrakha, on April 1 at The Moon. Approximately 300 community members were in attendance, including twelve members of the UTF. DakhaBrakha also engaged FSU students the following day as they participated in a walking tour of the Tallahassee campus.



Vyshyvanka Day Celebration

May 15, 2025

The UTF, Center for Global Engagement, and local Ukrainian diaspora co-organized an event to celebrate Vyshyvanka Day, a day when Ukrainians celebrate their folk traditions and the historical significance of the Ukrainian embroidered shirt, the vyshyvanka.

Ukrainian English Book Launch

September 26, 2025

Dr. Nicholas Mazza, Emeritus Dean and Professor of the College of Social Work and one of the leading experts on poetry therapy, participated in an event to launch the English-Ukrainian book, *Dialogue with Yourself: Recovery Through Writing*. Dr. Mazza wrote the forward to this book. It was published with support from the Presidential Grant of Ukraine for Young Writers.



Exhibition of Art-Therapy & Storytelling

October 6, 2025

FSU's Resilience Institute for Strength and Empowerment (RISE), the UTF, and the Art Therapy Program jointly hosted an evening exploring healing-centered peace building as an alternative to mental health systems overwhelmed by war and collective trauma in crisis areas. The event featured prints of artwork by East African and Ukrainian artists and a panel discussion including experts from FSU's art therapy program.

SPONSORED RESEARCH

Members of the Ukraine Task Force began 2025 with high hopes that they would be able to secure significant grant funds to advance their ongoing research and collaboration with Ukrainian partners. Unfortunately, the funding landscape changed significantly, and some of the funding that had been anticipated was canceled or suspended indefinitely. Nevertheless, UTF members submitted three noteworthy grant proposals during the year.

Applied to three external funding opportunities related to Ukraine

1. Community College Initiative Program, ECA, USDOS, PI Fuentes and Co PI Wiest, \$3,937,500
2. "Stimuli Responsive 2D Molecular Materials and Heterostructures," NATO's Science for Peace Program, PI Shatruck,
3. "Drones and AI-Driven Geospatial Intelligence for Civil Demining and Security," U.S. Ukraine University Partnership for Peace, U.S. Embassy in Kyiv, PI Fuentes, \$250,000,

In addition to the grants listed above, the UTF partnered with the U.S. Department of State to implement two International Visitor Leadership Programs for Ukraine.

- IVLP focused on improving Technical and Vocational Education -- August 2025
- IVLP focused on Exploring Market Driven Education -- December 2025



August 9-20, 2025

Members of the UTF participated in a U.S. Department of State-sponsored IVLP for Ukraine focused on U.S. Best Practices in Technical Education to Meet Workforce Demands. Rabieh Razzouk, Director of the Learning Systems Institute, led a large group discussion about how we can support Ukrainian educators in the future. Other parts of the university to be featured included the Career Center, Veterans Center, and Innovation Hub.



December 8, 2025

Dr. Vilma Fuentes, program director of the FSU Ukraine Task Force, was invited to serve as a keynote speaker to a second U.S. Department of State-sponsored International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP) for Ukrainian higher education officials. This IVLP explored U.S. approaches to market-driven education in the United States and how best practices can be applied in Ukraine.

COMMUNITY SERVICE

Members of the Ukraine Task Force participated in and supported several community engagement and community service events throughout 2025. Some were cultural events organized by the local Ukrainian diaspora while others were organized to support children in Ukraine.

Traditional Ukrainian Concert

May 8, 2025



Kozak Siromaha Concert

October 29, 2025



December Donation Challenge

Members of the Ukraine Task Force participated in and supported community engagement and community service events throughout 2025. Some were cultural events organized by the local Ukrainian diaspora while others were organized to support children in Ukraine.



SHARE THE GIFT OF STEM WITH KIDS IN UKRAINE

Donate new or used STEM toys, science kits, books, lab tools, and more!

Drop off at the Challenger Learning Center of Tallahassee
 200 S Duval St, Tallahassee, FL

Scan to Learn More and See All Donation Locations

Thank you to our campus partners



