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# **University of Florida Student Named 1<sup>st</sup> Runner-Up for the 2003 Florida College Student of the Year Award**

Gainesville, Fla (04-03) – Michael Gale, a senior in zoology with a 3.72 GPA at the University of Florida, is first runner-up for the 2003 Florida College Student of the Year Award.

Gale and 19 other students from colleges and universities across Florida shared \$65,000 in scholarships and prizes at the Friday, April 11 award ceremony and press conference held in the Capitol Building in Tallahassee. He appears on the cover of *Florida Leader* magazine and is profiled at [www.floridaleader.com/soty](http://www.floridaleader.com/soty).

Gale was selected from 156 applicants in the annual scholarship program sponsored by *Florida Leader*, SunTrust Education Loans, and Office Depot. The Florida College Student of the Year Award celebrates 16 years of recognizing outstanding Florida college students for their campus leadership, academic excellence, financial self-reliance, and campus and community service, something Gale has done throughout his years at UF. He is the first ever applicant to be honored as a finalist two years in a row.

Gale has been an active force in UF's student Government since the Fall of 2001. He started his involvement as the environmental cabinet director. "I represent a very non-traditional sector in SG, promoting environmental advocacy," he says. Since then, Gale's SG responsibilities have grown. As involvement cabinet coordinator, he supervises the seven cabinet directors whose areas are seen as "involvement-oriented." This responsibility has earned Gale recognition on campus, but that's not where his true passion lies. "Some people think Michael Gale is just this SG guy," he says. "To me, I'm the zoo guy."

Gale spent the past summer as an administrative intern in the education department at the Baltimore Zoo. His responsibilities ranged from teaching in the zoo mobiles and camp programs to creating new interactive exhibits for the zoo. “One of the interactives I designed was called ‘Tools for Stools,’ and it shows the tools that the veterinarians use to analyze the feces in this discovery drawer for kids to pull out,” he says.

Gale also is the president of the Honors Ambassadors on campus and serves as one of the Residence College Advisors. After serving two years as an RA, this job proved to have come with more responsibility. “Honors students are much more high maintenance,” he says. Gale himself is an honors student and actively uses that status to get involved. He serves on the National Collegiate Honors Council, helping the council find a permanent headquarters and director.

Aside from Honors work and Student Government, Gale is a member of UF’s Matthews Society, a group dedicated to ethical leadership and service to the University of Florida. “He’s able to approach lots of arenas and be active with all of them,” says Dr. Michael Rollo, associate vice president for student affairs. “Michael is always thinking, always on, always thinking of ways to share information.”

Above all, Gale values his time to just sit and connect with others. “There’s such a value to just sitting down and being with people,” Gale says. “There’s such a value to listening to [resident’s] stories and being part of their stories as time goes on—that’s been my favorite part of this year, being part of 33 amazing people’s lives and their undergraduate experience.”

Gale also is the winner of two national awards—the 2002 Morris K. Udall award, a national award presented to students dedicated to a career in the environmental sector, and the Harry S. Truman award, which focuses on students dedicated to public service. “The Truman and the Udall are extremely competitive national awards, particularly the Truman,” says Sheila K. Dickison, associate provost and director of the honors program. “It’s most unusual for someone to win both awards because they both have very different emphases, so that really says something about Michael’s strengths.”

The complete Florida College Student of the Year awards ceremony will air on Sunshine Network on May 21 at 5 p.m. and on May 27 at 10:30 a.m. It also will air throughout the month of June.

### **About Oxendine Publishing, Inc.**

In its 20th year, Oxendine Publishing produces three magazines including *Student Leader*, *Florida Leader* for high school students, and *Florida Leader*, which sponsors the 16th annual “Florida College Student of the Year Award” program, the 14th annual “Best of Florida Schools” awards, and features the “Top Florida Leadership Training” review. Visit [www.floridaleader.com](http://www.floridaleader.com) for details.

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