



STETSON UNIVERSITY  
CENTER FOR PUBLIC  
OPINION RESEARCH

# ANNUAL REPORT 2025-26

Presented By:  
**CPOR STAFF AND FACULTY**

## More Information



[Stetson.edu/artsci/cpor](https://stetson.edu/artsci/cpor)



Stetson University, DeLand, FL



# LETTER FROM DIRECTORS

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Dear Friends of CPOR,

This year has been a transitional one for the Stetson University Center for Public Opinion Research. Like any young center, CPOR is still refining its identity, strengthening its operations, and building the foundation for long-term growth. Even during a year of change, the Center continued to show its value as a nonpartisan source of public opinion research for Stetson, Central Florida, and the state.

One of CPOR's clearest successes this year has been the growing visibility of our election polling. The 2026 Florida gubernatorial and Senate poll showed that CPOR can produce timely, credible, and publicly relevant data during an important election cycle. The poll generated major media attention, including 46.8 million total reach, 41 million in editorial reach, 5.85 million in social reach, and an estimated \$433,000 in advertising value equivalency. It also received coverage from outlets such as The Palm Beach Post, Florida Politics, and NewsBreak, and was included in national-level tracking such as The New York Times 2026 Senate and gubernatorial polling tracker.

That success matters because it shows CPOR beginning to occupy a meaningful space in Florida's public conversation. Election polling helps explain not only which candidates are ahead, but also what voters care about, where uncertainty remains, and how public opinion is changing. As Florida continues to draw national attention, CPOR's polling gives Stetson a stronger voice in conversations about politics, policy, and civic life.

At the same time, CPOR's work this year extended well beyond elections. Our continued partnership with the Orlando Economic Partnership has helped track business confidence, economic uncertainty, workforce challenges, cost pressures, and housing affordability across Central Florida. CPOR also supported faculty and community-based research connected to water resilience, environmental protection, social isolation, and community well-being.

Just as importantly, CPOR remains committed to student learning. Through the CPOR immersive experience, undergraduate students contributed to real projects involving survey design, Florida politics, issue research, media outreach, literature review, and data-informed communication. These opportunities allow students to build practical skills while contributing to research that reaches journalists, partners, and the broader public.

As we look ahead, CPOR's next phase will require focus, stability, and continued support. We see a strong future for the Center as a statewide electoral pollster, a regional research partner, and a home for hands-on student learning. The development of an I-4 Corridor survey panel remains especially promising, offering CPOR the chance to regularly study one of Florida's most politically and economically important regions.

We are grateful to everyone who supported CPOR through this transitional year. With continued investment, CPOR can keep growing as a trusted source of nonpartisan research, public insight, and student opportunity.

Sincerely,

Dr. David Hill and Dr. Kelly Smith  
Center for Public Opinion Research  
Stetson University



# THANK YOU DONORS!

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We are deeply grateful to our donors for their continued support of the Center for Public Opinion Research.

Your generosity has helped CPOR continue to grow as a public-facing research center that connects high-quality survey research with student learning, faculty collaboration, and community impact.

This year, your support helped sustain our statewide polling work, expand our media outreach, strengthen our ongoing partnership with the Orlando Economic Partnership, and support faculty-led projects on issues ranging from environmental resilience to social isolation and community well-being. CPOR's research reached broader audiences, informed public conversations, and demonstrated the value of Stetson as a place where data, civic life, and student learning come together.

Your contributions also helped make experiential learning possible. Through CPOR's immersive research opportunities, students gained hands-on experience in survey design, data analysis, literature review, project coordination, and public communication. These opportunities prepare students for careers in research, policy, data analytics, public service, and beyond.

Looking ahead, donor support will remain essential to CPOR's next stage of growth, including the continued prospect of launching an I-4 Corridor survey panel, expanding our student research program, and building new partnerships with community organizations and clients across Florida.

We are proud of what we have accomplished together and excited for what comes next.

- CPOR Faculty, Staff, and Students

*Thank You*

# CPOR FACULTY & STAFF

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## **Kelly B. Smith - Associate Professor of Political Science**

Kelly Smith's, PhD, areas of specialty include state politics and public policy. Research focuses on American politics with a particular emphasis on the relationship among state legislative politics, bureaucratic politics, and democratic governance.

- PhD, political science, Brown University
- MA, political science, Brown University
- BA, political science, Providence College



## **David Hill - Associate Professor of Political Science**

David Hill joined the faculty in 2007 after teaching at Valdosta State University in Georgia and Bridgewater State College in Massachusetts. He has published articles in American Politics Research, Electoral Studies, State and Local Government Review, State Politics and Policy Quarterly, American Review of Politics, and Politics and Policy.

- PhD, political science, University of Florida
- MA, political science, University of Florida
- BA, political science, Stetson University



## **Gustavo Venturelli - Assistant Professor of Political Science**

Gustavo Venturelli is an Assistant Professor of Political Science and an affiliated researcher with Team Populism and ReDem, specializing in populism and democratic backsliding in Latin America. He earned his PhD from the University of São Paulo and previously held positions at Central European University and Skidmore College.

- MA, PhD, University Sao Paulo
- MA, Federal University of Santa Catarina
- BA, Federal University of Santa Catarina



## **Liam Leider - CPOR Manager**

Liam Leider serves as CPOR's manager, supporting survey operations, data analysis, project coordination, and public-facing research initiatives. He is currently pursuing his MBA at Stetson University, where his coursework focuses on data analytics and strategic decision-making.

- MBA, Stetson University (in progress)
- BA, political science and philosophy, Stetson University



## **Catherine Wright - Administrative Assistant**

Before working with CPOR and the Political Science & Economics Department in 2023, Catherine Wright worked for 1.5 years with the Sociology Department at Stetson University. She graduated from Louisiana State University in 2007 and is currently pursuing a masters degree at Stetson.

- MS, Marriage and Family Therapy, Stetson University (in progress)
- BA, communication studies, Louisiana State University



## **Robert Askew - Associate Professor of Psychology**

Robert Askew, PhD, is a quantitative psychologist and epidemiologist whose research focuses on the measurement of distinct facets of physical and mental health through the application of latent variable modeling techniques.

- PhD, psychology, University of Washington
- M.P.H., epidemiology, University of Texas School of Public Health
- BA, international studies and art history, Southwestern University

# PROJECT SPOTLIGHT

## STATEWIDE FLORIDA GUBERNATORIAL AND SENATE POLL

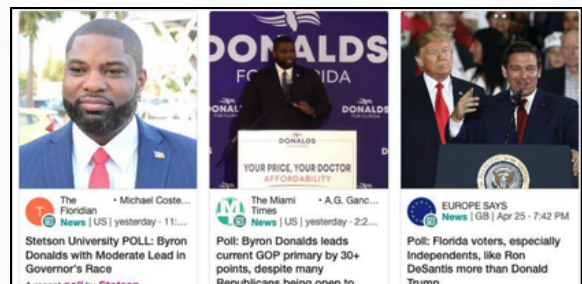
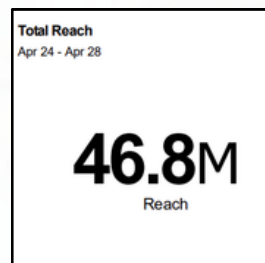
CPOR's April 2026 Florida Midterms Poll represents one of the most visible and impactful statewide efforts to date. Fielded between March 25 to April 13th, 2026, the survey captured early voter preferences in key statewide races while also measuring issue salience and levels of voter uncertainty heading into the midterm cycle. The resulting data provided a clear snapshot of the political landscape, showing Republican leads alongside a meaningful share of undecided voters, making the poll a valuable resource for understanding political conditions in Florida.

The media response to the poll reinforces CPOR's growing prominence as a trusted source of public opinion data. As detailed in the media report, the poll generated substantial statewide and national attention, with coverage spanning major media outlets and high-engagement social platforms.

### Key impact highlights:

- 46.8 million total reach across media coverage
- 41 million editorial reach and 5.85 million social reach
- \$433,000 in advertising value equivalency (AVE)
- Coverage in major outlets including NewsBreak, The Palm Beach Post, and Florida Politics
- Inclusion in national-level tracking, including The New York Times 2026 Senate & Gubernatorial polling tracker
- Strong digital amplification, with 121 instances of social echo and high-visibility posts reaching millions

**MIDTERM**  
**2026**  
**ELECTIONS**

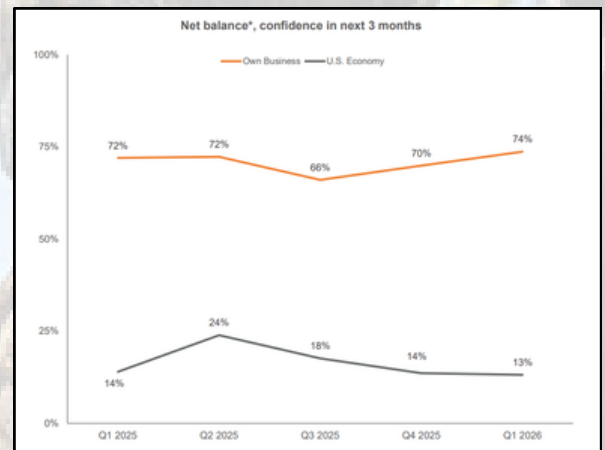
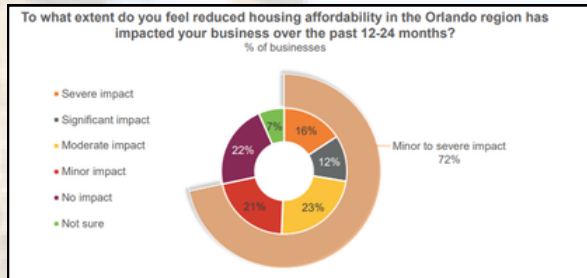


# ON-GOING PROJECTS

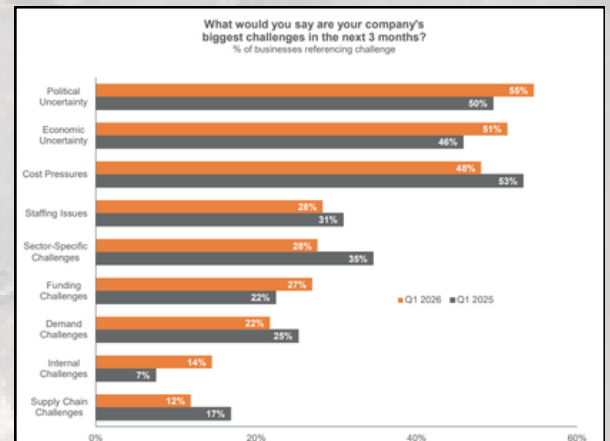
## Orlando Economic Partnership (OEP)



CPOR's ongoing partnership with the Orlando Economic Partnership (OEP) remains one of the center's most impactful and sustained collaborations. Now spanning multiple survey waves, this work has moved beyond one-time snapshots to produce a rich longitudinal dataset on regional business conditions. By fielding consistent quarterly surveys, CPOR is able to track how employer sentiment evolves over time—capturing shifts in economic outlook, workforce challenges, and structural pressures facing the Orlando metro area. This continuity not only strengthens the reliability of our findings but positions CPOR and OEP as leading sources for data-driven insight into Central Florida's economic trajectory.

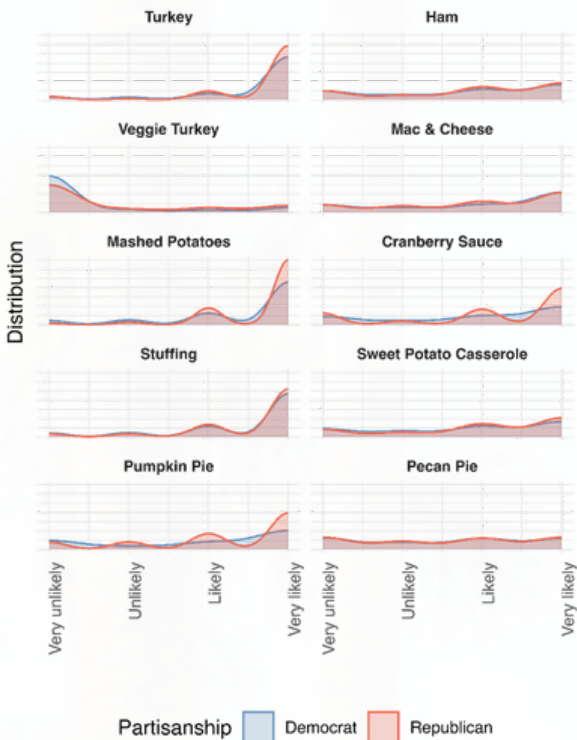


As part of CPOR's broader research portfolio this year, our work with the Orlando Economic Partnership highlights the value of sustained, data-driven insight into regional economic conditions. Across survey waves, businesses consistently report stronger confidence in their own performance than in the national economy, even as concerns about uncertainty, costs, and staffing persist. Housing affordability also stands out as a growing structural challenge, with a clear majority of firms indicating some level of impact. These findings reinforce the importance of CPOR's longitudinal approach, allowing stakeholders to track business attitudes, as well as see how perspectives evolve over time.



# COMPLETED PROJECTS

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## November Thanksgiving Poll

CPOR's 2025 Thanksgiving survey offered a timely example of how public opinion research can contribute to conversations beyond elections and policy debates. At a moment when Americans are often described as deeply divided, the survey found that Republicans and Democrats in Florida share many of the same Thanksgiving traditions, from turkey and stuffing to mac and cheese and pie. The results gave CPOR an opportunity to tell a more hopeful, accessible story about polarization, one grounded in data rather than assumption.

For Stetson and CPOR, this project demonstrated the center's ability to produce research that is rigorous, relevant, and public-facing. By translating survey findings into a story that donors, journalists, students, and community members could easily understand, CPOR strengthened its role as a nonpartisan source of insight on the social and political life of Florida. The project also reflected CPOR's broader mission: using high-quality survey research to elevate Stetson's public profile, inform civic dialogue, and create meaningful learning opportunities for students.

## IWER / Surface to Springs Project

CPOR completed its work with Dr. Jason Evans and the Institute for Water and Environmental Resilience (IWER) on the Surface to Springs project, a collaborative effort focused on understanding public attitudes related to water resiliency, environmental protection, and community engagement. Through this partnership, CPOR contributed its survey research expertise to a project with clear regional importance, helping connect Stetson's academic strengths to applied environmental and public policy questions facing Florida communities.

## Hollis Grant / Community Isolation Study

CPOR also helped launch a community-based survey project with Dr. Jesse Fox through his Hollis Grant, focused on gathering public opinion data about feelings of isolation in West Volusia and Orlando. Together, the project collected nearly 500 responses, creating an important baseline dataset for understanding how residents experience social connection, loneliness, and community belonging. This first wave of data will support future iterations of the study and help track changes over time, while demonstrating CPOR's ability to support faculty-led research with practical survey design, outreach, and data collection capacity.



# STUDENT INVOLVEMENT:

## **CPOR Immersive Experience**

During Spring 2026, CPOR engaged four undergraduate research apprentices in a hands-on research experience led by Dr. Gustavo Venturelli. Students contributed to active CPOR projects while building practical skills in survey design, political analysis, media outreach, literature review, and data-informed communication.

Three first-year and sophomore students focused on Florida politics and the 2026 election cycle. They tracked emerging issues likely to shape voter decision-making in upcoming gubernatorial, senatorial, and midterm elections, then developed original survey questions and response scales for possible use in CPOR polling. Their work included cognitive interviewing, peer feedback, and multiple rounds of revision, giving them direct experience with how question wording and scale construction affect data quality.

Students also supported CPOR's first direct journalist outreach effort by building a directory of Florida political reporters. This work helped expand the reach of CPOR's 2026 survey report, which included findings on vote intention, approval ratings, issue salience, voter migration, and policy preferences. The report generated 46.8 million views and over ten published news stories.

Students also completed structured literature review exercises to connect CPOR's public-facing work with the scholarly practices behind rigorous social science research. One senior apprentice will continue over the summer with training in R and a research project on support for Indigenous candidates in Bolivia and Guatemala. Together, these apprenticeships reflect CPOR's commitment to meaningful student learning through research with real public impact.



"CPOR's immersive program succeeds because students are not just learning about research; they are helping produce it. This year, our apprentices moved from identifying issues and designing survey questions to supporting media outreach for a report that reached millions of readers. That kind of experience is difficult to replicate in a traditional classroom, and it reflects what CPOR does best: connecting rigorous social science, public relevance, and meaningful undergraduate learning."

**Dr. Gustavo Venturelli,  
Assistant Professor of Political Science**

# BUDGET

## Income

- Donations, Grants, Rollover: Support from donors, the National Science Foundation (NSF), and the Hollis Grant. Projects: From items such as the IWER Project and other one-time projects.
- Partnerships: Income from collaborations like the Orlando Economic Partnership (OEP).

## Expenses

- Operational Costs: Administrative expenses, survey materials, software licenses, and essential operational costs.
- Project Funding: Research projects, including environmental attitudes (IWER), Hollis Grant, and others.

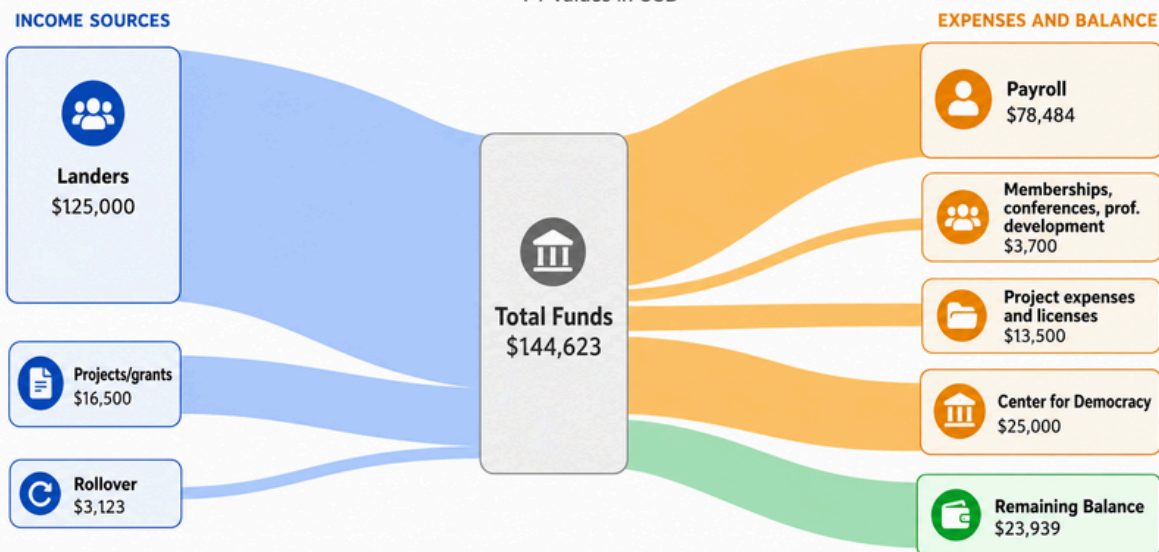
## Financial Overview Total (May 2026)

Income: \$144,623

Total Expenses: \$120,684

## CPOR Income and Expense Flow

FY values in USD



# MANAGER'S REFLECTION

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**Liam Leider**  
*CPOR Manager*

This year, my work with CPOR has affected nearly every part of the Center's operations, from statewide polling and Orlando Economic Partnership surveys to faculty collaborations, media reports, and internal university projects. Being involved across so many areas has helped me grow not only as a researcher, but also as a project manager and communicator. I've learned how much care goes into moving a project from an initial idea to a final report, and how important it is to translate complex data into insights that are clear, useful, and meaningful for the people who rely on CPOR's work.

One of the highlights of the year was attending AASRO in Washington. The conference gave me the chance to learn from survey research professionals across the country, see how other academic polling centers operate, and bring back ideas that can strengthen CPOR's work. It was also a reminder that CPOR is part of a larger professional community, and that the work we are doing at Stetson has real relevance beyond our campus.

CPOR has given me a foundation in research, communication, and leadership that I continue to build on every year. I am proud to help mentor student researchers, support faculty and community partners, and contribute to a center that gives students meaningful experience with real public impact. For me, CPOR is more than a workplace; it is the place where I learned how research can shape conversations, inform decisions, and open doors for students long after they leave the classroom.



**AASRO 2025 Conference, University of Washington**

# FUTURE PLANS

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As CPOR looks to the future, we want to build on one of the Center's clearest strengths: electoral polling. Our recent statewide work has shown that CPOR can produce timely, credible data on the races, issues, and voter trends shaping Florida politics. As the 2026 election cycle unfolds, continued polling will help raise Stetson's profile as a trusted, nonpartisan source for understanding public opinion in one of the country's most closely watched states.

A major next step is the development of an I-4 Corridor survey panel. With donor support, CPOR could regularly survey one of Florida's most important regions and track how opinions change over time. This would give Stetson a distinctive research asset in Central Florida and help position CPOR as a leading source of regional public opinion data.

CPOR is also seeing growing interest from potential partners, including conversations with Habitat for Humanity Orlando and Floridians Against the Death Penalty. These discussions show how the Center's work can serve a wide range of community needs while opening the door to new contracts and long-term growth.

We also hope to expand the CPOR immersive experience, giving more students the chance to contribute to real projects while building skills in survey design, analysis, communication, and project management. Together, these plans point to a future where CPOR continues to grow as a polling center, research partner, and place for hands-on student learning.



# ABOUT CPOR

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At the Center for Public Opinion Research (CPOR), our vision is to be recognized nationally as a preeminent survey research center, known for producing innovative and rigorous research on the public's opinions on politics, the economy, and social issues. We aim to be a trusted source of information for policymakers, media, and the public, promoting evidence-based decision-making and informed public discourse. Additionally, we strive to be a leader in providing students with opportunities to engage in experiential learning in survey research and social science methodology, preparing them for successful careers in research, public service, and related fields.

We envision a society where public opinion is well-understood and considered in policy-making, and where individuals are equipped with the knowledge and skills to engage meaningfully in democratic processes. Stetson University's Center for Public Opinion Research is dedicated to following the best practices of the professional field of public opinion research.

Stetson's CPOR (and Institute for Social Research) is a member of the Association for Academic Survey Research Organizations (AASRO), which upholds best practices for academic institutions to maintain high standards and objectivity in research. CPOR will be seeking certification in American Association for Public Opinion Research's Transparency Initiative, to demonstrate its commitment to transparent and ethical practices in survey research, which can enhance the organization's reputation and credibility among stakeholders.



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