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University of Florida
data breach affects
over 97,200 individuals
University of Florida

[Major Data Breach at the University of Florida](#)

The personal information of over 97,200 people dating back to 1996 could have been compromised

The University of Florida is in the process of notifying over 97,200 current and former students and staff that their personally identifiable information might have been accessed by unauthorized parties. The university's IT staff has recently discovered that an e-learning system that dates back to 1996 had been compromised by unknown hackers.

The University of Florida (UF) is one of the biggest educational institutions in the United States, counting more than 51,000 students. The university introduced a computer system called "Groove" in 1996 in order to host courses, information about classes and provide a free e-mail system for its campus residents.

According to [UF News](#), on January 14, an IT staffer discovered that the "Grove" system had been accessed without authorization and it shut down for investigation. "The investigation confirmed unauthorized access to the system, but it could not determine if files containing private information were accessed," notes Janine Sikes, UF News contact.

Sensitive files stored on the system include the names and Social Security Numbers of current and former students, as well as staff. The access to the system was being granted based on UF ID, which until 2003 was the same as an individual's SSN.

The University Police Department has been called in to assist with the investigation and the institution started sending notification letters to the individuals who could be affected by this incident. However, the university cannot reach around 5,000 people, because they don't have any contact information for them. Therefore, all persons concerned that their information might be at risk are urged to contact UF's Privacy Office and visit their website at <http://privacy.ufl.edu>.

This is not the first time that things go wrong, security-wise, at the University of Florida. We recently [reported](#) that on Inauguration Day, someone obtained access to a mobile text messaging service used by the institution to send campus life alerts to students and staff. The university became aware of the security breach after thousands of students received a cryptic SMS message that read, "The monkey got out of the cage."

More seriously, a few months ago, the IT staff from UF's College of Dentistry [discovered](#) unauthorized software installed on one of their servers. The computer was used to store names, addresses, social security numbers, dates of birth and even medical notes of some 330,000 former and current patients.