Students capitalize on UAB’s strengths with new Honors College

In the beginning, there was Ada Long, who founded the original University Honors Program 25 years ago. It was joined eventually by the Early Medical Professional Schools Acceptance Program (EMPSAP), Science and Technology Honors, and Experiential Learning and Global and Community Leadership Honors. Now, a new Honors College will bring a student-friendly and organizational focus to the programs.

“UAB has a strong tradition in undergraduate honors education, dating to when Ada Long created the University Honors Program,” says Bradley Newcomer, Ph.D., associate dean for Honors in the College of Arts & Sciences. “That program was a national model for undergraduate honors programs in a big university setting. Now, we have four universitywide honors programs plus the early dental, medical and optometry school programs. Overall, we have approximately 1,000 honors students in various programs on our campus, and it’s time once again for UAB to evolve its programs and give our students the tools they need in their drive to succeed.”

To that end, the University of Alabama System Board of Trustees approved the creation of the new Honors College at its Nov. 15 meeting. Newcomer is the director of the UAB Honors College, which will house all of the universitywide honors programs and the early dental, medical and optometry school programs under one umbrella. This will enable the programs to unify their processes, structures and branding without sacrificing the core integrity of the existing programs. It will also provide a single point of entry for prospective and current students and help them identify the best set of honors opportunities to support their educational and professional goals.

Dentistry changing its culture, empowering faculty, staff

CNN Money put together a list of the 100 dream workplaces in 2011, and Michael Reddy, D.M.D., D.M.Sc., was disappointed he didn’t see UAB’s School of Dentistry in the Top 10. Now, realistically, the School of Dentistry will never make the list. It’s not a private business like SAS Business Analytics, Google, Zappos.com or Dreamworks. But that doesn’t mean Reddy, the interim dean of Dentistry, can’t learn something from those companies and incorporate it among his faculty and staff to improve work conditions and, in some instances, change a culture.

“We’re trying to create a culture in which the School of Dentistry is considered one of the best places in the nation to work,” Reddy says. “You see places like Dreamworks, SAS and Google and think, what are they doing well? What they do is create a culture of belief in what you’re doing and trust in the leadership and the people that what they’re doing is truly important. We want this culture of innovation — which has always been part of UAB — and a culture of trust, which really relates to our core enterprise and our values.”

The 2010 fall universitywide Faculty and Staff Climate Survey — a first of its kind endeavor for UAB — gave employees an opportunity to give constructive feedback on issues of concern to them, and the results revealed to Reddy that the school had work to do on morale and trust.

“We’ve used the climate survey as a tool and a challenge to step forward,” Reddy says.

UAB, Piggly Wiggly program makes shopping easier

Reading a food nutrition label is tough. How many servings is this? How much sodium? Wait, sodium is salt, right? Why don’t they say so? Here’s a number for total calories. And now calories from fat. What’s up with dietary fiber? Help!

The new UAB Honors College will unify the processes, structures and branding of the UAB honors programs, making it easier for students to access information. “We want to be a first choice for undergraduate education and really capitalize on all of the opportunities in undergraduate research and experiential education here at UAB and in the greater Birmingham community,” says Bradley Newcomer, director of the UAB Honors College.
UAB launches free official mobile app

The new free UAB Mobile app puts access to the campus directory, UAB news, Blazer sports info, Blackboard, campus assistance and more at your fingertips. Read about it at www.uab.edu/app. Download it now from the iTunes store; coming soon to Android users.

Scale Back Alabama weigh-ins start Jan. 23

The Scale Back Alabama weight-loss program challenges participants to lose 10 pounds in 10 weeks. Teams will weigh-in beginning the week of Jan. 23 and weigh-out the week ending April 13. Faculty, staff and students who are not part of a four-person team will be assigned a team. For a list of weigh-in locations, times and prizes see the UAB Wellness website at www.uab.edu/wellness.

Capture this year’s healthy resolutions

What does healthy living at UAB look like? Share your New Year’s Resolutions with Employee Wellness by using your phone or camera to capture images of healthy moments at UAB. The pictures may be action shots, scenery, random snapshots or staged smiles.

Share your photos with UAB Employee Wellness by posting to Twitter @UABWellness, Facebook at UAB, Share your photos with UAB Employee Wellness by posting to Twitter @UABWellness, Facebook at UAB, and UAB Health System Employees and their families.

Pulmonary to host professional update, roast one of its own

The Division of Pulmonary, Allergy and Critical Care Medicine will roast the last of the “Killer Bs” and host a professional development seminar the weekend of March 9-10. The Gala Roast and Toast and Fellow’s Reunion will celebrate the career of William Bailey, M.D., a 39-year veteran at UAB. Bailey is the youngest of the legendary Killer Bs, four physicians who played a central role in the early days of the division of pulmonary medicine at UAB.

The Killer Bs consisted of Dick Briggs, Durwood Bradley, Ben Branscomb and Bailey. Bailey holds the Eminent Scholar Chair in Pulmonary Diseases and is the founder of the UAB Lung Health Center.

The Roast and Fellow’s Reunion is Friday, March 9 at the Wynfrey Hotel in Hoover. The reception begins at 5:30 p.m. with dinner at 7 p.m. Price per person is $50. Register by Tuesday, March 6 at www.ua.edu/pulmonaryupdate or call Cyndi Calhoun at 934-4328.

The division will host Pulmonary and Critical Care Update 2012 March 10. Randall Young, Jr., M.D., of the Albert Einstein Federal Center in Philadelphia, will deliver the Branscomb-Briggs annual lecture on agility in adult asthma. Young is a former director of the UAB Division of Pulmonary Medicine.

The update is for physicians, residents, nurses and respiratory therapists in pulmonary and critical care medicine, internal medicine and family medicine. It will provide seven AMA PRA category I CME credits. Registration fees are $200 for physicians, $100 for fellows and $155 for nurses/RTs. Registration and additional information is available at www.uab.edu/pulmonaryupdate.

Learn to build a basic budget Jan. 25

The UAB Resource Center Employee Assistance Program will host “Build a Basic Budget — A Five-Step Spending Plan” brown bag lunch from noon to 1 p.m. Wednesday, Jan. 24 at the West Pavilion Conference Center Board Room.

Legacy Community Federal Credit Union financial experts will present the event. They will help you identify spending leaks, track where your money goes, develop a spending plan, avoid the pitfalls of overspending and successfully manage your financial tracking and spending system. Experts estimate American consumers waste 20-30 percent of their money because of poor spending habits and planning. This is your chance to take control of your financial life.

Space is limited; call 934-2281 to register and visit the Resource Center online at www.uab.edu/eap for information on this and other events. The UAB Resource Center Employee Assistance Program is open to all UAB and UAB Health System Employees and their families.

Farm Stand delivery now available

Order healthy, delicious fresh fruits and vegetables online from The Farm Stand at www.uab.edu/wellness. Orders placed by midnight Monday will be delivered to your office building on Thursday. If your office/building isn’t on the delivery schedule, let us know and we’ll add it.

See a snapshot of life on an iron plantation

Hear fascinating oral histories of life for black workers living in the Sloss Furnaces company housing during the 1900s from the “Like it Ain’t Never Passed” monograph at 4 p.m. Jan. 26 in Sterne Library Seminar Room 174. Karen Utsi, curator for the Sloss Furnaces National Historic Landmark and adjunct history instructor at UAB, is the guest speaker. This free, public event is part of UAB Community Week.

Yakov Kasman to perform in Paris

UAB Professor of Piano and Artist-in-Residence Yakov Kasman will perform in Paris, France, with Orchestre Lamoureux in Théatre des Champs Elysées — considered one of the most important concert halls in the world — Jan. 29. Two days later he will play at Théatre de Rungis in the city of Rungis, France, on Jan. 31.

“Theatre des Champs-Elysees is one of the world’s most famous and prestigious venues. And Orchestre Lamoureux is one of France’s oldest and well-respected orchestras. I am absolutely thrilled to have a chance to be a soloist with this orchestra on that stage performing one of the greatest piano concertos ever composed — Prokofiev Piano Concerto No. 2,” says Kasman.

Kasman will be a soloist with the Montgomery Symphony Feb. 13, performing Mozart’s “Piano Concerto K. 488.” His next UAB performance will be at 7 p.m. Tuesday, Feb. 28 with Paul Mostoller, baritone, in a free faculty recital at UAB’s Alys Stephens Center.

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Portera, chancellor of UA System, announces retirement

Malcolm Portera, Ph.D., the fifth and longest-serving chancellor of The University of Alabama System — who once served as an interim UA president — announced Jan. 16 that he is retiring after a career spanning more than three decades in higher education.

"The time is right for a transition in leadership for the state's largest system of higher education," Portera said.

Under Portera’s leadership, the UA System grew from 45,000 students in 2002 to 57,000 in 2011-12. During the same period, the total budget for the three UA System campuses and its affiliates more than doubled — increasing to more than $4.6 billion this year from $2.1 billion a decade ago. During his tenure as chancellor, he also served as interim president at UAB and UA Huntsville.

In making the announcement, Portera said, "My wife Olivia and I want to thank the Board of Trustees for giving us the opportunity to lead what I believe to be one of this country's finest university systems. We have been blessed to have an exceptional staff in the Chancellor's Office, and we are supported by a truly outstanding group of campus presidents," he added.

"There is no one who better understands and articulates the value of higher education than Mack Portera," said UAB President Carol Garrison. "He has been a devoted advocate for UAB and the university system, always encouraging us to think creatively, set higher goals and never settle for less than excellence. His work will leave a lasting, positive imprimatur on the state of Alabama. I will miss working with him as a 'friend and mentor.'"

Portera was elected chancellor of the UA System in January 2002. He previously served as president of Mississippi State University (1999-2001). His career also includes six years as vice chancellor for External Affairs for the UA System and more than a decade of academic and administrative service on the Tuscaloosa campus. Portera plans to remain in Tuscaloosa and likely will teach on a part-time basis.

Gee first in Alabama to win recognition for online teaching

School of Business instructor Mickey Gee is first to receive national recognition for online instruction at a public university in Alabama for his class, Basic Marketing, from the Quality Matters Program, a national peer-review process.

"It is a great honor, and it is nice to see the UAB School of Business recognized for leadership in online learning," Gee says. "Our staff recognized that access to education online is important and doing it correctly requires a substantial commitment of time and resources.”

QM reviews each online course with a rubric that features 40 quality standards, using a team of three reviewers: a subject expert, design expert and external reviewer. The standards focus on alignment of course objectives with assessments, learning activities, course materials and engagement.

Elizabeth Fisher, Ph.D., the instructional design manager responsible for designing online courses in UAB's School of Business, has worked with 35 faculty to develop 40 online courses. "We ensure students receive the high-quality education and experience online that they expect from the UAB School of Business," she says.

"Online learning expands the access to knowledge for those who want to further their education, but are unable to attend in a traditional classroom setting. But online courses without interactivity and engagement with the instructor and other students are merely correspondence courses," says Fisher, also a certified QM peer reviewer.

Gee has been an Executive-in-Residence and a full-time instructor with the UAB School of Business for a decade. Before that, he owned and operated a Birmingham-based retail chain for 40 years. Though others with his knowledge and experience might shun advances in technology, Gee is as eager as his students to learn.

"I'm not the youngest guy around here, but I learned early in my business career that you must embrace technology to be competitive," said Gee. "My thoughts on that did not change when I joined the UAB faculty. Any time you can use technology to make something better — why not?"

DENTISTRY

This new culture is a reflection of UAB's enterprise-wide Code of Conduct, which is built around eight standards, including treating individuals with respect.

To help create this culture, Reddy first met with faculty and staff to uncover what gaps existed between their perceptions and the culture he wants to create. He also wanted to determine the behaviors and cultural norms that hinder opportunities for success. And Reddy wanted to know if faculty and staff believed they had the skills they need to lead and achieve a great workplace.

The suggestions that have been implemented are making a difference, says Steve Filler, D.D.S., associate dean for students, alumni and external affairs.

"In the past six months, a tremendous amount of positive change has occurred," says Filler, an administrator who works very closely with faculty and staff. "I actually visualize a real difference in the feel of the school."

Improving communication

The first step was improving communication. Reddy read a book by Google CEO Eric Schmidt, and found an idea within its pages that he's borrowed. Every Monday at 4 p.m., Reddy hosts what he calls Open Access. It's a combination of his own time and a traditional college office hours where anyone can come by his office for a four- to seven-minute meeting where any issue can be addressed.

Students have come to talk about the excitement of treating their first patient. Faculty have discussed ideas for how to revitalize the clinical research enterprise. Staff have requested that patient parking be addressed with the city, specifically the need to add more handicap spaces.

No topic is off limits, and Reddy listens and takes notes. He also started "informational interviews," -- meetings at a school has risen in recent months, and两个月, the faculty, staff and students of the School of Dentistry meet at a nearby hotel for a day-long program with multiple tracks. Some of those tracks have included work-life balance, conflict resolution, working with students with disabilities, how to write a case report, building trust, strategic planning and enhancing the clinical component of the school's mission. The most recent daylong program was held Jan. 18.

"We felt strongly we had to do this, and these events have really gone well," Reddy says.

Changing the model

Reddy believed the survey also showed that a new model had developed that was inconsistent with the mission of leading oral health care through research, patient care, education and service. This Reddy says, led to behaviors and cultural norms that hinder success.

"The mental model really was that we’re here to produce dentists for the state, which is an indirect result of all the good things we do," Reddy says. "We have really well-trained dentists, but that’s not the sole reason we’re here. Our goal is to be innovative, creative and make it a better place to work. Our goal is leading oral health care through research, patient care, education and service. But we want to lead at the global level. We don't want to just work for the state and produce highly trained dentists and specialists. We want to do more than just produce doctors."

To help adjust that mindset, Reddy and the school's Faculty Council (which comprises seven faculty members) began discussing ways to enhance faculty and staff development. They discussed interdisciplinary actions, clinical aspects of teaching, dentistry pedagogies, technology, information technology improvements, diverse cultures and other areas.

Ultimately, they determined it would close the clinical machine a few days a year to allow for faculty and staff development. Once every three or four months, the faculty, staff and students of the School of Dentistry meet at a nearby hotel for a day-long program with multiple tracks. Some of those tracks have included work-life balance, conflict resolution, working with students with disabilities, how to write a case report, building trust, strategic planning and enhancing the clinical component of the school's mission. The most recent daylong program was held Jan. 18.

"We felt strongly we had to do this, and these events have really gone well," Reddy says.

Other changes — some small, some large — also have been implemented, including:

• Linking research and clinical mission through branding
• Having the School of Dentistry Smile Cam at UAB home basketball games

Jan. 23, 2012 UAB Reporter 3
UAB doctors, therapists give man hope he will walk again

It's not the way he prefers to get from place to place, but Mike Jezdimir has become somewhat of an expert at maneuvering his scooter through tight places.

He zips it in and out of elevators and through the Spain Rehabilitation Center physical therapy center with ease. He also uses it every day to get around his home in Maylene.

But Jezdimir is working hard to ditch his wheels. He is determined to not let transverse myelitis keep him from doing the one thing he desperately wants to do.

"I'd like to get to the point where I can walk without the aid of a walker," Jezdimir says. "I'd be happy with my cane again.

"And I'd like to walk hand in hand down the street with my wife Lou Ann."

Jezdimir says the treatment and care he has received at UAB is going to him an opportunity to do just that — and that's all I can really ask."

**Long fight**

This isn't a new battle for Jezdimir. The 61-year-old Michigan native has spent the past 44 years fighting each day to have a high quality of life. His foe in the fight has been transverse myelitis, a neurological disorder caused by inflammation of part of the spinal cord. Attacks of inflammation can damage or destroy myelin, the fatty insulating substance that covers nerve cell fibers. This damage causes nervous system scars that interrupt communications between the nerves in the spinal cord and the rest of the body.

Transverse myelitis occurs in adults and children, and peak incidence rates occur between 10 and 19 years and 30 and 39 years. Approximately one-third of those with transverse myelitis get better and return to their baseline. Another third will have some changes to their body that will affect them the rest of their life.

The final third are left with some type of permanent disability.

For Jezdimir, the result of transverse myelitis has left him where he can't feel pain or hot or cold from his chest down. Because of this, Jezdimir has to be extremely careful getting into the shower; water too hot will burn him easily, and water too cold can cause his muscles to weaken to the point where he could fall. He also has muscle spasms that cause his body to stiffen frequently, sometimes up to two times per hour, and they can last for minutes each.

"I think I have a lot of pain," he says. "But I describe it as sensation because I can't tell if it hurts or not unless it's above my chest."

None of this has deterred Jezdimir through the years, however.

It was the summer of 1967 when transverse myelitis hit him, and it came out of nowhere. Then the 17-year-old worked his shift pumping gas at a Detroit-area gas station and began to feel ill. His arms suddenly became sore, and when he arrived at home, he told his parents he didn't feel well. They suggested he lie down and rest. When Jezdimir woke up six hours later, he was completely paralyzed from the neck down.

Doctors initially thought Jezdimir had polio or Guillain-Barré syndrome. Eventually they discovered changes in the spinal cord, between the C5 and C6 vertebrae in his neck, consistent with a viral infection. He was told he would never walk again and likely never feed himself again.

"They put me in the hospital for 29 days with no physical therapy at all," he says. "All they did was turn me around so I wouldn't develop bed sores."

After 29 days, Jezdimir began moving two fingers and he was transferred to a rehabilitation center. Since that day, Jezdimir has spent his time learning about how transverse myelitis affects his body and he has done everything in his power to find the proper medical care to aid him in his pursuit of a high quality of life.

"I've had this for 44 years, and I've been to a lot of places for physical therapy," Jezdimir says. "But until I came to UAB and Spain Rehabilitation Center, I realized I had missed out on a huge opportunity. This place is a diamond in the rough."

**Change in care**

Jezdimir came into the care of Annie Jackson, M.D., chair of the Department of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation, a little more than two years ago when he was at one of his worst points physically.

He had taken the drug baclofen orally for years in an effort to help treat his spasms, but the oral treatments were no longer effective. Instead, the drug was wearing him down and zapping him of his energy.

Jackson recommended to Jezdimir that he have an intrathecal baclofen pump installed in his body. The pump, which is placed under the skin in the abdomen, uses a catheter to dispense the baclofen into the space just outside the spinal cord. It enables the medicine to be dispensed at a higher concentration than what can be given orally and at the direct point of insult.

After some initial complications, Jezdimir had to have the pump revised. He learned quickly that the revision was working, even though what he felt scared him.

With the pump working properly, the medicine went to work quickly and Jezdimir suddenly felt extremely weak.

"He had not been that weak since his initial injury," says Sharon Renfroe, nurse practitioner and manager of UAB's intrathecal baclofen pump program. "He went back to that time and thought he was worse than he had ever been."

Jezdimir's wife, Lou Ann, says that moment put Jezdimir at his lowest. And she says Renfroe was there to reassure.

"'Sharon was off, but she came in to see him in the hospital on his worst day in there because she knew he was having a very bad day,' Lou Ann says. "You don't see that everywhere."

Jackson and Renfroe told Jezdimir that the pump was working like it was supposed to by taking away the uncontrollable spasms that made it seem like he had a lot of muscle movement. However, those same severe spasms were often fighting his ability to voluntarily move his muscles. Now he was going to have to learn to use some muscles he hadn't used before while other muscles had to be used in different ways.

Lou Ann says the initial attack 44 years ago left her husband's muscles like a checkerboard. He had good muscles in some places of his body and bad muscles elsewhere. Jezdimir developed his own physical therapy routine through the years to build up the good muscles to sustain him. He also learned to compensate for the muscles that didn't work.

He has undergone numerous outpatient and home physical therapy treatments during the years and had seen four doctors about his condition before coming to Jackson.

"He's done amazingly well," Jackson says. "He's really taken very good care of himself. He's lived with transverse myelitis longer than any person I know."

In fact, Jezdimir has been more functional than doctors and even some of his loved ones ever thought he could be.

**Earning his way**

Jezdimir was the second of eight children, and his parents wanted him to sit on a street corner and sell pencils out of a wheelchair as a way to try and make a living. He met Lou Ann in Kalamazoo, Mich., in May 1971, and they both had other ideas.

The Jezdimirs were married in November 1971, and she demanded he get a college education — and he wanted one for himself. So he earned his engineering degree from Western Michigan while building his career as a draftsman at Stryker Corporation. He eventually worked his way to director of engineering. He left Stryker to work in the plastics industry before his condition forced him to retire nine years ago. He went beyond the wheelchair and selling pencils on the corner," Lou Ann says proudly.

Jezdimir has had many other successes. He has been able to walk most of his life using either an arm crutch or a cane. He used to fish and play golf occasionally. The Jezdimirs' used to even play a slow game of tennis together. And he and Lou Ann also had two boys — Mike and Mark — who moved to Birmingham more than a decade ago; the boys ultimately are the reason why the couple is here.

"They wanted us down here so they could look after us," Lou Ann says. "It's been a blessing, because we would have never found UAB without it."

And that's why Jezdimir continues to press on. His surgeries and the installation of the intrathecal baclofen pump have changed his life for the better, he says.

Jackson, Renfroe and Robert Brunner, M.D., medical director of Spain Rehabilitation Center, helped get him on the right path with the pump. And his stay in UAB Hospital after two surgeries made a positive impact on him as well. "The nursing, technical and patient
Pump program can aid patients with neurological disorders

UAB’s intrathecal baclofen pump program has been active for decades and featured at the UAB intrathecal baclofen pump clinic in the early 1990s. Approximately 120 patients are enrolled in the program, including Maylene resident Mike Jezdimir, a 61-year-old patient with transverse myelitis, a neurological disorder caused by inflammation to part of the spinal cord.

Jezdimir’s spasms made him a candidate for the pump, and Amie Jackson, M.D., chair of the Department of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation, recommended its use for his care.

The pump is a titanium steel device housed under the skin in the lower abdomen; a catheter is threaded from the pump into the spinal canal to deliver baclofen 24 hours a day. Candidates include patients who develop spasticity after a stroke, spinal cord or traumatic brain injury, multiple sclerosis or cerebral palsy that cannot be controlled by oral medications.

"Baclofen binds to receptors in the spinal cord to block them from abnormally causing spasticity by reducing tone-tight or hypertonic muscles that can be painful and cause contractures," says Nurse Practitioner Sharon Renfroe, who manages and coordinates the intrathecal baclofen pump clinic for spasticity patients at UAB. "It also will decrease or eliminate spasms known as hypertonicity." Renfroe says, "These all significantly affect patients’ ability to perform activities of daily living, including mobility and level of comfort."

In Jezdimir’s case, his spasms were so violent that it caused his body to contort and affected his ability to sit, stand, walk and sleep. The trial dose of intrathecal baclofen alarmed him at what he felt — or actually what he didn’t feel.

But Jackson says this is the medicine doing its job.

"I told him he was going to feel like he really lost a lot of function, but he would see he could still do things. But he would be using weaker muscles he hadn’t been using, he’d use his spasticity to help him walk and transfer. We used therapy to actually re-teach his muscles to work, and that’s been beneficial."

Two years later, the pump still works very well for him, she says. "He’s on a very low dose, and he’s able to exercise and be more comfortable in his wheelchair. It’s really having a positive effect on his quality of life."

Referrals to UAB’s program come from Alabama, the panhandle of Florida and Mississippi.

Researchers say add a helmet to your tornado-prep kit

Helmets may prevent injury or death for those caught in a tornado, say researchers at the UAB Injury Control Research Center.

In a commentary posted online on its website — www.uab.edu/icrc — the research team suggests that any kind of safety helmet, from hard hats to football helmets to bike helmets, is an essential addition to an individual’s tornado-safety preparations.

"Head injuries are a major cause of tornado-related deaths in the United States," said Scott Crawford, a research assistant at the ICRC and the commentary’s lead author. "Alabama is the nationwide leader in tornado-related deaths with 412 fatalities recorded since 1980, demonstrating the need for a readily available, low-cost intervention to reduce risk."

According to the medical examiner’s office in Jefferson County, at least 11 of the 21 fatalities in the county in the wake of the massive April 27, 2011, tornado outbreak resulted from head or neck injuries.

"Previous research has shown that most tornado-associated injuries and deaths result when people or solid objects become airborne," said Russ Fine, Ph.D., director of the UAB ICRC. "Most victims suffer multiple traumatic injuries, including injuries to the head and neck. And head injuries have a statistically higher case-fatality rate of 23 percent versus the 3 percent case-fatality rate of all other injuries combined."

In the commentary, the researchers recommend “the use of any helmet, or head covering made of a hard material and worn to protect the head from injury, stored in an easily and readily accessible location in the home, workplace or vehicle for which one of its purposes is to be worn in the event of or threat of tornado activity.”

They describe a safety helmet as any structurally sound helmet, such as a motorcycle helmet, football helmet, baseball helmet, bicycle helmet, skateboard helmet, or even a construction hardhat, as long as the helmet’s original intended purpose is to minimize anatomical damage sustained as a result of high-velocity impacts.

"The ideal tornado helmet would be a full-sized racing-style motorcycle helmet with a full-face shield, as it provides complete head and face protections and is designed to minimize neck injury," Crawford said. "But any helmet is better than no helmet at all."

The UAB ICRC is partnering with the Alabama Head Injury Foundation to develop a public-awareness campaign supporting the use of helmets during times of tornadoic activity.

"Tornadoes are a common event in the Midwestern states of the Tornado Alley and in the Southern states that comprise the Dixie Alley," Fine said. "The use of helmets is a cheap, easily accessible strategy that can help save lives, and we urge all people living in tornado-prone areas to include suitable safety helmets in their tornado-preparation materials."
Would a system that makes it easy to understand which grocery store items are best for good nutrition be helpful? Try the EatRight by UAB Nutrition Guidance System, now available in Greater Birmingham Piggly Wiggly grocery stores.

“Look for a tag with a fork placed next to food items that the EatRight by UAB program has designated as Eat More Often foods,” says Judy Ard, M.D., associate professor of nutrition sciences and director of EatRight by UAB. “This is the icon that gives you the green light; it says this is something you should eat more often.”

In 14 local Piggly Wiggly stores, the fork icon is on some 400 food items in just about every food group produce, lean proteins, whole grain foods, low-fat dairy products and more.

“Diet plans spend too much time telling people what not to eat,” says. “We’d rather suggest foods that they should be eating more often. If a food item has the Nutrition Guidance System fork symbol, it’s a good choice.”

EatRight and the locally owned Piggly Wiggly stores have a long history of cooperation, and the stores were eager to implement the NGS program.

“We’re always looking for ways to enhance the shopping experience for our consumers. We didn’t have a system to educate customers about good nutrition choices or the means to create one,” said Andy Virgilio, co-owner of area Piggly Wiggly stores. “So when Dr. Ard came to us with the UAB EatRight NGS, it filled a void. And because it’s from UAB, it has instant credibility.”

And plans to expand the number of food items that are deemed worthy of the NGS fork to as many as 5,000 during the next year. The program also includes nutrition information, meal planning tips and easy-to-follow healthy recipes. Displays at the end of the store aisles include recipe cards and the ingredients for those dishes.

“We’ve condemned and distill our experience, our nutrition expertise and our knowledge into a very simple way of understanding good food choices,” Ard says.

The program is supported by the Community Foundation of Greater Birmingham and the Susan Mott Webb Charitable Trust.

“The goal of the system is to help individuals make better choices that can lead to a healthier community,” Ard says.

Learn more at www.uab.edu/eatright.

PIGGLY WIGGLY

CONTINUED from page 1

Many universities have trended toward creating an honors college: institutions have created an honors college: and surveys revealed four primary reasons why they do so. Newcomer says. “We want to be a first choice for education and capitalize on all of the opportunities in undergraduate education and enhance their normal coursework and enhances their normal coursework with experiential activities or outside the classroom activities.

Each of the programs takes approximately 30 students per year; however, national standards to be accepted are tough and the process is highly competitive. Newcomer says that’s not the case at all institutions.

“How can we do this? We want to create an enhanced educational environment that changes the lives of our students.”

UAB’s small, intimate universitywide honors programs help make that possible. Newcomer says. UAB Honors students have the opportunity to receive a lot of individual attention because each enrolling class typically is no more than 50 students.

This enables students to develop relationships with faculty members and gives them unlimited opportunities.

“There are so many opportunities for students here at UAB,” Newcomer says. “We’re big enough that we have all these research and experiential educational opportunities, and we’re small enough in terms of undergraduate population that our students are not just a number. Students have the option to make those quality relationships with faculty and staff. And if students really take initiative and build those relationships, they can really carve out a fabulous, one-of-a-kind education that they can’t get anywhere else.”

Newcomer wants the education UAB Honors College students receive to put them at the forefront of finding solutions to some of our most pressing problems today — renewable energy, diseases, drug discovery and delivery systems and developing technologies — among many others.

“That’s what our institution is set up to do,” he says. “When these critical issues humanity faces are being solved, we want UAB Honors College students right there.”

HOPE TO WALK

CONTINUED from page 4

care staff at UAB are first class,” he says. “They are compassionate and caring, and I was treated with respect and genuine concern for my wellbeing.”

And then there are his therapists — Melissa Daniel, a physical therapist, and Evelyn Givens, an occupational therapist — in Spain Rehab. They were charged with helping Jezdimir learn to use his new manual wheelchair, incorporate better transfer techniques into his routines, and help him get in and out of the wheelchair to stand, sit and get in the shower, among many other techniques.

“Jezdimir and Daniel worked to strengthen his muscles through rigorous exercises and learn new transfer techniques — the most unique thing is that he’s so far from his original injury,” Daniel says. “He had a lot of ways he was performing a transfer or getting up was not the way that he had adapted on his own. We had to work on tweaking his technique rather than starting from scratch. For him to be willing to try those new things and be motivated for something that has almost been life-long now is just huge in his recovery.”

Jezdimir and Daniel certainly made an impression on each other. He was appreciative she was willing to listen, and she was equally appreciative he was willing to not let his condition define who he is. Jezdimir’s spirits were lifted that much more by Daniel when she called him on a football Saturday just to make sure he was ready to watch his Michigan Wolverines play that afternoon.

“I mean, she called me on her day off just to make sure I was going to watch the game,” Jezdimir says. “Who does that? That’s who you want who comes in on a day off like Sharon Rensfoe did just to make sure their patient is OK?”

Jezdimir has completed his physical therapy sessions at Spain Rehab. He continues to see Jackson regularly, and Rensfoe refers his intrathoracic balloon pump every six months.

And Jezdimir continues to work daily at home with a physical therapist twice a week and on his own the other days. He just has one thing in mind — parking his scooter in the garage.

“I’m confident we’re on the right track,” he says.

HONORS COLLEGE

CONTINUED from page 2

The UAB Honors College will build on existing universitywide honors program strengths:

• Steady pipeline of engaged student candidates
• Strong sense of community
• Raise the profile of honors within the institution

• Recruit stronger students
• Improve the overall campus academic climate (the non-honors courses)
• Improve the quality of honors education opportunities
• Raise the profile of honors within the institutions

“By having the UAB Honors College, we will be able to really work and capitalize on the strengths of each of our programs, and it will help us integrate the programs better,” Newcomer says. “We’re not planning on merging programs. We cannot sacrifice the core identities of the programs. I think that would be a travesty. We just need to be smarter with how we use our resources. An honors college will enable us to do that and help us leverage new resources for our students in the future.”

Newcomer hopes to begin a strategic planning process for the Honors College in the coming months. Small changes will begin with this year’s applications for prospective students. Newcomer has other plans too, including the implementation of signature programs for the college — specifically study away programs in Chinese and Arabic — and creating opportunities with research companies at Innovation Depot and local biotechnology companies.

“But beginning a strategic planning process is critical right now,” Newcomer says. “We want to bring in community members, partners and key university stakeholders to help take honors education at UAB to the next step.”

How UAB is different

After UAB started the University Honors Program 25 years ago, similar signature programs for the college — the Experiential Learning Scholars Program started approximately seven years ago with a focus on science and engineering students. The GCL Honors Program, created approximately three years ago, helps students create their own unique learning plan that coordinates and enhances their normal coursework with experiential activities or outside the classroom activities.

Each of the programs takes approximately 30 students per year; however, national standards to be accepted are tough and the process is highly competitive. Newcomer says that’s not the case at all institutions.

“Some schools use their honors college as a marketing and recruitment tool,” Newcomer says. “They bring in high-achieving students and give them scholarships, laptops, special housing and make them feel special. We want honors education to be about the education, not about recognition for what you did in high school. It’s a different philosophy. We want to create an enhanced educational environment that changes the lives of our students.”

UAB’s small, intimate universitywide honors programs help make that possible. Newcomer says. UAB Honors students have the opportunity to receive a lot of individual attention because each enrolling class typically is no more than 50 students.

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“That’s what our institution is set up to do,” he says. “When these critical issues humanity faces are being solved, we want UAB Honors College students right there.”

The UAB Honors College will build on existing universitywide honors program strengths:

• Niche programs with challenging curricula and enhanced educational experiences
• Integrated, innovative curricular and extracurricular opportunities
• Strong sense of community
• Strong collaborations with university and community resources to support experiential learning opportunities
• Strong retention and graduation rates
• Steady pipeline of engaged student leaders on campus and in the community

The UAB Honors College will build on these strengths and focus on increasing opportunities for intellectually curious and academically talented students. Overall, the UAB Honors College will focus on integrative learning, experiential education and entrepreneurial innovation.

“The Honors College will increase the visibility of honors education on campus and in the community.” Newcomer says. “We want to be a first choice for undergraduate education and capitalize on all of the opportunities in undergraduate research and experiential education at UAB and in the greater Birmingham community.

Many universities have trended toward establishing honors colleges in recent years. The National Collegiate Honors Council published a monograph on the honors college phenomenon in 2006. Its research and surveys revealed four primary reasons institutions have created an honors college:...
DSS’s Solomon advocates for students, faculty and staff

Allison Solomon always knew she wanted to help those in need. As a high-school junior, she thought the best way to do that would be to pursue a career as a speech pathologist.

She found out four years later she was wrong.

“I was doing my clinicals in my last semester of finishing my undergraduate work at Auburn and I hated it,” Solomon says. “I thought, ‘I can’t do this the rest of my life.’”

So Solomon went to graduate school and got a degree in rehabilitation counseling. While job-shadowing, she made a connection with someone in the Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services who told her about a disabilities specialist position open at UAB.

“I never thought about working in higher education,” Solomon says. “When the idea came up of working at UAB, I got so excited. I thought, ‘This is perfect. I can be in college forever.’ I think it keeps you young in a way, working in the college atmosphere and especially working with students with disabilities.”

Now the director of Disability Support Services (DSS), colleagues laud Solomon for her extraordinary dedication to UAB students, faculty and staff. They also point to her desire to educate others about the difficulties faced by students who undertake the challenges of college work while seeking to overcome the disadvantage of having physical or learning disabilities as admirable and essential at UAB. Therefore, Solomon has been selected January’s Employee of the Month.

Edward Kennedy, recently retired attorney in the UAB Office of Counsel, says Solomon’s ability to explain the role of DSS and convince faculty that her office exists to work with faculty to manage accommodation issues almost always wins her over the most skeptical in the audience.

“Success in Allison’s job requires her to be an advocate for students who have provided documentation of a disability and balance that role with her role as administrative employee responsible for ensuring UAB complies with federal law established by the Americans With Disabilities Act. Students with disabilities who attend UAB are required to visit the DSS office if they need special accommodations. They must provide detailed documentation to support their disability, and it’s Solomon’s job to make sure the student meets the definition of disability under the law and that UAB is providing the necessary accommodations to those who are eligible.

“Our staff is responsible for making sure that everything UAB offers is available and accessible to students with disabilities,” Solomon says. “That can be in terms of physical access in the classroom, online access, or access to clubs, activities and services that are provided to students.”

Solomon and the DSS office are responsible for ensuring UAB complies with federal law established by the Americans With Disabilities Act. Students with disabilities who attend UAB are required to visit the DSS office if they need special accommodations. They must provide detailed documentation to support their disability, and it’s Solomon’s job to make sure the student meets the definition of disability under the law and that UAB is providing the necessary accommodations to those who are eligible.

“Each semester, I have at least one DSS student who may need disability-related accommodations that I am unsure how best to meet,” Stansell says. “Allison is always readily available to answer my questions and provide helpful information. I am always confident that Allison knows what federal law requires, and it’s certainly comforting to know that I have her as a resource.”

While many colleagues consider Solomon’s rapport with her students as her greatest strength, they say she also takes her role as a faculty advocate equally as serious. She avails herself to faculty daily through phone calls, emails and in person visits.

“She clarifies, synthesizes and works with individual programs to help each faculty member decide the best educational venue possible for the student,” says Patricia Jennings, Dr.P.H., professor and program director of the Surgical Physician Assistant Program.

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“One of the reasons I love my job is because it’s never the same thing twice. And the best thing is, we never have to wonder if what we’re doing is having an impact. When you see a student graduate, and you know the struggles they’ve had and the trials they’ve overcome to get there, it’s beyond rewarding.”

— Allison Solomon

(Melissa Scott, office services specialist, Mallory McKee, graduate assistant, applaud Solomon’s dedication to students and employees. They also value her leadership in their small, but busy, office.

“She is an exemplary leader who values the ideas and opinions of each and every staff member,” McKee says. “She often asks for feedback, which makes all of her employees feel important and appreciated.”

Solomon says she is thankful to work alongside such a dedicated group. She appreciates their positive attitudes and willingness to help each other and colleagues throughout campus.

“My staff is great, and it’s important we work well together because we see so many different issues,” Solomon says. “One of the reasons I love my job is because it’s never the same thing twice. And the best thing is, we never have to wonder if what we’re doing is having an impact. When you see a student graduate, you know the struggles they’ve had and trials they’ve overcome to get there, it’s beyond rewarding.”

If you need information on Disability Support Services, call 934-4205 or email dss@uab.edu.
This scholarship was created for children of UAB faculty and staff.

**REQUIREMENTS:**
- Student must be admitted to UAB.
- Must be a first-time entering freshman. The scholarship is not open to transfer students or graduate school students.
- Completed application must be received by February 1, 2012.
- Students must attend UAB immediately following graduation from high school.
- Demonstrated leadership, extracurricular activity and community service during high school.
- Parent must be an active member of the UAB National Alumni Society and be currently employed by UAB on a full-time basis. (Preference will be given on the basis of number of years of membership in the UAB National Alumni Society.)
- Students must maintain a GPA of 2.5 in order to keep the scholarship.
- Preference will be given to students with an ACT score of 22 or higher.
- Students must be enrolled full time.
- Students must include a 500-to 600-word, typed essay that answers the following question: “How do you plan to use your UAB degree to improve society in everyday life?”

Apply today for this NEW Scholarship!
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