UAB honors Outstanding Women

Six local women were honored as the UAB Outstanding Women for 2012 during a ceremony Thursday, March 8 in the Green and Gold Room in Bartow Arena.

The UAB Women’s Center and Women’s Studies Program present the awards annually during Women’s History Month to honor women in the UAB and Birmingham communities who have mentored or served other women, taken a courageous stance or overcome adversity.

Candidates for the award are nominated by Birmingham residents and selected by a committee of university women. The 2012 winners are: Becky Trigg Outstanding Woman Faculty Member Lynda Law Wilson, Ph.D., Outstanding Woman UAB Staff Member Jamika Kirk; Susan D. Marchase Outstanding Woman Administrator Melanie Talbot Montgomery; Outstanding Woman UAB Graduate Student Alison Barnard; Outstanding Woman UAB Undergraduate Student Joyce-Lyn Biggs-Smith; Outstanding Woman in the Community Jeannie C. Burton.

Wilson, the assistant dean for International Affairs and the deputy director of the Pan American Health Organization/World Health Organization Collaborating Center for International Nursing in the School of Nursing, is an innovative teacher who focuses on improving health care for women and children through education and professional nursing development. Her work touches the lives of nurses, a predominantly female profession, who in turn improve the health outcomes of women and children worldwide.

Wilson has been a driving force in development of programs in global communities for the School of Nursing, including initiating a study-away program in Guatemala. She also has built collaborative relationships with nurses and health-care professionals in Brazil, Chile, Columbia, Guatemala, Honduras, Zambia and other countries.

“She embodies the leadership needed to further students’ education by traveling abroad — taking them to areas that are remote and very different from the types of learning situations that they would experience in the United States,” says Doreen Harper, Ph.D., dean of the School of Nursing. “Initiating these types of programs takes an enormous amount of courage. Dr. Wilson leads students and faculty to be innovative in providing care and education in these under-served and remote areas to improve the quality of health for women and children. She

Promise of novel drug-delivery system that can invade tumors to be explored

Researchers Kenneth Hoyt (left) and Eugenia Kharlampieva are working on a drug-delivery method using an ultrasound contrast agent filled with a chemotherapeutic drug specially designed to target cancer tumors.

Survey leads to better communication in IT

UAB has been a big, big place, and with more than 20,000 employees it’s easy not to know what is happening — even in the office next to you.

If no one tells you, you’re very likely to never know.

Campus groups and organizations also experience these issues on a smaller scale. It was a source of consternation for employees in UAB’s Information Technology department, according to the fall 2010 Faculty and Staff Climate Survey. The group of 180-plus employees comprises professionals whose services support the UAB community. These services include support for research computing, research administrative systems, financial and human resource administrative systems, central email, networking, online educational resources and IT security.

Employees were concerned that they did

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(From left) Information Technologies Web Services team members Kevin Canada, Colin Brown, Karen Placke, Lauren Ritchie and Steven Till discuss strategies for their newly implemented newsletter at a recent meeting.
UAB’s Benevolent Fund campaign officially kicks off April 1, but Tuscaloosa Mayor Walt Maddox, a UAB graduate, will help get the annual fund-raising event started a few days early.

Maddox will be the keynote speaker for the annual kick-off campaign event at 2 p.m., Wednesday, March 28 in the Margaret Cameron Spain Auditorium. Maddox played a key role in Alabama’s recovery efforts following the devastating tornadoes of April 27, 2011.

UAB raised $315,915 in a tornado emergency relief fund this past year to help 157 UAB employees and students who were affected by the tornadoes. An additional 13 employees were awarded assistance with UAB Employee Emergency Assistance Program dollars when the special funds were depleted.

UAB employees pledged a record $1,850,212 during this past year’s Benevolent Fund campaign, a portion of which goes directly to the Employee Emergency Assistance Program. UAB hopes to receive $1,925,000 in pledges from employees as part of the 2012 campaign. For more on the Benevolent Fund, visit www.uab.edu/benefund.

**Capitol Steps to support WBHM's capital campaign**

The political humor of The Capitol Steps will come to UAB’s Alys Stephens Center Friday, March 23 to support the $250,000 capital campaign for public radio WBHM 90.3 FM equipment upgrades. “Capitol for Capital” is a special election-year presentation of the comedy troupe that “put the meck in democracy” and is known for skewering both sides of the political aisle.

Tickets are $35 plus a $4 handling fee and are available through the ASC Box Office at 1-877-ART-TIKS or online at www.alysstephens.uab.edu. Gifts to the capital campaign can be made online at www.wbhm.org. WBHM is a listener-supported service of UAB.

**New treatments to be tested for Alzheimer’s**

UAB researchers are recruiting participants for an international clinical trial of a new investigational drug that may slow the progression of Alzheimer’s disease. UAB investigators want to enroll people ages 50-88 with mild to moderate Alzheimer’s disease; call 934-2484 for more information.

**Competition targets wicked problems**

All the easy problems have been solved, leaving us with what Professor John Kao — dubbed “Mr. Creativity” by The Economist — calls wicked problems, the highly complex ones whose solutions require creative, interdisciplinary thinking.

During National Public Health Week the School of Public Health will sponsor a case competition to bring interdisciplinary thinking to highly complex problems, such as how to solve wicked problems. The competition targets wicked problems and is sponsored by UAB's Graduate Interdisciplinary Studies and the Office of the Dean of Interdisciplinary Studies.

**UAB medicine, SHP ranked among nation’s top schools by U.S. News**

U.S. News and World Report has a number of UAB programs among the nation’s Top 20 in rankings released in its “America’s Best Graduate Schools” edition, available online at www.usnews.com. The School of Medicine ranked No. 12 in primary care and No. 31 in research. UAB ranked No. 9 for its AIDS program and No. 12 in rural medicine among medical school specialties. The School of Health Professions physical therapy program ranked No. 19 among top health disciplines.

**Ethics filing deadline again set for April 30**

UAB employees who meet a certain salary threshold, or whose job includes management of state funds in certain capacities, are required to file their annual Statement of Economic Interests form with the Ethics Commission — @ethics.alabama.gov — by April 30. Employees who meet the filing criteria are being encouraged to file online. Employees who choose not to file online may download the form from the UAB Human Resources website. Employees who meet the filing criteria are being encouraged to file online. Employees who choose not to file online may download the form from the UAB Human Resources website.

UAB faculty and staff who must file are encouraged to file online. Online filers will receive an email confirmation of their filing. Employees who choose not to file online may download the form from the UAB Human Resources website. Employees who choose not to file online may download the form from the UAB Human Resources website.

**Wishes for the Alys Stephens Center’s ArtPlay are branching out with a new spring class — GardenPlay**

The class will guide students to create a garden as an expression of self, a creative outlet, a tranquil respite, a haven for wildlife or a potager for cooking. The class will be taught by ArtPlay’s Michelle Reynolds, a gardener, garden writer and speaker; musician and fabric artist. The two-hour, weekly class will meet at 6 p.m. Wednesdays, April 11 through June 13, in the ArtPlay house. The cost of the class is $200 and registration is open. Call 975-4769 or visit www.ArtPlayASC.org.

**Tuscaloosa mayor to speak for Benevolent Fund March 28**

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Michael Reddy named dean of UAB School of Dentistry

Michael S. Reddy, D.M.D., D.M.Sc., an internationally respected specialist in periodontics, has been named dean of the UAB School of Dentistry. Reddy has served as interim dean of the school since June 2011.

“After a thorough national search that resulted in a number of excellent candidates, the search committee’s preferred candidate came from within UAB,” says UAB interim Provost Linda Lucas, Ph.D.

Reddy was chair of the UAB Department of Periodontology from 2004 to 2011 and is the former assistant dean for Planning and Clinical Activity. He also is a senior scientist in multiple UAB research centers, including the centers for Metabolic Bone Disease and Aging.

“I am overwhelmed by the support and encouragement from the alumni, faculty, staff, students and the UAB community, and I’m excited about the opportunities to build on the collaborations and synergies that make UAB and the School of Dentistry strong,” says Reddy.

Reddy is the eighth dean of the UAB School of Dentistry, which ranks 15th in funding from the National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research, of the National Institutes of Health.

“Michael Reddy was an outstanding interim dean, gaining praise equally from faculty, students and alumni,” Lucas says. “A search committee comprising dental faculty, students, alumni and campus leaders conducted an extensive national search. We’re all delighted that Michael Reddy will be the new dean. The future of the School of Dentistry is indeed bright.”

“Alumni are very excited about the selection of Mi- chael Reddy as dean,” says search committee member and School of Dentistry alum Lew Mitchell, D.D.S.

“The alumni know unequivocally that Dr. Reddy, who has given 22 years to the School of Dentistry and to the city of Birmingham, is a gifted clinician, educator, administrator and researcher. The alumni especially appreciate his commitment to clinical excellence and his vision for graduating the best possible dentists to serve the citizens of Alabama.”

Patients help design new kidney-pancreas transplant clinic

Sherry Knox was immediately impressed when she walked into the new Kidney & Pancreas Transplant Clinic. The waiting area was comfortable and relaxing — a perfect size. The restrooms were easily accessible. The patient rooms in the back were outstanding, she says, in functionality, size and privacy.

As a seven-year kidney transplant patient and member of the Kidney Transplant Patient Advisory Council, Knox knows the things patients need to have complete care. And when Robert Gaston, M.D., medical director of Kidney & Pancreas Transplant, completed Knox’s tour around the clinic to where they finished — in front of the blood draw room — Knox’s face lit up.

“This,” Knox told Gaston, “is perfect.”

The clinic opened March 8 in the old maternity space on the fourth floor of the New Hillman Building. The new 11,000 square foot, state-of-the-art facility is more than five times the size of its former space one floor above the new clinic. The new space, part of UAB’s AMC21 plan, will enable the clinic to provide the world-class care it’s known for in an area befitting its stature.

“This provides a facility that unites the pre- and post- operative patients with adequate space for our staff to do their work and teach our patients about their care,” Gaston says. “It also puts a bright face on transplantation at UAB and in the state of Alabama. We’re known nationally and internationally as a place that provides the best transplant care, and now we have the look, feel and space that our patients expect a hospital of our caliber to have.”

The Kidney & Pancreas Transplant staff designed the space with input along the way from the Patient Advisory Committee.

In the old clinic space, patients would have to walk almost two blocks to The Kirklin Clinic for any lab procedure. That could be a struggle for some patients, and the wait for lab work didn’t help make the visit efficient.

The Patient Advisory Committee consistently mentioned that the addition of a blood lab room in the new clinic was vital.

“One of the clear messages from our patients was that they wanted lab draws in the clinic,” says Martha Tankersley, administrative nurse director for the Transplant Program. “They wanted to get their labs right where they were being seen, and we’ve got that set up for them. The suggestions of our patients were a big, big help in designing this space and making it more friendly and efficient.”

Patient comfort and staff efficiency were paramount in the design and concept of the clinic, and for good reason.

More than 10,000 kidney and pancreas transplant patients visit the facility each year, and the patient population continues to expand. The Kidney & Pancreas Transplant Clinic performs 250 to 300 transplants per year, which makes UAB one of the top three largest programs in the country. That doesn’t include the 120 liver, 25 heart and 25 lung transplants also performed at UAB Hospital.

“We’re in the top five for total organ transplants with more than 400 per year,” says Debra McGrew, associate vice president of UAB Hospital. “We perform more than 100 more transplants per year than any other program in the south.”

“We’ve also consistently had some of the best results year in and year out,” says Devin Eckhoff, M.D., director of the Division of Transplant Surgery. “And we do deliver very personalized care to the patients. I think they know that. They know they have a good team caring for them. This will only enhance that personalized care. They’ll have the same nurses and phlebotomists. It will help promote the real team care they receive.”

Indeed, independent groups that have conducted surveys with transplant patients report that UAB is consistently the highest-rated in terms of care by its patients.

Physicians and staff say the new facility should enhance the group’s profile even more.

One of the features that has the staff and patients excited is the new on-site conference room. It will facilitate transplant team meetings and case presentations to medical students, residents and other trainees. It also will double as a patient-education hub where staff can educate donors and potential donors, and transplant recipients on their care.

The new clinic has 18 exam rooms, two procedure rooms and two designated consultation areas among its space — that’s in comparison to the eight exam rooms and no consultation areas in the previous space.

Physicians are following approximately 4,000 patients with functional kidney transplants to date. With more than 300 being added to that number each year, says Mark Driehofer, M.D., professor of surgery and co-director of renal transplant surgery, the new clinic is vital to running a comprehensive transplant enterprise.

“Transplantation is a long-term activity,” says Driehofer, who has been a part of the program since 1986 and for some 7,000 kidney transplants. “It’s chronic, and we need to be able to manage long-term therapy, and that requires a complex interaction of the pre-transplant evaluation process and following them after transplant. We’ve always had some difficulties with that because everything was spread out. Having everything in one place and having enough space so we can address multiple parts of the program simultaneously is a big step forward for us.”

The clinic staff also encourages others to consider the gift of organ donation. Living donors also are in need. More than 28,000 lives are saved each year in the United States because of organ donation, giving hope to more than 108,000 people awaiting a life-saving organ transplant. 100 million Americans have checked “yes” for donation when applying for or renewing their driver’s license or identification card. Sign up as an organ, eye and tissue donor by visiting www.donatelife.net.

Nursing opportunities are available in the new facility. Those interested are encouraged to contact Virginia Loftin in the development office at 975-5602.

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broadens students’ scope of the world and encourages them to find ways to impact others, engaging these students in true global leadership.”

Wilson also has worked within the UAB community and throughout the world as a leader in pioneering nursing education to a wide range of women nursing students, colleagues and scholars.

Her research focuses on improving the health of children and families and specifically, HIV care for mothers and children in under-served communities.

“I feel privileged to be in a profession that offers so many opportunities to serve both at home and abroad,” Wilson says. “I think my drive for global work stems from my interest in different cultural perspectives and the many ways that we can all learn from one another by sharing perspectives and experiences. I want our students to gain this global perspective because I think that the solutions to our many global problems will come from partnering and learning different ways of seeing the world and different ways of addressing the common issues that we all face.”

Kirk, the alumni affairs specialist for the College of Arts & Sciences, has accomplished much in her blossoming professional career and is an example of professional success and achievement to those she interacts with on a daily basis — especially other aspiring women.

Kirk has been instrumental in engaging the college’s more than 40,000 alumni and developing and executing strategic alumni relations programs — a tall task for one person. But Kirk has proven to be an effective one-person shop and is making great progress in building the college’s alumni outreach and development programs in tandem with the development team.

Kirk has raised nearly $50,000 in philanthropic funds from alumni for the CAS annual fund through her work with the UAB National Alumni Society. The funding is crucial to furthering CAS programs as it seeks to provide transformative learning experiences to students and support the innovation and excellence of its faculty.

Kirk also is an outstanding example of a young woman committed to improving a city and community through all aspects of her life. She is the president of the YWCA Junior Board of Directors where she has worked tirelessly in the community promote the YWCA’s two hallmark initiatives: eliminating racism and empowering women. Kirk also is a member of the Junior League of Birmingham and chair-elect for The Market fund-raiser, which supports one group’s service areas of education, health, safety and crisis intervention and financial stability.

She is on the boards of directors of the UAB Minority Health Research Center Young Professionals Board, Hispanic Interest Coalition of Alabama and Bare Hands, Inc., which provide opportunities and environments for community involvement in the creative process and cultural dialogue.

Kirk says she learned how to give back to others as a young child by watching her grandmother volunteer her time at her church and the American Red Cross in Walker County.

“She sees in action taught me what an impact her time and talent gave those being served,” Kirk says. “My involvement with the YWCA of Central Alabama, Hispanic Interest Coalition of Alabama, UAB Minority Health Research Center Young Professionals Board and the Junior League of Birmingham goes beyond just what they do for others. In some cases, I have had friends and family members use their services. You never know when you yourself will need the assistance of these organizations, so why not serve and give?”

Montgomery, assistant dean for administration for the School of Health Professions, has gone through the School of Health Professions, has gone through the School of Health Professions, has gone through the School of Health Professions.

“After losing my daughter, I was given so much love, support and encouragement that it helped me to continue,” Montgomery says. “Other mothers who had lost children were especially helpful as they understood the true depth of the loss of a child and knew the challenges that I would be facing. Unfortunately, I have had too many people I know also lose children suddenly and unexpectedly, and I want them to know there is a support network out there and that they are not alone.”

Friends of Melanie and Virginia also set up several awards in Virginia’s memory in Vestavia Hills, including the Virginia Markle Cheerleading Spirit Award, and Melanie worked to create the Virginia Markle Adventure Village located at YMCA Camp Cosby — one of Virginia’s favorite places.

At UAB, Montgomery manages the finances for the School of Health Professions. The school was facing a $1 million shortfall in the state budget when she arrived in 2001. She worked with the then new Dean Harold Jones, Ph.D. — before he arrived on campus — to balance the budget, and still maintain the level of programs and services provided. The finances for the school have improved immensely, as shown by the recent expansion project that began at the school.

“I was truly honored and humbled to learn my co-workers had nominated me for this award,” Mont- gomery says. “However, winning wouldn’t have been possible without the people I work with. They are great co-workers who are committed to excellence in everything they do, and it makes all of us want to do our best.”

Barnard, a student in the Doctor of Physical Therapy program in the School of Health Professions, has worked diligently to encourage young women to pursue their interests in science, technology, engineering and math — especially if they are areas of strength.

“When I realized that some girls who enjoy and show promise in STEM subjects were losing confidence in their abilities and believed that boys were better at STEM subjects, I wanted to do something,” Barnard says.

After researching some ideas, Barnard found a program called Women in Science that had been successful at Ohio State University and put together the event UAB Girls in Science and Engineering Day based on its principles. Barnard enlisted the help of UAB professors and students with many different departments to create hands-on workshops in subjects such as neuroscience, materials engineering and reptilian biology. They also found internal and external sponsors for the event and welcomed 75 middle-school girls from the Birmingham metro area. Another event is in the works for 2012.

Burton also has volunteered her time to help teach a dance class to young girls with Down syndrome and autism.

“It is fun to be able to give these kids a chance to do typical girl activities like dance class,” Burton says.

Kirk has dedicated her time to many women attending UAB. She has motivated and inspired women as a peer mentor for TRIO Academic Services for three years. And as a non-traditional student, Biggs-Smith has been an example for every other non-traditional student in the TRIO program.

One of the women Biggs-Smith has helped the most is her daughter Ne’Kayla. Biggs-Smith joined the U.S. Army in 1991 and didn’t attend college. When Ne’Kayla said she didn’t want to go to college — in large part because Biggs-Smith never attended college — she knew she had to act.

Biggs-Smith made a deal with her daughter that she would go back to school and get her degree if her daughter would do the same. So in August 2007, at age 39, Biggs-Smith enrolled at UAB and her daughter enrolled at Montevallo. Biggs-Smith excelled at UAB, graduating in December 2011 with a 3.1 grade-point average and a degree in mass communications. Ne’Kayla will complete her degree in speech pathology in May.

Biggs-Smith accomplished this feat despite being diag- nosed with neurosarcomatous and osteoporosis during her time in school.

“Joyce has seen many obstacles and trials in her life, none of which she let defeat her or keep her down,” says Lisa Madison, office manager in TRIO “Although she is often in severe pain, she is always encouraging others. A smile is always on her face and a positive word is always on her lips. The students in our program look to her often for advice or encouragement.”

Burton, a church member at South Highland Presby- terian Church, has helped many women who have come to the church asking for assistance as part of its pocket- change ministry.

Burton, a retired social worker, is now serving 25-30 homeless and needy people each week and is particularly devoted to the single mothers who have sought help from the ministry. Instead of just handing out material goods, Burton helps these mothers make life changes. She counsels them on completing their GED college work or craft training to help them provide a better life for their children.

The 2012 UAB Outstanding Women award winners are (from left): Joycelyn Biggs-Smith, UAB Undergraduate Student; Alison Barnard, UAB Graduate Student; Lynda Law Wilson, Becky Trigg Outstanding Woman Faculty Member; Jeanvie G. Burton, Outstanding Woman in the Community; Melanie Talbot Montgomery, Susan D. Marchase Outstanding Woman Administrator; and Jamelia Kirk, UAB Staff Member.
Spain Rehab honors Women’s Committee for philanthropy

The Women’s Committee of the Spain Rehabilitation Center was formed 42 years ago with a mission to improve quality of life for patients, and it didn’t take long for it to start working.

Whether it was purchasing equipment, increasing public awareness of the center through charitable and promotional activities or procuring donated art pieces to display throughout the facility, the Women’s Committee long has been a strong advocate for the hospital devoted to the physically disabled.

Recently the employees of Spain Rehab decided to give a gift to the committee — a beautifully designed art piece titled “Lasting Impressions,” a ceramic sculptural mural by local artists Scott Bennett and Chris Gryder of North Carolina.

“It’s just a beautiful piece and a wonderful gesture by Spain Rehabilitation Center,” says Coquette Barnes, president of the Women’s Committee and a 20-plus year member of the group. “I’m very pleased and honored that Spain would remember us in such a wonderful way.”

Yvonne Akin, executive administrator of the Department of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation, says the Women’s Committee has been a vital part of the center’s success.

“They have given us an opportunity to do more for our patients,” Akins says. “They have spent more than 40 years giving a little extra that makes a big difference in the lives of people. They’re a wonderful, giving group of ladies that really has our patients’ well-being at heart.”

The Women’s Committee has provided numerous gifts to the facility through the years, in addition to more than 60 pieces of art.

It purchased a tile table for the physical therapy department in 1976, raised money to build a therapeutic pool in 1986, purchased a Cyber Machine for exercise in 1982, purchased a wheelchair seating pressure monitor system in 1994, funded a handicap accessible locker room and co-ed facilities for the therapeutic pool in 2006, donated a Spirit of Spain Rehabilitation Center patient portrait gallery in 2007, provided the revolutionary Locomotor Training Equipment in 2008 and raised $1 million to endow a chair. “We have provided many equipment needs for the hospital through the years, and we’re very proud of that,” says Joan Morris, a Women’s Committee member since 1971.

Many of the Women’s Committee members began supporting Spain Rehab despite the fact that neither they nor members of their families never had needed rehabilitation care. Some of the women have had to use their services in the years since, however, including Morris and Sheila Shugerman.

Morris was involved in a serious automobile accident several years ago and broke her neck. She also had a television fall off of a wall onto her knee.

“Every day when I leave home, I don’t wonder if I’m going to return home with cancer or heart disease or something like that,” Morris says. “But I always know something could happen to me, and I could end up in Spain Rehab because of an accident. I’ve been a patient twice, and I got lots of attention. I’m fortunate to have seen the hospital from both sides.”

Shugerman, whose first husband John Miller was a physician in Spain Rehab, has been a patient in the center for her knees and received outpatient care for Achille’s tendons and other issues. “I got involved through John. After he died, I continued to maintain my interest because I think this facility and the people who work here are just fabulous,” Shugerman says.

It’s not uncommon for patients to receive gifts on holidays from the committee, but the workers in Spain Rehab don’t go unnoticed by the group. Every year during National Rehabilitation Week, the group provides a small volunteer to have a “special engagement” in the center, “The group certainly appreciates the hard work of our staff,” Akins says.

The Women’s Committee continues to host an annual fundraiser that routinely raises between $50,000 to $70,000 for Spain Rehab. Their next goal is to raise enough money to purchase a van to transport patients on group outings and for them to learn to transfer from wheelchairs into a vehicle. “We enjoy being a part of a vital organization like Spain Rehab,” Shugerman says.

For more information on the Spain Wallace Women’s Committee, call Yvonne Akin at 934-4430.

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ultrasound studies specially designed to target unique cancer biomarkers; those capsules, filled with a chemotherapeutic drug, also will deliver the medicine directly inside the tumor.

Hoyt will use a novel ultrasound-based technique that makes the capsules oscillate, producing temporary openings in the tumor’s capabilities; he then will burst the drug-laden microparticles and dump the chemotherapeutic directly into the affected source.

“The potential is there for this to be a ‘Holy Grail’ type of drug-delivery mechanism,” Kharlampieva says.

Using polymer capsules for drug delivery is a relatively novel area of research. There are only a few groups in the world taking this approach, including ones in Australia and China.

Two primary features of Kharlampieva’s capsules make them unique. First, she can control their shape, making them spherical, cubical, cylindrical or disk-like. She can also make them mimic the platelet shape of red blood cells.

The other unique feature of Kharlampieva’s systems is that they are non-toxic, biodegradable and biocompatible,” Kharlampieva says. “They also should have high-loading capacity by easily modified chemically. Our capsules are engineered that way.”

But it is the shape-changing part of the capsules that is especially unique because scientists typically can control only capsule dimension and permeability.

“There’s no question shape is important,” Kharlampieva says. “If our capsules have the shape of red blood cells they can be easily accepted at the affected site. They also can extend their lifetime in the blood stream and maybe suppress or find its way around the body’s immune response. The main idea is to extend the lifetime of the delivery mechanism.”

The researchers also want to investigate the way different cell types can accept the shaped capsules.

“We want to know the affect capsule shape has on how fast the cancer cells will uptake the chemotherapeutic,” Kharlampieva says. “If a spherical or cubical capsule approaches the affected site — how fast it can be internalized? We want to investigate that as well, and it’s why we think shape is important.”

Hoyt, who studies breast and other cancer tumors, says any disease a researcher wants to target can potentially benefit from this research. He says the capsules or contrast agents can be catered bind specifically to target proteins that tend to be overly abundant in the diseased tissue vascularly.

“You really can put anything in the capsules — even gene-therapy vectors — and presumably target any sort of disease you want,” Hoyt says. “Once this technology is developed, anything you want to get past your immune system — like through your liver, for example — we can hide inside these capsules. And the great thing is, independently, we’ve shown that the individual building blocks making up these targeted drug-delivery vehicles works. We just need to take the next step now and get it fine tuned.”

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Hasan advances security on cloud computing’s frontier

Imagine you are a security guard, charged with protecting a diamond necklace. But, the necklace has been broken into tiny pieces and scattered from Seattle to Singapore.

That’s the problem facing computer-security expert Raghib Hassan, Ph.D., a UAB assistant professor of computer and information sciences who is researching ways to safeguard the fast-flying data packets entrusted to “the cloud” while preparing students for the coming wave of change in demands for data security.

Excess capacity

Apple and Google have invested heavily in cloud computing, offering users the chance to store music and other files on servers that provide instant access from any device with an Internet connection.

Yet cloud computing could be more valuable as a corporate tool — one that enables small start-ups to expand with minimal investment and any company to cut costs and improve efficiency. The idea emerged from the large data centers that companies like Amazon and Google built in the past decade.

Hassan says, “Amazon in particular had to build massive data centers with thousands of servers to handle the rush of Christmas orders each year, but their investment wasn’t being used efficiently. Most of the year, they were only using 5 or 6 percent of their capacity. So they got the idea to sell excess capacity.”

The cloud paradigm changed the technology market considerably by reducing the barriers of entry, Hassan says. “If you want to compete with Twitter by launching your own Web site, you don’t have to pay millions to buy your own servers. You can start small by renting a few servers, then scale up as your business grows.” In fact, Hassan notes, Twitter itself ran atop Amazon’s cloud during its first few years.

Expect security

Now there are no data-security guarantees in the cloud, and that is a problem. “That might not matter with your personal mp3 collection, but when it comes to financial data or health-care records, you certainly should care,” Hassan says.

“Federal regulations mandate adequate security for data, and it’s just not there for cloud computing,” Hassan says. “I want to find a way to make security schemes more efficient and apply them to clouds.”

Amazon now has several large data centers in the United States, Asia and Europe that can transfer the traffic load between centers automatically as U.S. demand peaks on heavy shopping days. “As the customer, you never know it’s happening,” Hassan says.

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not know what was happening within the individual administrative systems, infrastructure services and support services divisions — and sometimes even within their own group. IT’s goal is to help the university reach its greatest potential by providing the equipment and applications that enable many of the core services relied upon by students, faculty and staff at UAB. IT employees believed their division could be more efficient if all of its members knew the projects being planned and implemented across the organization.

IT has implemented several new forms of communication with faculty and staff as a result of the survey, including a monthly electronic newsletter, town hall meetings and email notifications of job postings within IT.

“We’ve implemented quite a few changes, and we’re continuing to innovate,” says Doug Rigney, Ph.D., vice president for IT. “It’s an ongoing process. Our changes and improvements are by no means over, but we feel like we’ve made some good strides.”

Heather White, director of Fiscal & Administrative affairs, has organized and directed some of the changes — many of which were suggested by the IT Employee Feedback Group and IT’s Strategic Planning Team.

The Employee Feedback Group is made up of non-management employees and was implemented directly as a result of the climate survey. Employees rotate on and off the group and represent all areas of the organization. The group meets with Rigney bi-monthly to give feedback — positive and negative — on the organization.

The group was the point of origin for developing IT’s employee newsletter.

“One of the first things that group said to us was that they really felt they knew what was going on in their own workgroup, but they wanted to have a better understanding of what other groups in IT were doing,” White says. “They wanted to know about big projects that were of interest across IT. That was the impetus behind developing a monthly newsletter. It’s turned into a very successful, organic thing.”

The newsletter, which is edited by Web Content Coordinator Lauren Ritchie, includes news items throughout the organization, including ongoing projects and upcoming events. The team built the newsletter in SharePoint, and there is a method for employees to submit items electronically.

“We’re able to leverage our employee’s knowledge and available technology to deliver something electronically that is a resource for our employees,” White says.

The Employee Feedback Group also asked for employees to be recognized for good work, and they are working on a recognition program.

The management team already has put together a recognition program for departments. The program, known as IT Makes a Difference, is an opportunity to highlight IT initiatives, projects and activities that make a difference to the university, an internal department or other group on campus. It also showcases a project or initiative that exemplifies IT’s core values of excellence, accountability, service, innovation and integrity. Groups then provide a project or initiative that exemplifies IT’s core values of excellence, accountability, service, innovation and integrity. Groups then provide a project or initiative that exemplifies IT’s core values of excellence, accountability, service, innovation and integrity. Groups then provide a project or initiative that exemplifies IT’s core values of excellence, accountability, service, innovation and integrity.

We’re also working on putting up a permanent display that would house honorees of the program,” White says. “It’s really trying to highlight that the IT organization makes a tremendous difference on campus. They are unsung heroes.”

Other changes

Another way employees wanted to improve organizational communication was to ensure that all employees were made aware of job availabilities.

Now, employees receive an email notifying them of new job openings and the available positions are posted in the monthly newsletter and the bulletin board in the Cudworth and Rust buildings.

“We’re being more proactive in telling our employees about these positions we have available,” White says.

Currently, there are 20 job openings available in IT, and managers are working to get them filled from inside and outside of the organization. To help, IT introduced a new recruitment plan to its employees this past week. The plan provides monetary incentives for employees if they refer someone for a position who is then hired and completes their six-month probationary period.

“There will be a reward and recognition incentive, and it’s a program we’re really excited about,” White says.

Employees also can expect more clearly defined career paths in the coming months — another area they addressed in the survey. IT management is working with Human Resources and the Health Services Information System on defining career ladder steps.

“We’re trying to be very coordinated and roll out a joint program that addresses IT job titles,” White says. “We hope to have that finalized in the next three to six months, and we think it will give our folks clear career paths within the organization.”

Overall White says, the survey and the implemented changes of the past 14-plus months have been a positive experience for the entire IT organization. Feedback continues to come in from all areas, and it’s making the group stronger.

“We’re getting feedback on ways we can continue to improve and make things better, which is great,” White says. “That tells me people are reading the information in our newsletter and thinking about how we can continue to improve. It’s showing that our employees are engaged in the process. We have a great group of people that are extremely talented and very creative. We’re trying really hard to tap into that talent and creativity to make the organization better.”

CAMPUS NEWS

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IT

REcEnT uAB scholar Steve Wood, an associate professor of computer science at the University of Alabama in Huntsville, has been selected as a Google Faculty Research Award recipient for his work on new cloud security techniques as part of his SECRET Lab.

Wood is a member of the UAB SECRET Lab, which is developing ways to safeguard the far-flung data packets in mobile devices and cloud computing. Wood says that the cloud computing market is growing rapidly despite growing security concerns.

“The cloud computing market is growing very rapidly, but the technology isn’t necessarily growing as fast,” Wood says. “The cloud computing market is growing rapidly despite growing security concerns.”

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IT
The Alabama Academy of Science gives top honors to Wyss

Larry Krannich, Ph.D., was excited when the call for nominations was made for the 2011 Alabama Academy of Science Wright Gardner Award. The award is the highest honor bestowed by the Academy and has been given annually since 1924 to honor individual whose work during residence has been outstanding. Krannich, UAB professor emeritus in chemistry, says J. Michael Wyss, Ph.D., professor of cell, developmental and integrative biology and director of the center for Community Outreach Development, is the perfect person to honor with the award. Krannich nominated Wyss, and he was selected by the group as the 2011 award recipient. Wyss was presented the award earlier this month.

“Dr. Wyss’ exceptional contributions to neuro-cellular mechanisms research and science education outreach through bringing biomedical science into the K-12 classroom certainly exemplify the spirit of this award,” Krannich says. “He is a true role model for transferring knowledge and expertise to the community to impact the lives of others through enhanced educational opportunities. He is a very caring, truly dedicated individual who shows this in all that he does.”

Wyss was presented the award earlier this month.

Wyss also has fostered strong partnerships with the Birmingham City Schools Science Department to create many programs like BioTeach and summer science camps and the initiatives created as part of CORD and the Alabama Math Science & Technology Initiative.

“When through his enthusiasm, hard work, and careful planning, Dr. Wyss has helped to transform the landscape of Science Education on the local, state and national level,” Krannich says.

Wyss recently spoke to the UAB Reporter about his love of science, the art of teaching it and his motivation to engage young students.

Q. What are your thoughts on receiving the award?
A. I am very humbled when I look at the list of great UAB and Alabama scientists who have received this award, including Max Cooper, Thomas Wdowak, Richard Compo and Wright himself. These were the makers of science for the 20th century in Alabama. I also appreciate that the Academy recognizes the great importance of all facets of science and math K-20 education for 21st century Alabama. What they recognize, however, is really the work of a great staff and hundreds of UAB faculty and trainees who make CORD’s science-education initiatives possible.

Q. Have you always been drawn to science?
A. Since my elementary school years, I have been interested in how things work. My father can attest to my disassembly of cars and other devices. My passion is biomedical research science.

Q. Why is encouraging area teachers and students to learn so critical?
A. The economy of the 21st century is going to be based largely on having a very well-informed workforce in science, math, engineering and technology. While 20th century America enjoyed prosperity based on a great laborers and natural resources, in the 21st century, production has largely moved to other countries with lower labor costs. What counts now is intellectual capital. While AMSTI and other state programs give teachers a basic understanding of how to teach science, CORD’s other programs, like our SEPA initiatives, take the teachers to the next level of truly understanding the science they teach.

Q. Is there an art to teaching science?
A. Hands-on, inquiry-based science has reawakened the spirit of students in Alabama who want to learn so critical. It is biomedical research or working on the line at Mercedes, the 21st century workers will need to be versatile in science and technology. With that kind of trained workforce and all the other resources Alabama has (including UAB), we can be a top productivity state with a very strong 21st century economy.

Operation Swordphish puts cyber-criminals on notice

A UAB initiative provides Alabamians a fast, simple way to report cyber-crimes at www.Operation-Swordphish.com that should put criminals on notice.

“To often, victims with comparatively small financial losses cannot look to the FBI or other federal agencies for help, and local police typically do not have the training or resources to pursue these cases,” says John Sloan, Ph.D., chair of UAB Department of Justice Sciences and principal investigator on the project funded by U.S. Department of Justice’s Bureau of Justice Assistance.

Swordphish, a partnership between UAB, the Alabama Department of Public Safety and the Alabama District Attorney’s Association, will enable cyber-crimine victims to report their experiences to trained investigators with the Alabama Bureau of Investigation and enable officials to create a database and trend patterns that will lead to successful prosecution, Sloan said.

“Cyber-crimes are difficult to investigate and difficult to prosecute,” said Alabama Gov. Robert Bentley, who noted the state was able to prosecute less than 1 percent of 6,000 reported cyber-crimes in 2009. “Operation Swordphish will drastically improve the odds of bringing cyber-criminals to justice and protect people’s personal finances,” he said.

“First of all, our daily lives hinge on the use of some type of digital device—from a cellphone to our computers,” said Randy Hillman, executive director, Alabama Office of Prosecution Services. “Criminals are becoming increasingly savvy in their methods, and it’s imperative that we remain vigilant. We encourage the public to use Swordphish to report phish- ing and other Internet scams.”

The UAB departments of Justice Sciences and Computer and Information Sciences, working within the UAB Center for Information Assurance and Joint Forensics Research, will provide leads to state law enforcement and technical support to investigators.
Funny How It’s Not Hard to be Funny with This Material.

The Capitol Steps are Coming to Town.

America's funniest political satirists will perform at UAB's Alys Stephens Center Friday, March 23 at 8 PM. The performance will benefit Public Radio WBHM's capital campaign, with a goal of raising $250,000 for technology and equipment upgrades. Tickets ($35 plus $4 handling) may be purchased by calling 1-877-ART-TIKS or online at alysstephens.uab.edu. Join us and laugh for a good cause.