Gulf oil: It’s what we can’t see that worries researchers

As businesses and property owners wait for the weather and ocean currents to choose where the bulk of oil will wash up from the Gulf of Mexico oil spill, UAB researchers are acting to protect their research interests along the Alabama and Florida coastlines. It’s not just the oil that we see that concerns Stephen Watts, Ph.D., professor of biology and a researcher whose pioneering work in sea urchin nutrition and culture is being studied worldwide in aquaculture and fisheries. He says the oil we can’t see poses as big a threat to the wildlife as the slicks themselves.

“My biggest concern is the water-soluble fraction of the crude oil, not the oil seen on the surface,” Watts says. “The damage from the oil will be definitive; it will come ashore and kill plants and animals,” he says. “Important microbial communities will be altered. We know that’s going to happen soon. It’s the water-soluble fraction of the crude oil, something we can’t see, that’s also extremely dangerous to the wildlife. There’s a certain amount of the mixture within the oil that will leech into the water, and that’s probably what is going to cause significant problems to the early larval and juvenile stages of the animals that live there.”

What is the water-soluble fraction? If you put oil and water together in a glass and shake it up, the two will eventually separate with the oil rising to the top above the water. What is not seen, Watts says, is the part of the oil that has an affinity for water and will not separate from it.

“If you were to take all of the oil out of that glass of water and then smell the water, you’d still smell the oil because part of it never separated,” Watts says. “That small part that remains is highly toxic to the animals that would attempt to live in it. They couldn’t survive. It will kill them. That’s my concern for the sea life who cannot easily flee.”

That residue also presents a problem for birds. Many of the birds that will die do so after consuming the dead fish floating on the water that were caught in the water-soluble fraction.

“The birds are going to take a beating on this,” Watts says. Another group of organisms of concern are what’s called “the birds that will die do so after consuming.”

Students will be able to rent selected textbooks from the Barnes & Noble at UAB Bookstore beginning in the fall of 2010, a new option that will mean savings of more than 50 percent off the cost of purchasing a new printed textbook.

“UAB is committed to offering its students the lowest-cost alternatives to purchasing new and increasingly expensive textbooks with which to complete their coursework,” said UAB Provost Elliott Capilouto. “The university’s new agreement with Barnes and Noble College Bookellers will help reduce the financial pressures many of our students face when it comes to acquiring increasingly expensive textbooks at the start of each new semester.

“I commend the members of the UAB textbook taskforce that was formed to investigate ways to bring textbook costs down and that proposed the rental program for us,” Capilouto said.

The UAB Bookstore is the state’s first textbook rental option now available to students

Students will be able to rent selected textbooks from the Barnes & Noble College Bookstore 10 days after the last day of finals. Rentals will not be available for every UAB class because some courses require one-time-use or other custom textbooks, but approximately 28 percent of titles are expected to be available though the rental program. The UAB textbook taskforce was created to make recommendations for what UAB should do to meet federal reforms that take effect this summer and are contained in the 2008 U.S. Department of Education Higher Education Opportunity Act, a part of which encourages universities to seek ways to lower textbook costs for students.

The taskforce members were Scott Plutchak, director of the UAB Lister Hill Library of Health Sciences; Warren Martin, Ph.D., retired professor of business; Stella Cocoris, assistant vice president of UAB Enrolment Services; Andrew Davis, director of UAB Business and Auxiliary Services; Greg Pence, Ph.D., professor of philosophy; Ellen Buckner, R.N., former professor of nursing; Sheri Spaine Long, Ph.D., associate professor of foreign languages; Mark Hickson, Ph.D., professor of communications studies; graduate student Emily Norman; undergraduate student Hernandez Stroud; and Reginald Reese, department manager at the UAB Bookstore.

Special to the UAB Reporter

On April 29, Susan Campbell received the charter for the new UAB Research Civitan Club. She plans to capitalize on the community of scientists, educators and employees on campus by using their knowledge and skills to give back to the local community.

New Research Civitan Club seeks employees’ help, input

Susan Campbell, Ph.D., is a scientist and researcher. And after reading that sentence, she knows what you’re thinking: Socially inept, has obscure interests, is single-minded is slavishly devoted to intellectual and/or academic pursuits. If that is what came to mind, then Campbell wants to tell you something — you’re right.

“I’m the most anti-social person on the face of the Earth,” says Campbell, director for research, outreach & development for the UAB Civitan International Research Center (CIRC). “That’s what makes scientists good at what we do, right? We don’t speak to (CIRC). “That’s what makes scientists good at what we do, right? We don’t speak to

Textbook rental option now available to students

Students will be able to rent selected textbooks from the Barnes & Noble at UAB Bookstore beginning in the fall of 2010, a new option that will mean savings of more than 50 percent off the cost of purchasing a new printed textbook.

“UAB is committed to offering its students the lowest-cost alternatives to purchasing new and increasingly expensive textbooks with which to complete their coursework,” said UAB Provost Elliott Capilouto. “The university’s new agreement with Barnes and Noble College Bookellers will help reduce the financial pressures many of our students face when it comes to acquiring increasingly expensive textbooks at the start of each new semester.

“I commend the members of the UAB textbook taskforce that was formed to investigate ways to bring textbook costs down and that proposed the rental program for us,” Capilouto said.

The UAB Bookstore is the state’s first textbook rental option now available to students

Students will be able to rent selected textbooks from the Barnes & Noble College Bookstore 10 days after the last day of finals. Rentals will not be available for every UAB class because some courses require one-time-use or other custom textbooks, but approximately 28 percent of titles are expected to be available though the rental program. The UAB textbook taskforce was created to make recommendations for what UAB should do to meet federal reforms that take effect this summer and are contained in the 2008 U.S. Department of Education Higher Education Opportunity Act, a part of which encourages universities to seek ways to lower textbook costs for students.

The taskforce members were Scott Plutchak, director of the UAB Lister Hill Library of Health Sciences; Warren Martin, Ph.D., retired professor of business; Stella Cocoris, assistant vice president of UAB Enrolment Services; Andrew Davis, director of UAB Business and Auxiliary Services; Greg Pence, Ph.D., professor of philosophy; Ellen Buckner, R.N., former professor of nursing; Sheri Spaine Long, Ph.D., associate professor of foreign languages; Mark Hickson, Ph.D., professor of communications studies; graduate student Emily Norman; undergraduate student Hernandez Stroud; and Reginald Reese, department manager at the UAB Bookstore.

Special to the UAB Reporter

On April 29, Susan Campbell received the charter for the new UAB Research Civitan Club. She plans to capitalize on the community of scientists, educators and employees on campus by using their knowledge and skills to give back to the local community.
Marchase honored by Anatomy Society for service to organization

Richard Marchase, Ph.D., vice president for Research and Economic Development and professor of cell biology, has received the 2010 A.J. Ladman/ Wiley Exemplary Service Award from the American Association of Anatomists (AAA)—one of the top awards given annually.

The award, presented April 27 during the society’s annual meeting, recognizes a AAA member distinguished in the field of anatomical sciences who has provided exceptional service to the society.

The association said Marchase has been a generous and effective contributor to the public affairs activities of the Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology for more than a decade. As its president, Marchase’s most lasting impact was on funding for biomedical research. He was a tireless advocate for National Institutes of Health (NIH) and National Science Foundation (NSF) funding and early vocal supporter of funding for NSF on supplemental and stimulus appropriations bills.

Initiating the discussion on the post-stimulus budget, Marchase began the campaign for predictable, sustainable growth and met with officials at the White House Office of Management and Budget to discuss the long-term prospects for the U.S. science enterprise. At his invitation, the presidents of the chemical, physics and mathematics societies joined him in congressional testimony on behalf of the NSF in April 2009.

Nominate a bridge-builder

The School of Public Health is seeking nominations for the Sam Brown Bridge-Builders Committee. The Endowed Award to honor a faculty member who exemplifies the multidisciplinary and collaborative spirit at UAB. All full-time faculty and staff are eligible. Send nominations to: Sam Brown Bridge-Builders Committee, RPHB 140, 1665 University Blvd., Birmingham, AL 35294-0022, or e-mail to maxm@uab.edu. All nominations must be received by 4:30 p.m. Friday, May 28. For more information on the nomination letter and required support, send inquiries to trustees of the society.

Creativity wins the prize: UAB Hospital nurses team up to build creative structures from canned goods to help stock the pantry at the Jimmie Hale Mission as part of Nurses Week, May 6-12. The nursing staff began collecting canned goods in February and competed to see who could build the most creative “construction” from the donated goods. Awards were given to nursing staffs as part of the event. The surgical nursing staff won the “Most Cans Donated,” “Best Representation of Theme,” “Best Use of Labels” and the “People’s Choice” award for their garden theme. Cardiovascular nurses won “Most Creative” for their spaceship.

Cancer survivors “Celebrate Life”

The UAB Comprehensive Cancer Center and an all-star collaboration of cancer organizations will host the inaugural survivors day event “Celebrating Life” at Pepper Place Saturday Market from 7 a.m. to noon Saturday, June 5. Learn more at www.uab.edu/survivorday or call 975-2952.

Find a physician in online directory

UAB Medicine offers a new online physician directory at umedicine.org/findadoctor that allows users to find a UAB physician faster and easier than ever before. The new site has an easy-to-use tool that lets users narrow their search by physician name, specialty, hospital affiliation, disease or treatment. Visitors can access to a wealth of information about UAB Medicine physicians, including photos, specialties, research interests, certifications, published research, video interviews and more.

Reynolds Lecture to examine globalizing medical histories

Stephen Casper, Ph.D., visiting assistant professor, Clarkson University, will examine “Globalizing Medical Histories” during the next Reynolds Lecture, to be held at 4 p.m. Thursday, May 20 in the Lister Hill Library Ireland Room.

A reception will follow in the Alabama Museum of the Health Sciences, where the National Library of Medicine’s traveling exhibit, Against the Odds: Making a Difference in Global Health, is on display through June 18.

Check online calendar for events

The UAB Campus Calendar at www.uab.edu/calendar is updated daily with campus events, activities and deadlines, and the “Calendars” link on the UAB home page takes you straight there. Postings can include detailed information, photos and links to sites or related events. Check out the FAQs for more information.
Oil spill will affect property owners, seafood consumers

The massive oil slicks in the Gulf of Mexico are beginning to come ashore and threaten the economy of coastal regions in Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama and Florida, but it is too early to know the ultimate effects.

One early indicator is tourism. Tourism on the Gulf Coast between Mississippi and the Florida Panhandle approaches $4 billion annually, and the Alabama Gulf Coast Convention & Visitors Bureau reports that more than $533 million was spent by tourists during the 2008-09 fiscal year. Early estimates are that tourism in that area may be down by 30 to 50 percent this summer, depending on the actual beach damage that occurs in the coming weeks.

UAB business Professor Bob Robicheaux, Ph.D., says condominium and hotel owners likely will begin to drop prices soon in an effort to bring tourists to the area this summer — a development that he says is good for the consumer, but bad for the industry.

“The hotels and condo owners who are forced to drop prices to get people to frequent the restaurants, buy gasoline and shop the outlet malls will see a severe economic blow on their revenues,” Robicheaux says. “Look how price competition is affecting the automobile and clothing industries. You can buy those products at rock-bottom prices across the country these days, but the retailers are suffering. I like low prices as much as anybody, but, as a student of business, I know that competing on the basis of price is a no-brainer — you go bankrupt.”

Robicheaux says the oil spill also will put many coastal workers — especially fishermen — out of a job, but it also will create new jobs in oil well maintenance and cleanup along the beaches.

Because shrimp, red snapper, grouper, oysters and other seafood will not be as plentiful if fishing operations remain shut down for an extended time, Robicheaux says prices will make a significant leap upward. That will have an impact on restaurants, supermarkets and, ultimately, our household-eating patterns.

“It’s going to be a while before you can find shrimp at $4.99 per pound again at your local grocery store,” Robicheaux says. “And all of these seafood restaurants in Birmingham that count on every-other-day delivery of seafood from the Gulf Coast are going to find the supplies drying up and prices exorbitant. Restaurant operators across the nation will be willing to pay twice what we’ve been paying for seafood just to keep their menus, and they will likely outbid our providers. Many local restaurant operators may have to change their menus from shrimp, snapper and grouper to other types of seafood and probably even other types of food.”

Ports in Mobile and New Orleans that travelers count on to provide cruises also could be impacted if they are unable to sail.

In addition to the commercial fishermen and the loss of income in those port cities, Robicheaux says to expect serious economic downturns in the transportation industry sectors, including motor carrier, rail and inland water carriage as well as the port city economies. Robicheaux estimates that the Alabama and Mobile ports of New Orleans and Mobile are hobbled by the oil-filled shipping lanes across the Gulf of Mexico.

“Both of those cities have done so much to rebuild traffic in recent years, and it has had a tremendous economic impact in Alabama,” Robicheaux says. “People are going to be affected in many ways, and it could have an impact for years. We’ll see it, and we’ll feel it. For how long depends on when we can get those tanks under control.”

GULF OIL

CONTINUED from page 1

known as mesosfauna, small worms and invertebrates that live in the sand and are a vital part of the food chain.

“They live between the sand particles that feed the small organisms, which feed the small fish and right on up the chain,” Watts says. “If you wipe those mesosfauna out, you’ve done something pretty significant to harm the food web.”

Those concerns have Watts ready to make a trip to Saint Joseph’s Bay in the Florida Panhandle where there are natural populations of sea urchins. He’s prepared to make a large collection if necessary.

“We’ve got permission to go down there and collect a large number of urchins,” Watts says. “We’re talking about less than one-tenth of 1 percent, but a collection that lives in the unique ecosystem of the Cedar Point Marsh adjacent to Dauphin Island.

“The UAB team was planning to release a large number of head-started terrapins from the UAB hatchery into Cedar Point Marsh in early May but temporarily has postponed the release because of the oil spill.

Wibbels hopes to release 50 of the 150 turtles early this spring during mating season. An early release also would have given them the entire summer and winter to acclimate and adapt to their environment before it got cold. Now he’s considering other alternatives.

“It may be we shift to a second strat-egy and hold them back in case there’s a major impact on the salt marsh and wait until the salt marsh recovers,” Wibbels says.

Blue crabs anyone?

Watson has been researching blue crabs for 20 years and received national attention for his research this past year; he is unraveling the process by which blue crabs molt. His research could lead to the creation of a new industry that could create jobs and stimulate local economies through private aquaculture or farming operations across every state touching the ocean.

The states of Alabama, Florida, Mississippi, Louisiana and Texas brought in a blue crab bounty worth a total of $4.8 million in 2007, according to the National Marine Fisheries Service.

Watson has purchased crabs from local sources or crabs on the coast for 20 years. Now he’s forced to make preparations to purchase them elsewhere in the event the Gulf Coast fisheries are shut down for an extended period.

“We have some alternatives in Florida that we can turn to, at least during the short term,” Watson says. “What’s happened doesn’t immediately affect my research because we mostly bench science, and I can get crabs from alternative sources. But if the worst of what’s predicted happens, it’s a tragedy for Alabama. Those waters are one of our real treasures.”

Part of Watts’ research has been focusing on the Cedar Point Marsh adjacent to Dauphin Island and the Mid-County Marsh in Mobile, Alabama. They are two of the important breeding and nursery areas for blue crabs in the state.

Robicheaux says the oil spill also will hobble the seafood industry in Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, New Mexico and Texas.

Robicheaux says, “We have some alternatives in Florida that we can turn to, at least during the short term.” Watson says. “What’s happened doesn’t immediately affect my research because we mostly bench science, and I can get crabs from alternative sources. But if the worst of what’s predicted happens, it’s a tragedy for Alabama. Those waters are one of our real treasures.”

May 17, 2010 UAB Reporter 3

If Alabama beach hotel and condo owners are forced to drop prices to encourage people to keep summer vacation plans, it will put a severe economic blow on their revenues, says UAB business Professor Bob Robicheaux.
Teachers, parents advocate for safer playgrounds, gyms

Q

uestions about playground safety were answered recently during a service-learning activity in which UAB
School of Education and high-school students assessed conditions of nearly 100 sites in 12 Alabama cities.

As a result of their findings, Selma City Schools and the School of Education developed two simple tools that will help
parents and teachers identify potential dangers on playgrounds and in gymnasiums and help them lobby for safer condi-
tions.

The tools are checklists that include questions about the conditions of facilities and equipment provided:
They are available at no cost on the UAB Center for Educational Accountability website at

www.ed.uab.edu/cea/playground_gym_assessment.htm

“Frustrated teachers and students in Selma city schools took a leadership role and agreed to help us to develop this
checklist so that action could be taken in communities throughout Alabama,” says Brian F. Geiger, Ed.D., professor
of health education. “The checklists are available free so that parents, teachers and others can advocate for safer play-
grounds at PTA, PTO, school board or city council meetings.”

Estimates of annual emergency room visits to treat playground injuries range between 50,000 and 200,000, according to
a 2005 U.S. Consumer Product & Safety Commission report. Approximately 45 percent are severe injuries, including
fractures, internal injuries, concussions, dislocations and amputations.

Of these injuries, 148,000 occur on public playgrounds in schools and community parks. The most common accidents are falls from swings, climbers and slides on to hard surfaces and equipment.

Sandra Sims, Ph.D., Educational, Ph.D., Assistant Pro-
sessor Jane Roy, Ph.D., Assistant Pro-
fessor Sandra Sims, Ph.D., Educational

“High-school students have been doing the checklists with us. They very
quickly learned to identify hazards in different settings, and they identified
them faster than we can write them down. They’re demonstrating advocacy to
ensure the safety of their peers, and I think that’s fantastic.”

Advocates for safety

Sims was a physical education teacher and coach in a public school for 20 years prior to joining UAB, and she says many
teachers walk through their classroom space prior to the school day starting to check for hazards. Still, Sims was never
asked to observe and complete a check-
list.

In fact, it wasn’t until Sims was taking a graduate-level class in sports law that she
saw how many safety issues there were and how many people were being sued.

“When I went back to my school, I devel-
oped a gymnasium tool to look for some
hazards at nearly all of the locations they
visited. The results were published in the
California Journal of Health Promotion.

The project led the UAB faculty to devel-
lop the checklists — tools that teachers,
parents and students can use together.

That’s how we’ve been using it,” Geiger
says. “High-school students have been
doing the checklists with us. They very
quickly learned to identify hazards in
different settings, and they identified
them faster than we can write them down. They’re demonstrating advocacy to
ensure the safety of their peers, and I
think that’s fantastic.”

How do you get started?

Geiger and Sims recommend that two
or three administrators, faculty and par-
ents download the checklists and walk
through their play areas to identify the
safety hazards.

In most cases the problems are fairly
easy to correct and require little money,
whether it’s repurposing and clearing
playground equipment, installing shade
structures, or covering connectors with
the PEOPTA or local businesses.

During these events, school staff and vol-
unteers may renovate and repair facil-
ities.

“Once everything is ready to go, it
shouldn’t take more than five to 10 min-
utes to complete the checklists,” Sims
says. “And if you do it regularly, you
know you have a safe environment where
kids are going to want to play and par-
ents are going to feel comfortable know-
ing their children are safe.”

Visit www.ed.uab.edu/cea/playground_gym_assessment.htm to download the
checklists or e-mail Geiger at bgeiger@uab.edu or Sims at ksims@uab.edu with
questions or for more information.
Graduate School to offer family assistance scholarships

A unique new scholarship program at the Graduate School will offer significant support to students who want fulfill their dreams of completing a research-based doctoral degree but face obstacles in the form of family-related financial commitments.

Providing as much as $5,000 annually per recipient, the Graduate Family Assistance Scholarships are being made available with funds generated by the investment of a 2009 anonymous gift of $5 million to UAB.

“Thanks to the generosity of our anonymous donor, the new Graduate Family Assistance Scholarship could be the key that opens doors to new academic opportunities for those who would otherwise not be able to enroll in a doctoral program because of financial pressures related to child care or care of a parent or other similar expenses,” said UAB President Carol Garrison.

As many as 10 assistance scholarships will be granted each year to full-time eligible students. The awards will be renewable annually if recipients are able to demonstrate continued financial need and satisfactory progress in their graduate program.

The institution for its efforts on behalf of its graduate students and their families.

“I have found UAB to be a vibrant academic community that challenges its students to new heights of engagement, all while providing the resources and support to add students in their many successes,” Bolland said. “The family assistance scholarship program makes me incredibly proud to be a part of the UAB graduate community.”

Scholarship payout totals will fluctuate based on individual student circumstances and will be provided in addition to any stipend or other financial support granted to students through their graduate program.

“The scholarship program is another example of the UAB commitment to developing and extending family-friendly policies and programs to our students, faculty and staff,” said UAB Provost Eli Capilouto.

“It also furthers our university pledge to extend learning opportunities to students from all backgrounds and circumstances who are seeking to advance.”

Interested parties can only apply for the Graduate Family Assistance Scholarship after receiving an offer of acceptance into a research-based Ph.D. program at UAB. Women, minorities and others who have financial responsibility for supporting children, a parent or sibling are encouraged to apply, and prospective students having other financial needs may qualify as well.

For additional information or to make application, visit the Graduate School website at www.uab.edu/gradschool and use the link for Online Forms, then click on Funding Information for Graduate Students.

Biorepositories are the future of research for cancer, more

The solutions to cancer’s mysteries may lie within us — more specifically, within our blood, urine and saliva. Soon, every patient who visits The Kirklin Clinic will be able to contribute samples of these to the UAB Comprehensive Cancer Center Fluid and Tissue Bank and support breakthroughs in cancer research.

The Fluid and Tissue Bank is a new initiative of the UAB Tissue Collection and Banking Facility, which has been providing tissue samples to researchers for more than 30 years. UAB was among the first institutions in the United States to recognize the importance of tissue samples to scientific research, and these biorepositories store and maintain hundreds to thousands of tissue samples for scientific research.

“The better information we have on medicine in general, then the more effective our treatments for cancer will be,” says William Grizzle, M.D., Ph.D., facility director. “We used to tell patients that the research done on their tissues today would help their children or their children’s children. But today science is moving so rapidly that this research could impact the patients’ own care.”

Living data

Human-tissue samples are vital to the scientific study of all diseases, especially cancer research, says Grizzle, a senior scientist in the Cancer Center. Scientists can compare gene profiles, DNA, clinical outcomes and other characteristics to locate and identify specific genes or mutations that routinely appear in cancers. That information enables doctors to identify patients who are more prone to cancer and select the most effective treatments.

Development of a tissue bank was among his priorities when Cancer Center Director Edward Partridge, M.D., was named to the post in 2007. A $200,000 donation from businessman and longtime Cancer Center supporter Caldwell Marks led to its opening in February on the first floor of The Kirklin Clinic.

Staff now ask patients for their consent and collect urine and saliva samples, and the clinical laboratory handles the blood collection. “We try to get consent from all patients who come to Kirklin,” Grizzle says. “It’s entirely optional, but only about 5 percent or less say no.”

“Cancer research really cannot move forward without having adequate numbers of human tissues to study,” Grizzle says. “For the first time, we’ll be able to meet investigators’ needs immediately, particularly for fluids, which are difficult to collect when they are fresh.”

Meeting a need

Grizzle says there are three models of tissue banking — simple collection and storage of available tissues, prospective collection based on a researcher’s specific criteria or a combination of the two.

Until recently, UAB operated under the prospective model. “Scientists would come to us and want particular tissues, and we would collect those tissues according to their needs,” Grizzle says.

“The advantage to that approach is that you collect only what is necessary, and you collect it just the way the investigator wants.”

The disadvantage, he notes, is time. “If you’re going to collect as you go along, it takes longer to collect specimens; there’s not a large availability of tumor samples immediately,” he says. “If you’re focusing on clinical outcomes, there is a long period of time before that data is available.”

Managing assets

Grizzle hopes quickly to build an adequate tissue and fluid bank to attract UAB researchers and help cover its operating costs. Current funding will allow the bank to operate for about 18 months.

Grizzle and his team also manage the tissue resources associated with the center’s various SPORE (Specialized Program of Research Excellence) grants. UAB also is one of six institutions that supply tissues to investigators across the country through the national Cooperative Human Tissue Network, and it is the biorepository for the Pulmonary Hypertension Breakthrough Initiative, which collects, stores and distributes diseased lung tissue for pulmonary hypertension research.

As many as 10 assistance scholarships will be granted each year to full-time eligible students. The awards will be renewable annually if recipients are able to demonstrate continued financial need and satisfactory progress in their graduate program.

“Through one generous donor’s selfless act of giving, UAB is now able to recognize motivated students who want to both pursue their academic dreams and serve their family members,” said Bryan Oye, Ph.D., dean of the UAB Graduate School. “UAB is proud to be able to offer this unique scholarship opportunity.”

Jeffrey Bolland, president of the UAB Graduate Student Association, applauded

Graduate Student Association, applauded the institution for its efforts on behalf of its graduate students and their families.

“I have found UAB to be a vibrant academic community that challenges its students to new heights of engagement, all while providing the resources and support to aid students in their many successes,” Bolland said. “The family assistance scholarship program makes me incredibly proud to be a part of the UAB graduate community.”

William Grizzle is director of the Fluid and Tissue Bank, a new initiative of the UAB Tissue Collection and Banking Facility. The facility has been providing tissue samples to researchers for more than 30 years.
Dennis McLernon’s acting skills made a strong impression on a wide-eyed and arts-loving freshman at Attleboro College more than 30 years ago.

So when Julie George-Carlson founded the Freeport Shakespeare Festival in Freeport, Maine, this past year, it was this decision that The Tempest would be the festival’s first play this summer; she knew exactly whom she wanted to call to play the leading role of Prospero.

“I had a conversation with an artistic associate about The Tempest, and I told him I wanted a young actor from New York City who I knew would be able to embody all of the characteristics that were needed for Prospero, I would only want to consider Dennis,” George-Carlson says. “When I called him, and he said yes, I can’t tell you how happy I was.”

George-Carlson is the principal organizer of the Freeport Shakespeare Festival, which will take its inaugural bow Aug. 3-6 in the open-air amphitheater on the campus of L.L. Bean.

The hope is the festival will evolve into a smaller version of the Alabama Shakespeare Festival or the Stratford Shakespeare Festival in Ontario, Canada, which draw tens of thousands of culture-and arts-thirsty tourists.

McLernon has directed The Tempest and played one of the lords in a production of the play at the Alaska Shakespeare Festival, but this will be his first time to play the role of Prospero.

“The role is fantastic, and it’s very flattering to be asked to do it,” McLernon says. “I’ve had the script for about a month, and I’ve already begun memorizing my lines. My goal is to show up at rehearsals next month with my lines memorized so I can really have as much fun and grow and explore as I can.”

Even as a young college actor, George-Carlson says McLernon demonstrated a remarkable capacity to be present in a role and was an actor who was serious about his responsibility to the text, the playwright and the audience.

George-Carlson says he was determined to stay informed about McLernon’s career after his graduation. She kept in touch with him for 20-plus years after he left school, following his career path and forging her own in the theater business.

Their paths were about to cross again this past year when the Freeport Shakespeare Festival board held its first meeting. Because Maine frequently receives rain during the month of August, one board member suggested they do The Tempest — a play suited to such an event.

Day of crisis
The Tempest follows the trials and tribulations of Prospero, the rightful Duke of Milan, who along with his infant daughter Miranda was put to sea on boat to die by his usurping brother Antonio 12 years before the play begins. Prospero and Miranda survived their journey and found role on a small island where he learned the art of magic.

By chance, Antonio sails near this island years later and Prospero conjures the eponymous tempest, which forces his brother and his henchmen ashore.

“This is Prospero’s day of crisis, and it is the most important day of his adult life,” McLernon says. “If he does not act on his enemies finding their way to the island, chances are he and his daughter may never get off. What’s very interesting beyond that is that he is faced with having to forgive his brother and his fellow conspirators. He was determined to clear his name and left to die at sea with his infant daughter. It’s really despicable, and it’s a lot to forgive.”

McLernon has played many leading Shakespearean roles, including Macbeth, Claudius in Hamlet and Malvolio in the Twelfth Night. But he says the fact that he is close in age to Prospero and has a daughter close in age to Miranda makes the role of Prospero very personal.

“It’s special as an actor when a character’s circumstances coincide with your own,” McLernon says. “Imagination has a lot to do with it, but when things cross over like this it’s really kind of wonderful.”

George-Carlson says seeing McLernon on board has given her the production a great sense of tranquility and optimism.

“I can’t begin to describe the senses of calm, positivity and possibility that have emerged since he agreed to do this role,” she says.

“Dennis will bring a grounded sense of character and a thorough understanding of the world of the play and will serve as a terrific role model to the rest of the company,” she says.

McLernon attended a fundraiser in Freeport in February and was impressed with how George-Carlson has rallied support for the inaugural season.

She has involved many local artists, including local union actors and puppet artisans. In fact, during the masque portion of The Tempest, local puppet masters are creating a series of puppets to be used during the play’s entertainment section.

“The masque section of The Tempest serves mainly as an entertainment for the young lovers and has little to do with the crisis of the plot, but it was a device used in plays in that period of time,” McLernon says. “It’s really shaping up to be amazing.”

George-Carlson certainly hopes so. And she believes with McLernon on board, it certainly has that chance.

Whitley wins ’10 Distinguished Physician award for service

Richard Whitley, M.D., a renowned researcher and infectious disease specialist and president of the Infectious Diseases Society of America, has been named the 2010 recipient of the Distinguished Physician Award from the Pediatric Infectious Diseases Society.

The award recognizes a pediatrician whose career signifies excellence in infectious diseases research, education, patient care, prevention and public health. The director of UAB’s Division of Pediatric Infectious Diseases, Whitley received the honor May 3 during the PDIS annual awards banquet in Tuscaloos-

He was nominated by more than a dozen physicians from UAB and across the nation.

Whitley is on the Advisory Council for the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, one of the National Institutes of Health. He also is on the 2009 H1N1 Influenza Working Group of the President’s Council of Advisors on Science and Technology. The group is providing recommendations to the U.S. President Barack Obama on needed federal responses to pandemic flu.

A distinguished professor of pediatrics, microbiology, medicine and neonurosurgery, Whitley is vice chair of UAB’s Department of Pediatrics and co-director of UAB’s Center for Emerging Infections and Emergency Preparedness.

He is credited with helping to develop vidarabine, the first drug to treat encephalitis caused by the herpes simplex virus. The vidarabine breakthrough more than 30 years ago opened the door to an entire field of antiviral therapy now crucial for the treatment of influenza, human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) and other infections.

Whitley’s research also is focused on using a genetically engineered version of herpes simplex virus to fight cancer. Studies show that this enhanced virus, rendered incapable of spreading herpes, enters tumors and attacks cancer-cell biology to stop tumor growth.
Combo drug combats obesity and high blood pressure effectively

Research shows that an oral, once-daily, low-dose, controlled-release drug combining an appetite suppressant and an anti-seizure drug resulted in significant weight loss and improvement in blood pressure. The findings were presented at the American Society of Hypertension annual meeting by Suzanne Oparil, M.D., professor of medicine in the UAB Division of Cardiovascular Disease and director of the UAB Vascular Biology and Hypertension Program.

The drug, known by the trade name Qnexa®, is under review by the Food and Drug Administration for weight loss in clinically obese adults or overweight patients with weight-related diseases. Oparil is a consultant for Qnexa manufacturer Vivus

Oparil said that in Qnexa, phentermine suppresses appetite, while topiramate, which is controlled-released, decreases appetite and increases satiety throughout the day. Topiramate also produces the blood pressure-lowering effects.

Neuropsychology of brain tumors is focus of May 18 lecture

A Neuropsychology Grand Rounds lecture will examine the neuropsychology of primary brain tumors, presented as part of Brain Tumor Awareness Month in May.

Christina A. Meyers, Ph.D., ABPP, professor of neuropsychology and chief of the Section on Neuropsychology at the University of Texas M.D. Anderson Cancer Center, will discuss some of the common symptoms experienced by patients, and present information on the effects of treatment on cognition and interventions that can improve patient's quality of life.

The lecture is 8 a.m. Tuesday, May 18 in West Pavilion Conference Center Room E.

Science closing in on mystery of age-related memory loss

In an editorial published May 7 in Science, David Sweatt, Ph.D., chair of Neurobiology, says that drugs known as histone deacetylase inhibitors are showing great promise in stopping memory loss — and even in boosting the formation of memory in animal models. Sweatt’s editorial was published in conjunction with findings pub- lished in Science from researchers led by Shahid Peleg at the European Neuroscience Institute at University Goettingen in Germany. The European researchers’ findings supplement and support work done previously in Sweatt’s laboratory. “We’ve been studying histone deacetylase inhibitors for some 10 years, Studies in our lab and elsewhere strongly suggested that these drugs potentially could reverse aging-associated memory dys- function,” said Sweatt.

Scholars institute is set for May 18-19

The annual conference that focuses on using technology to facilitate learning will be held on the UA/University of Huntsville campus this year. There is no fee, but registration is required.

More information is online at www.PCS.uah.edu/pp/scholar- institute.jsp or call Karen Shadet at 975-6552.

Protect your intellectual property

Many discoveries that result from funded research can be commercialized for the financial benefit of UAB and its faculty. The UAB Research Foundation can help you protect your interests before you publish your results to the public domain. For more information, visit www.uab.edu/abr.

RESEARCH CIVITAN CLUB

CONTINUED from page 1

anyone; we just get our work done.”

Campbell’s self-deprecating humor aside, she knows scientists and researchers do tend to become so invested in their work that it’s easy to forget the reasons why they crunch data and look through a microscope hundreds of times a day, day after day.

That’s one of the reasons why Campbell has championed the new Research Civitan Club — a first for Civitan International. Campbell wants to capitalize on the presence within Civitan International. “The establishment of the Research Civitan Club provides a novel venue for research center scientists, clinicians, their trainees. The UAB Research Civitan Club held its formal charter celebration May 6 in the atrium of the CIRC.

CIVITAN International’s long relationship with UAB makes the club a natural fit; it has been supporting the CIRC at UAB for the past 19 years through grants total- ing more than $15 million. These monies have been used to hire faculty members working on developmental dis- abilities, providing shared instrumentation — including the TT Functional Neuroimaging Facility — and pro- viding important seed grants to investigators and their trainees.

CIVITAN International. Campbell wants to capitalize on the presence within Civitan International.

CIVITAN International’s long relationship with UAB makes the club a natural fit; it has been supporting the CIRC at UAB for the past 19 years through grants totaling more than $15 million. These monies have been used to hire faculty members working on developmental disabilities, providing shared instrumentation — including the TT Functional Neuroimaging Facility — and providing important seed grants to investigators and their trainees.

CIVITAN International’s long relationship with UAB makes the club a natural fit; it has been supporting the CIRC at UAB for the past 19 years through grants totaling more than $15 million. These monies have been used to hire faculty members working on developmental disabilities, providing shared instrumentation — including the TT Functional Neuroimaging Facility — and providing important seed grants to investigators and their trainees.

CIVITAN International. Campbell wants to capitalize on the presence within Civitan International.

CIVITAN International’s long relationship with UAB makes the club a natural fit; it has been supporting the CIRC at UAB for the past 19 years through grants totaling more than $15 million. These monies have been used to hire faculty members working on developmental disabilities, providing shared instrumentation — including the TT Functional Neuroimaging Facility — and providing important seed grants to investigators and their trainees.

CIVITAN International. Campbell wants to capitalize on the presence within Civitan International.

CIVITAN International’s long relationship with UAB makes the club a natural fit; it has been supporting the CIRC at UAB for the past 19 years through grants totaling more than $15 million. These monies have been used to hire faculty members working on developmental disabilities, providing shared instrumentation — including the TT Functional Neuroimaging Facility — and providing important seed grants to investigators and their trainees.
The UAB Benevolent Fund received pledges in excess of $1.7 million in 2009. This money was used to help **168 employees in crisis situations**, providing nearly $200,000 in emergency funds.

Along with supporting UAB employees, the Benevolent Fund also supported **127 local service agencies in our community** including United Way, American Cancer Society, Big Brothers Big Sisters, Childcare Resources, Alabama Kidney Foundation, American Heart Association, North Central Alabama chapter of Susan G. Komen, Salvation Army and YWCA.

The Benevolent Fund is UAB’s system for supporting charitable, service and health agencies by providing a mechanism for employees to help those in need in the Birmingham area.

For more information or to make a pledge, visit www.uab.edu/benfund online, call 934-1581 or e-mail David Precise at dprecise@uab.edu.