7.0 magnitude earthquake devastated Haiti in January 2010. On March 11, an 8.9 magnitude earthquake off the coast of Japan — the most powerful in the nation’s recorded history — generated a massive tsunami that killed thousands and triggered a nuclear crisis. And on Aug. 23, a 5.8 magnitude earthquake with an epicenter in northern Virginia rattled houses and nerves from Florida to Maine, damaging the Washington Monument and other historic structures.

Given these and other, less-chronicled earthquakes in Chile, China, Pakistan and Argentina it is reasonable to ask: Are they becoming more frequent, and could one happen in Alabama?

Predicting mega-quakes

The spate of earthquakes seen in the past two years likely is more an unfortunate coincidence than a trend, says UAB geologist Scott Brande, Ph.D.

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Cytology transitions from undergrad to graduate program

Cytotechnologists work in hospitals, clinics and private laboratories, rarely see patients and there is a good chance you have never heard of them — but their role is vital to the health-care enterprise.

They are specially trained to use microscopes to detect small changes or abnormalities in cells throughout the whole body, and their work is critical in the early detection and diagnosis of pre-cancerous disease processes, cancers and other diseases.

UAB, a national leader in training cytotechnologists, has upgraded its undergraduate curriculum to a graduate program — the only one of its kind in Alabama and one of only a few such programs in the country.

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Chapman’s new works inspired by 9/11 aftermath

Gary Chapman began thinking of ways society had changed in the 10 years since the 9/11 attacks and was struck by inspiration.

The artist, a UAB professor of painting, who creates large, distinctive paintings that often feature realistic portrayals of people, had the idea to create a series of smaller paintings.

“I kept coming back to this idea of

Geologist says Alabama’s faults are mostly harmless

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“The number of earthquakes larger than about 6.0 to 6.5 on the magnitude scale is about 120 or 130 per year — and a magnitude 6.0 earthquake can do significant damage in a populated area,” Brande says. “The number of quakes larger than 7.0 might be 10 or 15, and the number larger than 8.0 might be one or two per year. So larger quakes actually occur fairly often.”

Those numbers derive from a hundred years of reliable data that Brande says offer a guide to the number of major earthquakes we could see in a given timeframe, but they are not predictions. “We may get three or four in one year, but we might not have another one for three years after that.”
SACS accepts UAB QEP Impact Report

UAB’s accrediting agency, the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS), has accepted with praise the QEP Impact Report. President Carol Garrison congratulated and thanks everyone who has contributed to this success, adding that, “Interest in our QEP among others who were preparing their own plans has brought positive attention to UAB and its efforts to improve undergraduate education.”

The August issue of Degrees of Excellence, the quarterly QEP Newsletter, includes the comments from SACS and highlights forthcoming QEP events and a few of the many hundreds of people who contributed to the successful QEP.

Stay alert: Cell phone thefts around campus

The UAB Police Department is alerting the UAB community of several events in and around campus recently in which two African-American males have stolen cell phones from victims. The UABPD says:

• Do not loan your cell phone to someone you don’t know.
• Do not leave your cell phone lying on a desk or other furniture and walk away, even momentarily.
• If you should become the victim of a theft or robbery, give up your property as requested, and get away as soon as the suspect leaves.
• Never chase a suspect; always assume the individual is armed even if you do not see a weapon.
• Remember, there are more than 400 emergency “Help” phones are available throughout campus. Or, call the UAB Police at 934-4434 to report a crime.

Take WBHM with you everywhere

Now you can access public radio WBHM 90.3 FM through your smartphone and other mobile devices. Listen live, pause and rewind audio and view the program schedule all at once.

Or explore on-demand content, search for stories, bookmark a story for later — you can even wake up to WBHM with the alarm clock. Check out wbhm.org and download the apps for iPhone, iPad and Android devices.

Athletics launches new attendance rewards program

UAB Athletics has launched its new UAB Rewards Program — a program that shows its appreciation to Blazer fans. Members are awarded points for attending designated UAB athletic events. The more points you collect, the more prizes you win. The program is open to all UAB students and fans.

UAB BookTalk to kick off Sept. 6

The UAB Department of English begins its monthly BookTalk discussions Sept. 6 with The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao by Junot Diaz. The informal talks are held the first Tuesday of each month at 6 p.m. in the Mervyn Sterne Library Henley Room. For more information, contact Jennifer Young at jyoung@uab.edu or 975-5128.

Addiction recovery is lunch series topic

The Addiction Recovery Program at UAB presents a series of Lunch and Learn seminars on Wednesdays in September as part of National Recovery Month, sponsored by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. The seminars are free and open to the first 35 registrants. To register, call 975-7931 or e-mail pwatson@uabmc.edu. The seminars will be held Sept. 7, 14, 21 and 28 from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. in the West Pavilion Conference Center.

Share Your Bowl and help Feed Alabama

UAB Campus Restaurants is partnering with Kellogg’s in their national Share Your Bowl Program to help fight hunger. For every bowl of cereal purchased at the Commons on the Green Sept. 12-Oct. 14, Kellogg’s will donate a bowl of cereal on UAB’s behalf to the local Community Food Bank of Central Alabama.

To kick off this event, Kellogg’s Tony the Tiger, Blazer students and administrators will be on the Green at 8 a.m. Monday, Sept. 12. “Good Day Alabama” will air the kick-off live.

Register for Alabama Launchpad Conference

Alabama Launchpad, a program of the Economic Development Partnership of Alabama Foundation, will present its first statewide conference on innovation and entrepreneurship Sept. 23.

National-level speakers and Alabama innovators will speak at the one-day conference to discuss the progress of tech-based economic development in the state and foster a climate to support its activities. UAB is a founding partner program. To register and learn more, visit InnovateAlabama.com.

Click and earn money for UAB’s ArtPlay

Clicking “Like” on Facebook could mean more music in the lives of Birmingham children. The children participate in a music program offered by ArtPlay, the city’s new home for arts education from UAB’s Alys Stephens Performing Arts Center.

Each click through Wednesday, Sept. 28 will earn $1 for ArtPlay. To start the donations, visit Drive 4 the Music on Facebook, “like” the page, then “like” the Alys Stephens Center to help more Birmingham students receive an excellent music education, regardless of their financial resources.
Corley changes roles after first GCL Honors graduation

Robert Corley, Ph.D., has enthusiasm for many things. In particular, the assistant professor of history loves teaching students about the history of the city of Birmingham. But he also believes part of that education should give students opportunities to transform themselves and the lives of other people during the course of their lifetime.

In short, he wants them to become leaders.

And that is why when the Global and Community Leadership Honors Program was launched four years ago, Corley wanted the opportunity to direct it. It was another way he could challenge himself. He also viewed it as an opportunity to prepare students who are searching for a deeper understanding of global and community issues and to help them find ways to relate those issues to their own values and goals.

Just before the GCL Honors Program graduated its first class this past spring, Corley made the decision to step down from the director position and focus on teaching full time.

"Being an honors director is a demanding job to do it well and do it right," Corley says. "We've been after it pretty hard for four years developing the GCL program, and I had my first graduating class and showed the program could be successful. It made sense to hand it off to some new leadership."

Corley was hired as the first director of the new honors program in May 2007. He strove for faculty mentoring, specialized courses, service-learning and international and community-learning experiences for GCL honors students, and he encouraged them to take leadership roles in campus and community organizations.

Examining the role of social entrepreneurship in these types of ways has become part of the mainstream conversation in higher education only in recent years.

During his four-year leadership tenure, Corley created new courses, organized stimulating events and created a nationally unique undergraduate honors program for students interested in the big problems of today, in our local and global communities, says Philip Way, associate provost for Undergraduate Programs.

"Dr. Corley is inextricably intertwined with the GCL honors experience," Way says. "As a result, the graduating students exhibit a close attachment to the leadership of the program. It's that special sense of community that makes honors at UAB so successful. We are indebted to Dr. Corley for helping make this a part of the undergraduate academic fabric of UAB, and we are going to miss his involvement."

The GCL Honors Program has encouraged students to form a community with like-minded peers who share their goals for the future. Together they investigate, analyze and seek to understand many common concerns faced by societies around the world, and they prepare for the leadership roles that can help address those concerns.

"I think we designed a program that stretches students, pulling them out of their comfort zone and into thinking about things they wouldn't otherwise think about."

"A lot of these students are high achievers, and a lot of them are in the sciences," Corley says. "They do things that require technical skills and knowledge. I'm asking them to take a step back from some of that and take some time to reflect on themselves, and not just their career."

Corley was born and raised in Birmingham and returned home in 1976 to forge a career as a professor, writer and community leader after receiving his doctorate in history from the University of Virginia.

He has taught the popular History of Birmingham course at UAB since 1980. He was director of UAB's Center for Urban Affairs for 14 years.

He also served as the regional director of the National Conference of Christians and Jews for nine years from 1984 to 1993 and has been active on a number of community boards and agencies for many years.

Corley also was appointed to the Birmingham Board of Education in 1987, and he was reappointed for a second term in 1992. In addition, he was a member of Mayor Richard Arrington's Task Force that created and designed the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute, and in 1989 he became a founding member of its Board of Directors and Executive Committee.

"Dr. Corley has fine values that he brings to the table whatever he does," says Norma-May Lukon, former director of the Office of Service Learning, and a person Corley credits for helping develop the GCL community service curriculum.

"He was perfectly suited as the founder of the GCL honors program in that he personifies global values of diversity and leadership based on establishing meaningful relationships."

Krista Boggs, program manager of the GCL, says teaching students about community change requires more than theoretical knowledge.

She says Corley's experiences have brought to life exciting concepts for students and empowered them to make a difference in their own ways.

"In starting this new honors program, Dr. Corley set the vision for what it meant to be a community leader, whether locally or internationally," Boggs says. "This vision set the groundwork for what would grow into a program impacting more than 135 students during his tenure as director."

"Dr. Corley's vision for the GCL honors program will live on through the many students he individually taught and mentored and through the lives of people whom the students will positively affect as they go out in the world."

While Corley is ceding his GCL duties, he will continue teaching students. His History of Birmingham course will continue, as will his Civil Rights history course.

He also hopes to teach more political history and 20th century U.S. history, which is his major field of study.

"I've always taught, and I do have a passion for history and teaching," Corley says. "I want to spend these last few years in the classroom."

For more on the GCL, visit www.uab.edu/gclhonors.

Robert Corley viewed it as an opportunity to prepare students searching for a deeper understanding of global and community issues and help them find ways to relate those issues to their own values and goals.
Kris Lamont Ellis, director of Internal Communications and Relations at UAB, will serve as interim general manager of public radio station WBHM 90.3 beginning Oct. 1 following the retirement of longtime general manager Mike Morgan.

Dale Turnbough, associate vice president of public relations and marketing at UAB, announced the appointment Aug 30. WBHM 90.3 FM is a public service of UAB.

“We wish Mike all the best and we will miss him,” Turnbough said. “He has had a successful, 40-year career in public radio, most of it in a leadership role at WBHM, and he has played a key role in establishing the station as a respected and trusted source of news and information.”

Morgan joined the station in 1992. Ellis joined UAB in 2005. A journalism graduate of the University of Alabama and former reporter/editor, she also has management and communications experience in the manufacturing, financial and higher education arenas. She is immediate past chair of The Literacy Council, a United Way non-profit organization that serves a five-county area in Central Alabama.

“If you have a passion for public radio and community service, she also has significant management, operations and non-profit fundraising experience,” Turnbough said.

Morgan retires as GM of WBHM, Ellis assumes interim role

A trip through the health-care system can seem like an endurance contest, requiring multiple visits to a range of specialists and other health-care providers in offices all over town.

But a partnership between primary-care physician at UAB’s Kirklin Clinic and the UAB School of Nursing replaces the poorly coordinated, episodic, acute-care model with a more comprehensive, team-based approach.

Six physicians at the clinic’s Internal Medicine-1 practice have joined to establish a Patient-Centered Medical Home (PCMH).

The concept has gained popularity in recent years and is a key component of health-care reform measures passed by the federal government in 2010.

A PCMH coordinates all patient care, including referrals to subspecialties such as cardiology, orthopedics and rheumatology; follows up with patients who have been hospitalized; and provides education on managing chronic diseases.

At UAB’s PCMH, all patient information — including X rays, lab results and hospital and subspecialist records — is available electronically to all providers.

Because managing chronic disease is the medical staple of primary-care offices, the Kirklin Clinic medical home staff includes one full-time and two part-time nurse practitioners who are members of the School of Nursing faculty.

“In addition to their advanced nursing education and experience, they have experience in teaching, which augments the medical home’s patient-education efforts relating to chronic diseases,” says Stuart Cohen, M.D., who heads up the PCMH group and is medical director of Prime Care Internal Medicine at the Kirklin Clinic.

Cytology

CONTINUED from page 1

skills. They are on rotation in molecular labs. That’s why we’re ahead of the game.”

For more than 30 years UAB’s cytotechnology program in the School of Health Professions has awarded a baccalaureate degree with a certificate in cytotechnology. In 2010, the program accepted the last cohort of undergraduate students and the first cohort of graduate students. The program now awards a Master of Science in Clinical Laboratory Sciences with a certificate in cytotechnology.

“Our students are well-prepared in all areas,” Pijuan-Thompson says. “They can advance in a number of ways. They can work as certified cytotechnologists or have dual positions in cytology and molecular testing, and with experience they can go into laboratory management as well.

This year the cytology program entered a partnership with UAB Hospital to provide Hologic image microscope training, one of few cytology programs to provide this advanced training to students.

“We provide the hands-on training and all of the certifications in the field’s new technologies to make our students ready to work,” Pijuan-Thompson says.

Julie Hannan Cogdill, a Waxahachie, Texas, native and UAB alum, graduated from the program and found immediate success in the workforce.

Cogdill came to UAB because of the institution’s reputation in the medical field and its certified cytology program. After graduation, Cogdill was hired as a cytotechnologist at Ameripath North Texas and now works for PathAdvantage Associated in Fort Worth as a molecular laboratory general supervisor and Clinical Laboratory Improvement Amendments supervisor.

“My professors prepared me for the workforce and the changing atmosphere of cytology,” Cogdill says. “It was classes and curriculum at UAB that enabled me to take a position that was half-cytology, half-molecular and eventually work my way up to being in charge of our molecular department.”

What do cytologists do?

Cytologists are the first line of reviewers for patient slides. They examine patient samples under a microscope and study the slides for minute abnormalities in the cell’s nucleus, shape, size and other morphologic characteristics that warn of pre-cancer and cancerous changes. The samples may be obtained from various body sites or any body cavity that sheds cells. Examination of Pap smears is a major role for cytotechnologists.

Cytologists also provide a preliminary diagnosis for a clinical pathologist who is responsible for the final diagnosis of abnormal disease processes.

Graduate curriculum

The new graduate curriculum will prepare students to assume the role of a traditional cytotechnologist and provide enhanced training in molecular diagnostics, laboratory management and applied research. The program emphasizes one-on-one training and class sizes are small because of the intense nature of this specialty.

The program admits students who have met UAB’s graduate school admission requirements and have completed a baccalaureate degree and program-specific pre-requisite courses. It is designed as an entry-level program that requires no prior training in cytology. The program requires four semesters of full-time study. Twenty of the 56 semester hours of coursework in the curriculum are new courses offered by the department or existing courses in the Clinical Laboratory Sciences (CLS) program.

“This enables us to maximize the faculty resources available to teach the courses and provide the students with the opportunity to learn in an interdisciplinary environment,” Pijuan-Thompson says. “There is increasing demand for health-care professionals who have the knowledge and ability to work in multiple capacities across disciplines.”

In addition to the departmental and CLS courses, the cytology-specific courses included in the curriculum are new. Courses throughout the curriculum have been revised to assure maximum exposure to ancillary diagnostic testing and allow the opportunity to correlate cytologic results with ancillary test results in achieving the final diagnosis. Practical experience in specialty areas such as fluorescence in situ hybridization also will be obtained.

“Our graduates will be prepared to assume leadership positions in private and hospital laboratories, government and industrial facilities and in academia,” Pijuan-Thompson says. “The program prepares graduates for a career that greatly benefits the practice of pathology and the patients it serves.”

While cytotechnology may not be a well-known or publicized field, it is a lucrative one with an average national annual salary of $61,235.

For more information, visit www.uab.edu/clds/academic/graduate/cy.
Employees offered help with lifelong financial planning

Education gives us the tools we need to succeed in business, health care or any other professional field. It also stands to reason education is a key to financial success.

That’s certainly the view through the eyes of UAB Financial Resources Officer Richard Coleman, who can rattle off statistics that illustrate the role of financial literacy in personal indebtedness.

“There is a very high level of financial illiteracy in Alabama and the country,” Coleman says. “I know we have employees who struggle with their finances because I see them every week. And the thing I tell them is their situation is not isolated, and they are not alone. But I also tell them it’s never too late to reverse the effects. That’s what I want to help them do.”

Coleman is available to assist any UAB employee with their finances and financial planning through the UAB Employee Assistance Program, which is provided by The Resource Center. Coleman offers financial counseling to employees, which includes a complete financial assessment, help with creating a budget, managing credit-card debt and preparing for retirement.

“I’m here to educate and help our employe- es,” Coleman says. “A lot of people come to me and they are in the red every month. They say, ‘I never have enough money. I always have to wait and pay one bill late.’ We help people plan and get their budget on track and make sure that every month they are in the black so that they can come out of this valley of debt they are either starting to accumulate or have already built.”

Making ends meet isn’t always easy, and it has been particularly tough for some in recent years with a struggling economy. There have been fewer raises, lost jobs and higher costs for essential items, including food and gasoline. And Alabamians have suffered.

A recent survey conducted by the Financial Industry Regulatory Authority showed:

• 65 percent of Alabamians say they have difficulty covering their monthly expenses.
• 63 percent of Alabamians have no emergency fund at all.
• 61 percent of Alabamians have not figured out what they will do for retirement income.

Coleman says one of the reasons these numbers are high also relates to credit-card debt.

“There are a lot of people wondering, ‘Why am I broke all of the time? Why don’t I have enough cash to get to the end of the month? They don’t realize they’re paying too much for their credit card. Their rates are astronomical. Everyone should have a plan to reduce or get out of their credit cards.”

Job loss is the No. 1 reason individuals and families are in dire straights, Coleman says. It’s the second reason. That’s why an emergency fund is important.

Coleman says every individual or family should strive to build an emergency fund large enough to cover monthly expenses for up to eight months. It’s not something that can typically be done overnight. It takes commitment and discipline, he says.

“I let people know they’re going to have to make a lifestyle change, a mindset change,” Coleman says. “A lot of people spend above their means because they feel like they deserve to have whatever it is they want. ‘It’s like our country’s financial crisis we’ve watched the past few years — a lot of individuals and families got into trouble because they overspent,’” Coleman says. “Then a spouse loses a job. All of a sudden, they don’t have enough to make all of their payments. Then the credit-card companies start calling, and their cars are repossessed. In worst cases, their homes are being foreclosed — all because their spouse lost their job.”

In addition to discipline, long-term planning for life is another key to personal financial success.

Coleman points to his predecessor, Kris Findlay, as a person who was meticulous about his spending and planned well for his future — so much so that he retired at 47.

“He’s the exception to the rule in this country,” Coleman says. “He was extremely financially prudent and astute. Most people are not that way, but we should strive to be. Most people do want to retire early and not work until they are 70 years old. Most people want to be able to travel and enjoy their grandchildren the by the time they hit their 50s. Well, you can do that if you make some small changes once you get into the work force. Don’t wait to get started — do it now. And if you have waited, get started now. If your spending is out of whack and you need help, come see me before it gets out of hand. At least come to us and let us make an assessment. It’s not good to ignore it. All you have to do is do a little bit of planning.”

If you need financial help or advice, set up an appointment with Coleman by calling The Resource Center at 934-2281. You can also visit The Resource Center website for more information, including forms at www.uab.edu/eap.

Also, join Coleman for the free, open seminar “Budgeting for Retirement” at 5:30 p.m. Wednesday, Oct. 12 in the West Pavilion Conference Room E.

CPR studies confirm best practices already in place

Researchers with the Resuscitation Outcomes Consortium, which includes UAB, reported in the New England Journal of Medicine on the first two large-scale ROC trials. Both trials evaluated new strategies for cardiopulmonary resuscitation following cardiac arrest.

Investigators say the trials were ended early when it became clear the new strategies being studied did not produce better outcomes than existing standards of care.

One study examined whether paramedics responding to a cardiac arrest should perform CPR prior to checking cardiac rhythm with a defibrillator. Current practice calls for paramedics to deploy a defibrillator and apply electric shock immediately.

“There was evidence from a European study that CPR performed prior to defibrillation might be beneficial by restoring blood flow before the shock is applied, priming the pump, so to speak,” said Henry Wang, M.D., associate professor and vice chair for research in the UAB Department of Emergency Medicine. “However, our findings showed that there was no difference with prior CPR. Thus, EMS crews and other first responders may choose the approach that best suits their needs.”

The other study examined a device known as an impedance-threshold device, a valve attached to the oxygen bag used in rescue breathing. The valve allows air to be exhaled during the chest compression phase of CPR, reducing pressure in the heart. Evidence suggested that reducing the pressure in the heart would help blood flow return to normal as the heart resumed beating.

“The results of this study showed there was no improvement in cardiac-arrest outcomes associated with the use of the impedance-threshold device,” said Wang. “The significance here is that these de- vices commonly are used by many EMS agencies. Our findings suggest there is little reason to spend money on purchasing these devices, nor to spend time training in their use or employing them in the field.”

Research outcomes that disprove a hypothesis can have great value, the investigators say. They can confirm best-practices and provide a better baseline understanding of the issue at hand.
Bowling coach gets the ball rolling for new UAB program

Michelle Carcagente Crews has spent much of her life hanging around alleys. She bowled her first game at age 3, was a collegiate All-American at the University of Central Florida and earned a spot on Junior Team USA. This summer, Crews was selected as the first coach of UAB Women’s Bowling team, which will begin practice in October.

Speaking by phone from a tournament in Las Vegas where she was scouting potential recruits, she talked with UAB Magazine about what it’s like as a woman in the sport.

UAB Magazine: You were born in Alabama at all, so I wasn’t very familiar with the university or the city before this job became available. I’ve always known I wanted to work in the bowling industry in some way, but I also wanted to be in a place where I would be comfortable living and raising a family. As my husband Jimmy and I began to explore the city and learn more about the university, we realized that both Birmingham and UAB have all the things we were looking for.

I like the size of the school and the fact that it has high academic standards. It’s a place that I think will be very attractive to recruits — especially someone with interest in the medical field.

Also, my husband works for a medical supply company and is on the amateur staff of one of the bowling companies, so Birmingham is an ideal location for us.

UAB Magazine: Although most people have bowled recreationally or even in leagues, many in this area may not be familiar with college bowling. What basic things do UAB fans need to know to follow the team?

MC: Practice begins in October and the NCAA championships are in April, so there will be many matches against other teams, but you can travel with as many as eight events scheduled, and I hope to eventually get up to 12 or more.

UAB Magazine: When you’re scouting teenage bowlers, what do you look for, other than high bowling scores?

MC: I look at a bowler’s potential, and in truth, the scores are not as important as you would think. Most high-school bowlers we look at have not had much experience with different lane conditions, oil patterns and different balls. You really need that experience to consistently post high scores. So I look for bowlers who show potential and show that they are coachable and want to learn and develop their skills. You want someone who will be excited about what UAB has to offer them, someone who can be a leader and a valuable member of the team.

UAB Magazine: How do you train as a college bowler?

MC: Our practices will be bowling five to six days per week. That includes two team practices, two individual practices and one or two sessions just on your own. In addition, we’ll have at least two days a week in the gym. Most people don’t realize how important cardiovascular fitness is for a bowler, but you have to be in shape to compete. A college bowler will be on her feet six to eight hours a day, throwing a 14 or 15 lb. pound ball down the lane a few hundred times per tournament. So weight-training and cardio are important if you want to perform at a high level.

UAB Magazine: College bowling is a growing sport, but there aren’t as many opportunities for coaches. Did you consider other career paths?

MC: I grew up in a family that was very involved in bowling, so I always knew I wanted to be in the industry in some way. During college, I was an assistant manager and events coordinator at a bowling center, and I really enjoyed working with the public and developing programs for our community. But as I watched the sport continue to grow in the college ranks, I knew that coaching would be the best way for me to be able to do the things I wanted to do. The chance to help young people and to build a team from the ground up is an opportunity I couldn’t pass.

Bowling 101


Michelle Carcagente Crews is preparing to lead UAB’s bowling team into its inaugural season and hopes to position the Blazers near the top of one of the NCAA’s fastest-growing sports.
9/11 brings changes to state’s disaster preparedness plans

There were perhaps 200,000 people on the bridge that day, on foot, walking eastward — New Yorkers, evacuating lower Manhattan over the Brooklyn Bridge after two hijacked airplanes crashed into the World Trade Trade Towers Sept. 11, 2001.

A handful of people were stemming that tide of evacuators, walking westbound into Manhattan, including a group of emergency medical professionals who had been attending a research conference in Brooklyn. Shannon Stephens, EMT-P, a researcher in the UAB Department of Emergency Medicine, was one of them.

“I walked over the bridge with a paramedic from Pittsburgh,” Stephens recalled. “An officer with the New York fire department said they’d take all the help they could get. They had whole battalions they couldn’t reach on the radio. As we were crossing, the second tower fell. I remember the ash plume, you could see it come out of Manhattan, come across the water and sort of roll over us.”

UAB emergency physician Sarah Nafziger, M.D., was attending the same conference with Stephens and then-chair of Emergency Medicine Tom Terndrup.

“It was several hours before we knew what happened for sure,” she said. “We heard rumors there were hundreds of planes crashing in cities all over the country. We saw fighter jets in the air from it with minor injuries, or you were dead.”

The UAB trio managed to get space on an Amtrak train to Washington, D.C.; the next day. They hopped a commuter train to Reagan National Airport to rent a car, passing by the Pentagon en-route. They were among the few people in the country to see both the WTC and Pentagon sites in the first two days.

Ten years later, the memories are still vivid. The lessons learned are important. “After 9/11, I think disaster preparedness became a household term,” said Nafziger. “We had been doing some work in the field of disaster preparedness, so it wasn’t a new concept for us. Most of our work was focused on preparing for a bioterrorism event.”

The very scope of disaster preparedness has expanded in the past decade. Planners now understand that the same planning, same organization and the same approaches can be applied to any mass casualty event — from terror attacks, to tornadoes and hurricanes.

“We understood that we had to have systems that could handle a bus wreck with 20 victims but also be able to scale up to deal with thousands of victims. Lessons learned in the past decade have been put to good use. Alabama now has a statewide EMS trauma system, and Nafziger is the assistant state EMS medical director.

“This whole experience of 9/11 for me was a call to action,” she said. “I felt the need to give something back to my community because it was demonstrated to me that my community can be very fragile and in a moment’s notice our whole lives can be disrupted. We had tornadoes here recently. And the response you saw from friends and neighbors was very like what we saw at 9/11. Friends helping friends, neighbors helping neighbors. Everything else aside, any differences to help each other. That’s something that has not changed in the past 10 years, and I’m very glad to see that.”

Nafziger acknowledges that the attack on the World Trade Center was a turning point.

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Athlete, alum a Top 30 honoree for NCAA Woman of the Year

Thirty women — 10 from each NCAA membershisp division — have been selected as the top 30 honorees for the 2011 NCAA Woman of the Year Award. Former UAB women’s soccer player Danielle Blair’s name is on that list. She is the first athlete in UAB history to make the prestigious list.

Now in its 21st year, the Woman of the Year Award honors female student-athletes who have distinguished themselves throughout their collegiate careers in academic achievement, athletics excellence, community service and leadership.

The Top 30 honorees were selected from a group of 142 conference nominees. The list will be narrowed to nine finalists, from which the Woman of the Year will be chosen by the NCAA Committee on Women’s Athletics. The winner will be announced Oct. 16.

Blair, a defender, is one of the most decorated players in UAB Blazer history. A native of Toronto, she was a three-time ESPN The Magazine/CoSIDA Academic All-America selection, was twice named to the Conference USA All-Academic team and earned the league’s Academic Medal all four years. Blair also was named the C-USA Scholar-Athlete of the Year for women’s soccer for the 2009-2010 academic year.

Blair, a triple major in marketing, management and industrial distribution, graduated in 2011 and maintained a 3.98 GPA. Her scholastic efforts earned her the C-USA Postgraduate Scholarship, and for her work in community service she received the C-USA Spirit of Service Award in December 2009.

After her career at UAB, Blair played for the Trinidad and Tobago Soca Princesses Women’s National team, for which she competed in the Women’s World Cup qualifying rounds.

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