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Updates from our alumni
Roughly one year ago, The University of Alabama launched a campaign to raise $15 million in private donations to help build a new Performing Arts Academic Center on the former Bryce Hospital property.

Our hope was to raise roughly one quarter of the funds necessary to build the $65-million facility, and thanks to the generosity of our alumni and friends, we are making great strides in that effort. Already, we have raised $8.8 million, more than half of what we need before we can break ground, and we are deeply grateful for your support.

Through generous gifts and pledges, alumni and friends have named gallery spaces, theatres, rehearsal spaces, and more. Their legacy will be left on the Department of Theatre and Dance and the institution for years to come.

Still, we have a long way to go, and we hope that you will consider contributing to this project—giving back to the institution that is committed to raising a future generation of leaders and innovators.

As Dean, I cannot express how thrilled I am about this project. Our students and alumni have accomplished so much within the walls of Rowand Johnson Hall and the Clark Hall dance studio—leading them to roles on Broadway and in Hollywood—but this new facility will turn a page in UA’s performing arts standard and begin a new legacy of unparalleled achievements.

There will be four new theatres as well as studios specifically tailored to the needs of costuming, set design, and production and lighting. We want our students to have a seamless transition from our campus to the professional world, and consequently each aspect of the facility will be state-of-the-art, matching and exceeding the caliber of commercial studios around the country.

I believe the center will one day become as iconic to our campus as Denny Chimes and the Bryant-Denny Stadium are today. It will be a centerpiece of the institution that not only educates and inspires but also reaches out and invites the community to join us. It will be one of the first buildings prospective students see when they step foot on campus, and it will be one that they will return to again and again for years to come.

To learn more about the Performing Arts Academic Center or to find out how you can participate, visit https://www.ua.edu/performingarts/.

Dean Robert Olin
The former Bryce hospital building is being renovated to create a new University welcome center, reception venue, and museum dedicated to the history of mental health in Alabama as well as the history of The University of Alabama. Additionally, a new facility, known as the Performing Arts Academic Center, will be built on the north side of the former Bryce hospital. The 130,099-square-foot center will become the hub for theatre and dance education and performance. It features four new theatres; studios for costuming, set design, and lighting; faculty offices; classrooms; and more.

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Looking at Rick Smith’s work, you’d assume he has a background in visual art. Surprisingly, however, the master glassblower learned his craft solely through apprenticeship and practice.

Today, Smith is the University’s scientific glassblower, and once each year he also teaches a scientific glassblowing course within the Department of Chemistry during interim.

The class, an intense 63 hours of work, is crammed into just three weeks, but by the end, students can fix their own beakers, create apparatuses needed for chemical research, and even create artistic pieces, like the dogwood flowers they made for their mothers for Mother’s Day this year.

“The most difficult part is the raw dexterity required to make fine adjustments,” said Zane Orchowski, one of Smith’s 2018 students. “Rick made it look effortless, but we would be lucky if our first attempts at replicating his work came out half resembling it.”

Smith says that gravity is the enemy of glassblowers, and students have to learn how to simultaneously blow into the glass to keep it from collapsing while also rotating it evenly to make sure it retains its shape.

When Smith began learning how to blow glass at Lillie Glassblowers in Atlanta, Georgia, in 1972, he says it seemed impossible.
“Within two or three weeks, my mentor had me trying to blow swans,” Smith recalled. “I couldn’t do it, and I’ll never forget how frustrating it was.”

To this day, when doing demonstrations, Smith always chooses to create a swan—not only because it is a piece with a lot of showmanship, but it also reminds him how far he’s come.

Rick makes it look effortless, but we would be lucky if our first attempts at replicating his work came out half resembling it.

At UA, Smith is responsible for mending glass equipment as well as designing a wide array of specialty apparatuses created specifically for UA faculty research. Outside of work, however, Smith also works on creative projects in his garage, where he houses his lathe, oven, saw, and Mini Cooper.

Smith has made ornate ships, complete with razor-thin masts and sails; he makes the glass elephants for the outgoing presidents of the College of Arts and Sciences Leadership Board; and he also created and designed a model of the President’s seal, showcasing a 3D version of Minerva.

“I do a couple hundred projects a year,” Smith said. Though chemistry and chemical engineering students are the most common enrollees for his classes, Smith says he has taught art majors, math students, and others as well.

“It is by far the most fun class I have taken at the University,” Orchowski said. “I am constantly recommending the class to anyone who needs a chemistry elective, and, being in a fair amount of labs this semester, I’m half hoping to break some equipment on accident, just to have a chance to go back to the workshop to fix it.”

At the International Horn Society Symposium in Muncie, Indiana, four UA undergraduates won first prize in the INTERNATIONAL STUDENT QUARTET COMPETITION. Doctoral student Joshua Williams also performed at the event as a featured soloist, following his win last year in the solo competition.
A new student club on campus travels to Guatemala to provide healthcare for hundreds

Over the summer, 16 UA students traveled to Guatemala for two weeks, shadowing local doctors, taking vitals, recording patient histories, and managing a traveling pharmacy as part of a new UA club associated with Volunteers Around the World.

The group, made up of mostly College of Arts and Sciences pre-medical students, was organized by Rachel Schillmoeller, a mechanical engineering junior who is pursuing a minor in Spanish.

“I had been looking into various volunteer abroad opportunities when I saw an ad for Volunteers Around the World on Facebook,” Schillmoeller said. “They were looking for someone to become a team leader for The University of Alabama, and I thought that it would be a great and rewarding experience.”

Impressed by the wide array of opportunities Volunteers Around the World offered students interested in medicine, Schillmoeller determined to create a new club for the organization at UA, and 10 months later—after recruiting members, creating a constitution, meeting with campus officials, receiving a letter of approval from an accredited doctor, learning about insurance, and more—she and 15 other adventurous students set off for Guatemala.

Dr. Lesley Reid, the chair of the Department of Criminology and Criminal Justice, accompanied the group as a chaperone and faculty advisor.

“As a sociologist, I tend to be skeptical of everything,” Reid said, “but I’m especially suspicious of ecotourism and volunteer tourism—where you get to be a voyeur but you don’t necessarily do any good for the communities that, on some level, you are exploiting. So before committing to be the advisor for the group, I did a lot of research on the organization—and all accounts were positive.”
Reid said she liked that the students were working with local doctors from Guatemala, who were themselves volunteering within the local communities, and she valued the fact that the students could see the way another culture approaches healthcare.

Throughout their trip, the students set up seven temporary clinics in various rural and urban communities, where they then saw between 80 and 100 patients per day. The students updated medical histories, took vitals, and then shadowed the doctors as they made diagnoses and recommendations for treatment.

According to Korbin Prince, a junior studying microbiology, they treated patients with gastritis, basic infections, and even diabetes.

“They were doing really basic healthcare,” Reid said. “But this is healthcare that these communities don’t have, period.

“While Guatemala has socialized medicine and has medical clinics that are free of charge, where we were, the closest permanent clinics were an hour and a half away—which is prohibitive when you don’t have transportation.”

Bringing the clinics closer allowed these communities to get the basic treatments they needed.

“A lot of mothers brought their kids—from babies to teenagers,” Prince said. “And most of the time we got to put the mothers’ minds at ease because their children really were fine.”

Additionally, because the temporary clinics incorporated a small pharmacy, patients were able to get their medications—everything from antacids to antibiotics—free of charge.

Following their successful first trip, the Volunteers Around the World club is already planning for next year. Prince, who was elected the 2018-2019 president of the club, says they will be headed to Peru and student interest has soared. Already, he’s been in contact with more than 300 hopefuls, and with only 25 spots per trip, he plans to organize additional trips for future years.

Following a successful trip to Guatemala to provide healthcare in rural communities, the Volunteers Around the World club has plans to expand. They already have plans for a trip to Peru next year.
High Five Studios, a game design company based in Tuscaloosa and comprised of UA students, took home the grand prize at the Culverhouse College of Business's Edward K. Aldag Jr. Business Plan competition.

The indie gaming studio won over $50,000 at this year's Aldag competition, where they pitched their first game, "Prisoner," to a panel of judges and received the top honors, as well as third place for community affairs and crowd favorite.

“That was jaw-droppingly shocking,” said Alex Haisting, a 2018 New College graduate and CEO, audio director and lead producer of High Five Studios. “We had no idea that would happen going into it.”

The annual competition allows students to pitch their business plans to judges, awarding grants to those who impress them the most, as well as an office at The Edge, Tuscaloosa’s newest co-working space.

“The office space is amazing,” Haisting said. “We love being at The Edge. The staff at The Edge are very helpful, along with being in an environment with
other entrepreneurs is always nice. We always seem to be running ideas by each other and helping each other out.”

High Five Studios plans to use the grant to update their game, “Prisoner.” The game follows World War II prisoner of war Kurt Davis as he navigates through the Japanese prisoner camp and experiences severe hallucinations.

“One of the aspects is if something is real or not,” Haisting said. “It’s a question of ‘do other people see this, or is it just me?’ There are a lot of monsters based off of traditional Japanese folklore with a Western twist.”

Haisting’s team consists of three other New College students: Robert Petit, the game designer, technical artist, and programmer; lead artist Rachel Christ; and lead programmer Cody Fletcher. Business manager Josh Mokwa is also a UA student.

The company was born after some of the team traveled to South by Southwest (SXSW) in the spring of 2017. There, they were introduced to the world of indie gaming studios and decided that they may be able to develop a game themselves. From there, the group formed their own company and started work on “Prisoner,” which was released in March of 2018.

A year later, High Five Studios once again found themselves at SXSW, but this time, as presenters. Haisting and his team travelled to Austin, Texas, where they met with other developers and introduced “Prisoner” to the gaming world.

“That was one of the coolest things,” Haisting said. “We were there in 2017 just looking and thought ‘wow, this is cool,’ and a year later, we’re coming as developers. The community there is very exciting.”

Since presenting at SXSW and winning the Aldag grant, High Five Studios decided to purchase new equipment and computers to make their game more efficient and aesthetically pleasing. Over the past few months, the team has added several features that Haisting believes improves the quality of the game.

“We are developing something far greater than we ever expected since the funding influx,” Haisting said. “We have quadrupled the map size, added a crafting system, and the narrative is very dense and very rich. We can’t go into too many features quite yet without giving away key features of the game, but I can say it is shaping up very well.”

After “Prisoner” re-releases in early 2019, Haisting says that High Fives Studios will begin working on another game, exploring different platforms and genres.

“I can say, it will be much larger, we will most likely be expanding our team a little for the next project, and it will have multiplayer components that we can expand on for future downloadable content, whatever this next hypothetical project might be.”

Until the game releases, Haisting and the team will be enjoying their success so far.

“It’s been a pretty cool semester,” Haisting said. “We developed a game, we won the Aldag, and we presented at SXSW. I’d say that’s something worth celebrating.”

LEVITETZ PROGRAM FOR LEADERSHIP

New College alumnus Jeffrey A. Levitetz recently gave the College of Arts and Sciences $1 million to create the Levitetz Leadership Program.

The gift comes in three parts: scholarships for undergraduate students who have displayed creativity and entrepreneurship or are involved in the armed forces, annual stipends for students with unpaid internships, and seed grants to support the innovation of students and faculty.

“The New College program at The University of Alabama has played a very important role in my life,” said Levitetz, founder of the Levitetz Family Foundation. “I am honored to be able to give back to the program that has made such a difference to me. The Levitetz Family Foundation is very proud to embark on this new program and give students the opportunity to succeed.”

Jeff Levitetz was a New College student in the late 1970s—studying marketing and business management. He started his company, Purity Wholesale Grocers Inc., out of the trunk of his car. In the last decade, Levitetz has made annual gifts to New College supporting scholarships and has person-ally lectured biennially on campus. Nearly 150 UA students have been proud to be called Levitetz Scholars.
Nine hundred miles off the coast of Hawaii, a tiny island called Johnston Atoll is home to decades of nuclear fallout, agent orange toxic waste, asbestos, and an invasive ant species called the yellow crazy ant—an ant that sprays acid.

The atoll, once controlled by the United States Military, sounds like a vacationer's hell—and yet when environmental science alumnus Kyle Davis saw an opportunity to work on the deserted island for six months, he jumped at the shot.

“It seemed like a really interesting break,” Davis said. “Having just graduated, it was a good time in my life to try something radical.”

That was in 2014, and for six months Davis counted and killed ants while surveying the population of red-tailed tropicbirds, which have made Johnston Atoll their nesting ground.

Davis said the experience changed his life and put him on a trajectory of conservation work throughout the United States.

“The job was really amazing,” Davis said. “It was life-changing because my lifestyle was reminiscent of how people lived before civilization. It felt immeasurably and incontrovertibly right. We didn’t have artificial light. We didn’t have the internet. You couldn’t distract yourself with all the little flourishes of civilization.

“Though you would think that handling pesticides and having a camp situated to the west of a plutonium dump would be worse for your health, I’m convinced that a lifestyle on Johnston is actually better for people. Because I was outside, off the computer, and woke up and went to bed with the sun, my mental and emotional health improved radically on the island.”

Since his work on Johnston, Davis has built trails and protected forests in Arizona; he’s kept the wild artichokes at bay at the Audubon Starr Ranch Sanctuary in California; he’s collected wild seeds in Moab, Utah; he’s surveyed birds and killed weeds at Midway Atoll; and now he’s working for Hawaii’s Pueo project, surveying a sub-species of short-eared owl called the Pueo.

“Most people think you go to college to make a lot of money or to get a job where you have at least a decent income, but conservation is one of those fields that isn’t necessarily financially rewarding,” Davis said.

Some jobs he has done for free; for other jobs, he’s received housing and a tiny stipend that rounds out to about $2.50 an hour. But he loves the lifestyle that accompanies conservation work, and having spent so much time with seabirds, he plans to get a graduate degree studying seabirds full time.

“The dream job is something that makes enough money to get by while getting to spend half of your time in the field on these amazing islands that are not open to exploitation,” Davis said. “We forget that before people were at their present numbers, animals owned the earth and had this huge influence.”
SURVEYING ANTS
While at Johnston Atoll, Davis and his team conducted an ant survey of the entire island using 1,000 vials that each contained a single cube of spam. The ants would flock to the spam, and after collecting the vials, Davis individually counted the number of ants in each vial.

“There were 900 to 1,000 ants in a single vial every now and then,” Davis said. “The fire ants can really swarm on a spam cube, and their little bodies have these sticklers, so they would get stuck to each other. We would pull the ants off one by one from the cube and line them up in little rows of ten. We got good data, and I’m really proud of that, but that was a huge part of our time—counting ants.”

EATING AND DRINKING
The boat that travels to Johnston Atoll only goes twice per year—to drop off the new batch of volunteers and their supplies. There are no visitors and no resupply, so the crew has to make sure that their 55-gallon drums of water and food lasts 182 days.

“There’s enough drinking water for us to survive in case it doesn’t rain even once when we are there,” Davis said.

For when it does rain, the team uses a large 20-by-20-foot tarp to catch the water and then filter it. Still, they bathed in the ocean and used a compost toilet because there is no plumbing on the island.

For food, the team survived largely on canned goods, and Davis said that by the end everyone missed fresh fruits and onions.

STERILIZING ANTS
Through the years, researchers of the island have found that when the ant populations are active, the reproductive success of the red-tailed tropic birds heavily dips.

The yellow crazy ants are particularly problematic because their acid can blind the birds who do not flee from them.

Because the crazy ants do not have a single queen, their colonies are difficult to kill. Instead, the team experimented with pesticides intended to sterilize the colony.

“We tried an insect growth regulator with the hope that the workers would feed it to the queen, making her sterile, and thereby causing the colony to kind of evaporate.”

The pesticide didn’t work, but new teams of volunteers are still working for a solution.
THE FIGHT AGAINST THE VIRUS
Nearly 100 years ago in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, a simian virus common among chimpanzees adapted, crossing species from monkey to man. The virus, now known as the Human Immunodeficiency Virus, went unnamed, undiagnosed, and untreated for roughly 50 years, allowing it to spread exponentially and build a terrifying presence around the globe—affecting populations of all races, gender, and sexual orientations.

In the midst of this global crisis, which garnered its first widespread attention in the early 1980s, a young scientist named Woo-Baeg Choi was living in South Korea, working on chemical warfare for the South Korean government. He had taken the position as part of a five-year military obligation, but in the process of his work, he realized he wanted more. Specifically, he wanted a doctoral degree in chemistry in order to pursue organic synthesis, which allows chemists to discover and build new molecules.

By 1996, Choi not only received his doctoral degree; he also helped to discover and license two drugs that are now used to treat roughly 90 percent of HIV-positive patients.

"At the time, the whole world of researchers was working on AIDS medicine," Choi recalled. "It was extremely competitive, but we stumbled on a remarkably good method for making the compound, and from then on we were just cruising."

Still, Choi's journey to success didn't start smoothly.

After deciding to move from South Korea, Choi applied to universities across the United States for doctoral assistantships to help pay for his education. Despite his intelligence and success in the field, however, he wasn't offered funding at any of the institutions to which he was accepted—except one.

"The University of Alabama was the only school I applied to that offered me a graduate teaching assistantship," Choi said. "And it turned out even that was a mistake."

According to Choi, Dr. Drury Caine, who was the chair of the chemistry department at the time, had been confused about when Choi would be enrolling. While Caine thought his new student would begin in the fall, Choi couldn't actually move to America until December of 1984 because of his military commitment.

"Dr. Caine later explained that he shouldn't have offered me the assistantship because of the timing," Choi recalled. "But he said that since he had, he would keep his word."

When Choi arrived on campus in late December 1984, he knew no one; he had only communicated with the faculty via mail, and he had little practice speaking English to native speakers. At the time, he was living in a local hotel with his wife and their 9-month-old son while they waited for married housing at Rose Towers to reopen after winter break.
It was a difficult time, but to make already stressful matters worse, the day he finally met with professors, he was informed that he would be required to take his doctoral qualifying exams—a four-day process which was set to begin that very night, all in English.

Unprepared and not a native speaker, Choi took each of the exams, and then made UA history as the first person to pass all four on the first attempt. “Reading and taking a test in English wasn’t as hard as speaking and listening,” Choi said. “In South Korea, we used English texts in school, but we never ran into English speaking people, so conversations were more difficult. I had to spend a lot more time getting used to lectures.”

Because Choi tested out of much of his course work, he finished his doctoral degree in three and half years, and then went on to do post-doctoral work at Emory University.

There, Choi worked with Dr. Dennis Liotta and Dr. Raymond Schinazi, the team with whom Choi would make history.

As Liotta later recorded, his interest with HIV research began soon after Azidothymidine was approved for treating HIV infections in 1987. Though the drug had had some success, he wrote in an academic paper in 2016 that “its clinical usefulness was severely limited by associated toxicities and the emergence of resistance.” The drug only worked for four to six months and then it lost its effectiveness.

“Through the first half of the 1990s things were pretty grim,” Liotta told students in an Emory lecture in 2013. “You could extend patients’ lives by a year or so, but then they died. It still makes me very emotional when I think about it. I knew a lot of people who died. … It was an absolutely horrible time.

“We got involved almost out of desperation.”

Wanting to find a novel therapy using organic synthesis, Liotta’s lab began working to build a new compound. Choi’s work in the lab showed the most promise, so he soon became the lead chemist on the project, working very closely with Dr. Liotta.

Together, the team discovered a method for making Emtricitabine and Lamivudine, two compound that inhibits the RNA of HIV from replicating into new viral DNA. The drugs stunt the spread of the virus within the body and thereby improve the patient’s overall immunity.

After clinical tests and FDA approval, the drugs were sold to Gilead Sciences, Inc. and Royalty Pharma for $525 million. The three inventors split 40 percent of the sale, and the manufacturers then reduced a part of the cost to ensure that the treatment could be procured at a lower price in parts of the world most devastated by HIV and AIDS.

Though the World Health Organization estimates that 35 million people have now died as a result of the virus, the death toll from and spread of HIV has been in steady decline since the mid 2000s. Emtricitabine and Lamivudine have been so effective for treatment that the World Health Organization added them to its “List of Essential Medicines.”

“I had come to the United States just to study and to get a degree,” Choi said. “I hoped to go back to Korea and get a job at a university. All of a sudden I was licensing a multi-million dollar drug that could treat AIDS.”

Following his work at Emory, Choi began working in the private sector of pharmaceuticals at Merck and Company, Inc. Eight years later, he started his own business doing organics synthesis, and in 2000, he founded FOB Synthesis in Kennesaw, Georgia, to support drug discovery and custom synthesis.

Choi’s current research focuses on bacteria. He is particularly interested in finding solutions for antibacterial resistance, and over the last 18 years, he has had dozens of additional patents. Though he says he has stopped counting the number of patents, he estimates it totals somewhere between 80 and 100.

Earlier this year, to help support chemistry students like him, Choi donated $50,000 to create the Dr. Woo-Baeg Choi Endowed Scholarship for Chemistry. The scholarship will be awarded annually to an international graduate student studying chemistry.
I HAD COME TO THE UNITED STATES TO STUDY AND TO GET A DEGREE...BUT ALL OF A SUDDEN I WAS LICENSING A MULTI-MILLION DOLLAR DRUG THAT COULD TREAT AIDS.
In the late 1950s, a traveling art exhibit featuring Hans Hofmann and his students came to Auburn University from the Museum of Modern Art in New York. The show had been seen across the country, but when it stopped in Auburn, it changed the life of a young undergraduate student named Thornton Willis.
“It was the first time I’d seen real abstract paintings,” Willis told artist writer Julie Karabenick in an interview in 2013. “I was totally fixated on those paintings... The work was powerful, expressionistic.”

Recalling the same experience to James Panero, the executive editor of The New Criterion, in 2009, Willis said, “That was like a punch in the face, a punch in the gut. Seeing that work was the epiphany that brought me to painting. I’ve been chasing that ever since.”

In 1962, still inspired by Abstract Expressionism, Willis enrolled at The University of Alabama to pursue a master’s degree in fine art, and he found a lifelong mentor in Melville Price, a UA faculty member and painter who was a close friend of other New York School artists. Willis said that coming to the University was a breath of creative fresh air in which he was free to experiment.

Still, he couldn't have known that over the next five decades his fame would surge—landing him a Guggenheim Fellowship, two National Endowment for the Arts fellowships, and a personal visit by the former first lady Jackie Kennedy.

Least of all, perhaps, Willis could not have anticipated that one day a New York Times art writer would review his “Step Up” collection, comparing it to the work of Hans Hofmann—the very man whose work had transformed Willis’s conception of art.

“It means a lot to me that the art critic Ken Johnson of The New York Times saw in my work Hofmann as an influence,” Willis said. “Hofmann was one of the number of Abstract Expressionists who influenced my work initially, and to be mentioned in reference to that generation is a great compliment.”

Prior to his young adulthood—when he attended community college, Auburn University, the University of Southern Mississippi, and eventually The University of Alabama—Willis had no formal introduction to visual art. His early exposure was limited to the comics in the Sunday paper, but he often practiced recreating those images and other cartoon characters like Superman, and he began doing rudimentary portraits.

“I didn't try to draw things very realistically,” he told Karabenick. “I could do it, but what really interested me had more to do with the sensation of drawing—the touch, the eye responding when you make a mark, the actual motion when you draw.”

His visceral attraction to art hasn’t changed. At 82 years old, he is still enraptured with the physical impact of the human hand in the making of art. While many younger artists today explore digital means of making art, Willis remains interested in how the personal touch of the brush and the choices of color and form can move people.

“American abstract artists considered making large paintings as a heroic act,” Willis said. “It was about making a big gesture and even creating a whole environment that the viewer could walk up to and experience.”

Though Willis is most famous for his large paintings—the largest of which are nearly 10 feet tall and 12 feet wide, filling the gallery walls on which they hang—he says that he paints in an array of sizes. In fact, his current show in New York City is a series of small paintings.

“Over my career I have worked on all sizes, large and small,” Willis said. “The small drawings in my notebooks are an important stepping-stone to understanding the big work. … Small work, I feel, is a more intimate experience for the viewer.

“But it’s interesting that I can spend as much time on a small painting as I might on a large one. Whatever the scale you still have to make the painting a dynamic work.”

Despite the fact that his work has transformed over the years and can be grouped into distinct stages, like “slats,” “wedges,” “triangles,” “lattices,” and others, a few recurring motifs throughout his body of work place the pieces in conversation with one another.

Regardless of his stage of work, Willis has been driven by a commitment to vibrant color, and an interest in space and geometry. With each piece, he attempts to create a sort of equilibrium in which no single element comes to the foreground nor recedes to the background. He says his paintings are objects, and as such, he aims to have each element of his paintings balanced with the others, creating one complete form.

Willis lives and works in his studio, a 2,500 square foot loft he began renting with his wife Vered Lieb in the early 1970s. The studio, once the dilapidated remnants of a light manufacturing
sweat shop in New York City's SoHo district, originally had no plumbing and the electricity didn't work. The two relied on other artists to help build walls within the studio, put in the plumbing, and legalize the electricity—and they in turn helped other artists to build their loft studios.

Some of the first paintings Willis ever sold were made soon after moving to New York City. They were large slat paintings, made all in one sitting, and each took Willis roughly 10 to 14 hours to complete. Later Willis said that those paintings came the closest to what he has been trying to accomplish as an artist.

“They’re very magical, very spiritual to me,” he told Karabenick. “I think everything I’ve painted since has, in a sense, been a reaction to them.”

Though the slat paintings were some of Willis's favorite, he became renowned for his wedge paintings. During that period of his work, Jackie Kennedy came to his studio in a limousine to select two of the Wedge paintings for the collection of Maurice Templesman. Willis says that he did not recognize Jackie and had to be told by the antiquities dealer who accompanied her who she was.

“Mrs. Kennedy was truly gracious and interested in looking at my work and talking about it with me,” Willis said. “I was genuinely pleased to have her in my studio. It made my day. I will remember her kindness and good manners for the rest of my life.”

During this time, he also received his most prestigious arts grants and was twice solicited by Sidney Janis, a successful art collector entrenched in avant-garde pop, new realist, and postmodern art, to join his gallery. Though the move would have been a successful one for Willis, he remained loyal to the Elizabeth Harris Gallery where his art is still showcased and sold today.

The decision to stay with the Harris Gallery was not the only one his peers did not see as financially prudent. Many also counseled him not to depart from the large Wedge paintings that had propelled him to success. However, true to his internal artistic passions, his work branched into new modes focused on triangles, zigzags, lattices, and steps.

Currently, he is working on what some art critics have called his strongest work to date. Art critic and poet John Yau writes about the newest work, “What is unexpected—for this viewer, at least—is the revelation of how fully the tension between order and invention in Willis's forms can be read aesthetically, politically, and socially.”

At 82 years old, Willis continues to paint and show his work energetically. And, with works scattered across dozens of private and public collections around the country, including the Museum of Modern Art, the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York City, and the High Museum, in Atlanta, Willis is making a profound impact on young students.

What's more, with the recent generous donation of 29 works to the Sarah Moody Gallery of Art, students on campus now have the opportunity to be inspired from his art in the way he was once inspired by Hans Hofmann’s.

“I am so pleased to have these pivotal works housed here at The University of Alabama,” Willis said. “I am truly grateful to Dean Olin who understood that this donation of work is a gift of appreciation for the time I spent here as a graduate student and how it enriched my life.

“I owe thanks to William Dooley who took the time to come to New York City and handpicked each work. It feels just natural that I give back what I can. Although my career path took me to the North, my roots in many ways remain in the South.”
25 years of WOMEN IN THE College of Arts and Sciences
This year, The University of Alabama celebrates 125 years of welcoming female students to its halls. Women have shaped the University and the College, and in honor of their contributions, we highlight 13 of them, each representing a decade in which women have attended the institution.

When women entered The University of Alabama for the first time in 1893, their enrollment was considered an "experiment in co-education."

"The girls were made to understand that their record at the University during that first year would determine whether the university doors were to be opened wide to the young women of the State or whether they were to be closed and to remain closed to the young womanhood of Alabama," wrote a reporter from the Montgomery Advertiser in 1928, recalling the event.

The experiment was an incredible success. Anna Adams and Bessie Parker were the first two women to attend, and both received grades that would place them on the honor roll. Following in their path, another eight women enrolled, and together the group received more honors than the rest of the male students combined.

"The co-eds (just ten of them) won sixty per cent of all the honors given against the competition of several hundred young men," the Montgomery Advertiser reporter wrote.

Adams was the first of all the women to receive a degree from the University, but like those that followed her, she
couldn’t have done it without the aid of Julia Tutwiler, her former instructor at Livingston Normal College for Girls. Not only did Tutwiler hand-select Adams to attend the University, she was also instrumental in opening the doors for her in the first place.

Because of Tutwiler’s persistent petitions to the state legislators, the University trustees, and others, women were finally given a chance at the equal education they deserved. Not only was Tutwiler the president of an all-girls school, for which she had received the state’s first grant toward the education of women, she also helped to establish the Alabama Girls Industrial School, now known as the University of Montevallo.

Following her graduation from the University, Adams went on to teach in elementary schools in Birmingham for many years. She also played an active role in the social and civic activities of the community.

Like so many of the first female students at UA, Anna Hunter, who later became Anna Little, was another one of Julia Tutwiler’s pupils at Livingston Normal College for Girls prior to coming to the University.

Hunter referred to Tutwiler as one of her “patron saints,” noting that she was “the one who fought, bled, and died to gain admittance for the girls to the University.”

Though Lila McMahon was the first to receive a master’s degree from the University in 1902, Hunter became the first to receive a master’s degree in science in 1904, and immediately following her graduation, she was the first woman to join the University’s faculty, working as a physics laboratory assistant.

“It is not hard to teach physics if students will just turn themselves loose and use their imagination,” Hunter told Anniston Star reporter Jane Marxer. “When I was in college my professor used to hold up a Russian woman scientist to me as an example. There have always been some women who are interested, but I don’t see why there can’t be more.”

Hunter was also inspired by Marie Curie, who, in 1903, isolated radium at a time when some physicists thought everything had been discovered in the field.

For Hunter, co-education was so valuable because it helped her to realize that men were no more capable than she was. She said to reporters that the boys did not know any more than she did “and sometimes not as much.”

Though Hunter only taught at the University for a year before taking a position at a girls’ high school in Montgomery—it says everything. little—she returned to UA after World War II and taught physics until her retirement in 1954.

Prior to her death in 1962, Hunter served as a board member for the Red Cross, the Salvation Army, the League of Women Voters, and the Tuscaloosa Religious Council, and she also received the Woman of Achievement Award from Business and Professional Women Inc. for being a “pioneer woman physicist.”
Thanks to the diary of Daphne Cunningham, the University has one of its most complete pictures of what social life looked like more than 100 years ago for the collegiate female. Cunningham didn’t write much per se, but she kept a daily log of her life’s highlights, which included studying for exams, recovering from sicknesses, skipping class to go shopping, and most of all a lively dating life—though many of those dates were as simple as a walk home.

“Not infrequently, she would go on three or four dates a day,” wrote Dr. Lisa Dorr, UA’s associate dean of social sciences in an article published by Alabama Heritage. “On January 9, 1914, for example, Hargrove Vander Graaf walked her home from classes. Frank Greenhill then took her to the picture show at four in the afternoon, and Richard Foster took her to the Alpha Tau Omega dance in the evening.”

Though Cunningham’s non-committal dating in the 1910s was commonplace among her peers, Dorr says that it—especially the dances—worried the older generation, and soon UA President George Denny placed regulations on the events. He outlawed specific styles of dance like the tango and the turkey trot, and he also instituted a curfew. Though the restrictions for the dances were lifted in 1914, female students had curfews and were required to get special permissions from the dean for a wide range of social activities for decades to come.

For the first five years that the University was open to women, female students had no place to stay on campus. From 1893 to 1898, they lived in town, often boarding with local families or relatives. But, again, thanks to Julia Tutwiler, administration was convinced to convert a men’s dormitory nicknamed “The Ranch” into on-campus housing for women.

In 1912, the University built Tutwiler Hall, the first building designed exclusively for women, but only eight years later, it had exceeded capacity, leaving female students to seek accommodations in professors’ homes and boarding houses once more. In 1920, the University expanded the hall, spending $75,000 to add 50 rooms to the west side of the building. Still, the housing crisis continued and eventually came to a head in 1922.

In the fall of that year, headlines throughout Alabama declared “Doors of State University Closed to Young Women,” and subsequent articles told how, after attempting to house three women in rooms only suited for two, the University put a cap on female enrollment and was forced to turn away roughly 50 women who had already been admitted.

“They made their preparations to enter the University this fall,” the University wrote in a 1922 press release.
distributed throughout the state. “Their trunks were packed, and they had told their friends good-bye. Then at the last moment to each of them came a telegram from President George H. Denny, telling they could not be admitted to the State University. Tutwiler Hall, the girls’ dormitory, was already crowded far beyond its capacity. It would be impossible to admit any more girl students.”

P. P. Claxton of the Montgomery Advertiser wrote of the overcrowding in 1922, “Merely admitting women to a college organized and equipped for men does not constitute coeducation in any real sense. It would be no more absurd to admit men to a college for women and call that coeducation. Adequate and suitable provision should be made for their living and their instruction and training.”

The University agreed. They were committed to co-education in its realest sense, and the administration understood that without the proper infrastructure, the institution could not continue to grow.

Consequently, on October 5, 1922, the University launched its first-ever fundraising campaign, known formally as the Million Dollar Campaign. It was a state-wide ordeal, written about from Brewton to Centre, Alabama, and every alumnus and alumna was expected to give at least $305 to the cause.

Throughout the campaign, women’s committees were formed in each county to help solicit funds, and Mrs. Mary Cockrell Clark, a 1906 graduate, led the women’s campaign for the entire state.

To the Washington County News, she said, “The women of Alabama are determined that the campaign shall not fail because they know it is of such great importance for their children. “We demand that our children shall have the best opportunities for success in life, and we cannot permit a condition to continue which will deny any of them the opportunity to attend the State University. If these 50 young girls have been denied a college education this year because we have failed to prepare for them at the State University, hundreds of others will suffer the same fate in the next few years. The time for action has come.”

The Million Dollar Campaign was a wild success for the University that directly resulted in the expansion of Tutwiler Hall. Additionally, the funds provided for the construction of the Amelia Gorgas Memorial, now known as Carmichael Hall, and a University post office, supply store, and cafeteria, which were housed in the building now known as the McLure Education Library.

By August 1929, President George H. Denny announced to the female students on campus that his vision for a women’s campus was nearly complete with the construction of Bibb Graves Hall, Doster Hall, and a new physical education building which would be named after Charles Heyward Barnwell. At the time, each were designated specifically for female education.

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As the University has continued to expand, however, keeping up with female student housing has been a continual challenge. The University has now been through three iterations of Tutwiler housing—the annex from 1898, the first Tutwiler Hall built in 1912, and the second Tutwiler Hall built in the late 1960s. The 1960s dormitory, though 13 stories high, is still insufficient to hold everyone who wants to live there, and in suit, the University will be tearing it down and replacing it with a new building which will hold roughly 600 more students. That hall is slated to open in 2020.

“We have a huge demand for these rooms every year,” President Bell told the Tuscaloosa News in 2016. “We have many more requests to be in this resident hall and this portion of campus. [The new building] will probably still not be able to meet all of the demand but it will be a great step forward.”
Though her husband, Paul “Bear” Bryant, often overshadows her in the UA history books, Mary Harmon Black was a type of surrogate mother for hundreds of the Crimson Tide’s football players.

In 1981, Black told the *Alabama Journal* that when riding to away games, Coach Bryant would ride with the starting players while she would go in the second or third bus.

“We sing, play backgammon and do anything we want to do,” she told the newspaper. “We aren’t just dead quiet, but they are on his bus.”

Black made it her business to know the players and look after them socially and emotionally, and even when the players graduated or moved on, they would often come find her on the busses to talk with her long after she had arrived.

Joe Namath told the *Anniston Star* in 1984, after her death, that when Coach Bryant suspended him and kicked him out of his dorm, Black took him in and let him stay in their home.

Black met her husband at UA, where her sorority Alpha Gamma Delta sponsored the football star for the 1935 Rose Bowl. Mary Harmon was a Corolla beauty and honorary cadet colonel of the Cadet Corps. In 2001, the Special Collections Building was renamed in her honor.

When Betsy Plank, “the first lady of public relations,” attended UA in the early 1940s, the University didn’t offer a degree in her chosen field. Only 16 when she graduated high school, she chose to study history instead, and though she maintained an avid love for the subject throughout her life, her passion and her mission were in communicating with the public on behalf of corporations.

Self-taught, Plank began her career in PR in 1947 as the radio-television director of a Chicago Red Cross campaign. For the next 63 years, Plank worked through the ranks at agencies and corporations, eventually becoming the executive vice president of Edelman Worldwide and the first female president of the Public Relations Society of America.

“Standing at just over five feet tall, the Tuscaloosa native rose to the highest level of the Public Relations Society of America at a time when the organization’s leadership and membership were predominately male,” said Dr. Karla Gower, the director of UA’s Plank Center for Leadership in Public Relations. “Plank was able to do so in part because she chose not to draw attention to her gender. She was simply one of the guys.”

Though Plank received numerous PR awards throughout her life, including all three of PRSA’s top individual awards, some of her greatest contributions and successes were with students.
“Plank believed that public relations was a proud and noble profession,” Gower said. “But she also knew that to reach its full potential there would have to be a commitment to education, mentoring, and leadership.”

Acting on those beliefs, Plank helped strengthen the Public Relations Student Society of America, established in 1967, and establish UA’s Plank Center for Leadership in Public Relations in 2005, which works to advance knowledge of leadership values and skills in the profession globally.

“Her tangible legacy continues to keep her vision alive by helping recognize and develop diverse public relations leaders, role models, and mentors nationally and internationally,” Gower said.

In 2006, just four years before she died, the PRSA Foundation also created the Betsy Plank Scholarship Endowment Fund in her honor.

When Rita C. Jordan was just 15 years old, her mother passed away. Jordan was the oldest in her family, and with her mother gone, she was left to help her father raise her younger brother James, and later, to watch over her adopted sister as well.

But with an early love of music, having been taught the trumpet from UA’s band director from the time she was 10 years old, she was determined to pursue her higher education.

She graduated from high school at the age of 16 and immediately enrolled at UA as a music education major.

Not only did she play the trumpet for her courses, she also would have been among the first women to march in the Million Dollar Band itself. She couldn’t have known then that she would go on to join the only all-female military band in history and become the first female Korean War veteran to boot.

From the inception of the Million Dollar Band in 1912, membership was exclusively male. In fact, the first time a woman took the field with the band was in 1936, when its first female sponsor, commonly referred to as Miss Alabama, led the band onto the field in her white skirt, blazer, and an armful of crimson and white flowers.

For roughly a decade, Miss Alabamas were the only women to grace the football field at half time, but in 1944 when WWII had mercilessly depleted male enrollment at universities across the country, the Million Dollar Band was left with sizable gaps in its ranks. Not wanting the band to dissolve entirely, director of the band Col. Carton K. Butler finally allowed women to play.

That year, the band went to every home game and performed so well that when the football team made it to the Sugar Bowl, they were asked to come along. According to the 1945 Corolla, “The show which they put on there was acclaimed by all as one of the best half-time performances ever witnessed at the Sugar Bowl classic.”

From that point onward, women have made up a major component of the Million Dollar Band.

As for Rita C. Jordan? She played in the band for three years from 1946 to 1948, at which point she decided she wanted to enlist in the Air Force and dropped out of UA.

In 1948, President Truman signed the Women’s Armed Services Integration Act, allowing women to serve directly in the military, and Jordan enlisted as a member of the Women’s Air Force in April 1949. A year later, North Korea invaded the South Korea, bringing the United States into the Korean War.

Jordan served as a radio operator and instructor in the war, but she also joined the only all-girl military band, which formed in 1951. The Women’s Air Force Band was so popular that it toured extensively throughout the country and also played music for television and radio.

By 1952, her four-year tour had ended, and she returned home to Alabama as the nation’s first female Korean War veteran.

Immediately upon returning home, Jordan re-enrolled at UA and finished her degree in music education. For the next few years she worked as the band director at Montgomery County High School, but soon she wanted additional education and returned to UA for her master’s degree.

She graduated for the second time in 1957 and subsequently taught band at schools in and around Atlanta, Georgia, for years.
Though segregation was declared unconstitutional in 1954 by the United States Supreme Court, The University of Alabama and many other educational institutions across the South resisted the law for years and continued to reject African Americans from attending.

Autherine Lucy Foster was the first to enroll in 1954, but she was expelled days later “for her own safety.” It took another nine years for the University to integrate with the registration of Vivian Malone, but when it did, a cascade of integration throughout the state followed.

Malone enrolled in June of 1963, despite Governor Wallace's futile attempts to keep her out, and by September of that year, 147 school districts across the South were slated for integration.

In many areas, things went smoothly. But the anger and intolerance of some cities was so steep that students boycotted their own schools in lieu of integrating.

One such school was West End High of Birmingham. There, two young teenagers, Patricia Marcus and Josephine Powell, were the first to integrate. In return, they were rejected, insulted, threatened, and even had rocks thrown at them as they made their way to and from school.

One thousand of their peers refused to attend with them during their first week. Still, Marcus and Powell persevered. And in almost empty classrooms, they demanded equal education. A year later, they both graduated and applied to The University of Alabama.

Both women were among the first to attend the institution, arriving on the heels of Malone, and though Powell eventually dropped out because of a death in the family, Marcus, who became Malone's roommate, was the first female African American graduate of the College of Arts and Sciences. She began studying chemistry and eventually switched to sociology, the degree with which she graduated in 1968.

Of the persecution she faced while at the University, she once told a Los Angeles Times reporter, “It seems the most sensitive time is in the fall, after white students have come back to school from segregationist homes. " As the year goes on and as the white and Negro students get more accustomed to each other, there is less chance of trouble. Not that I've had any trouble. I haven't. Occasionally someone will whisper an ugly name, but I don't look around to see who said it.”

As women, these civil rights pioneers paved the path for opportunity well beyond what they were offered.

By 1968, Dianne Kirskey founded the Black Student Union, then known as the Afro American Association or Triple A. She later went on to become the first African American on the UA homecoming court and the first African American Bama Belle—a former group of female students who aided in football recruiting. The work she accomplished with the Black Student Union has led to dozens of other organizations on campus that are committed to equality, diversity, and education.
When Catherine Johnson Randall was still in high school, The University of Alabama was awarded a grant from the National Science Foundation to create the nation’s first university-wide undergraduate research program.

The program, known as the Computer-Based Honors Program, would enable undergraduates to use computers to assist faculty in their research. At this point, computers were still the size of a room, but because Randall’s visionary father told her that computers would one day be everywhere, she had a keen interest in becoming proficient with them.

Former University President David Mathews and his wife invited Randall on a tour of campus to learn about the program, and she says she was immediately sold. “Because of opportunities like the Computer-Based Honors Program, I do not think I could have been stretched academically more at any other university,” Randall said.

While at UA, Randall was a history major, Crimson Girl (now known as a Capstone Woman), SGA senator, and more. In the spring of 1970, she helped defuse campus unrest over the Vietnam War by working with President Mathews to make the final exams that year optional. She also helped to remove the curfews for women, which had been in place from the onset of female enrollment in 1893.

In 1973, Randall received her first degree from UA in history, but with a deep love of the University, and an even greater interest in furthering her education, she returned to the University again, and again, and again until 2001, when she received her fifth degree from the institution. Currently, she has bachelor’s, master’s, and doctoral degrees in history, as well as master’s and doctoral degrees in education.

“I became a part of UA as its leadership was first recognizing its responsibility for the equal treatment of women,” Randall said. “As such, I was the beneficiary of opportunities seldom before afforded to women, and I will never be able to repay UA for all it has done for me.

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“The legacy of the women who had to push open doors that UA freely opened for me is a source of tremendous gratitude and inspiration to this day.”

While pursuing her undergraduate degree, she met and married Pettus Randall, who would later become president of his father’s successful publishing company Randall Publishing, and in 2005 she became the Chairman of the Board of Pettus Randall Holdings, LLC.

Dr. Randall has been a member of the Board of Directors of Alabama Power Company since 2015. She is also a member of the Board of Directors for Mercedes-Benz U.S. International. She has been the National President of Mortar Board, Inc., as well as the President of the Board of Directors of the Alabama Women’s Hall of Fame, the Director of Alabama Girls State, and more. Her life has been dedicated to service, faith, and leadership, and perhaps nowhere is that more evident than in her work as the 25-year director of the Computer-Based Honors Program.

Her impact was so profound that the program for which Randall originally chose to come to UA was renamed in her honor in 2017. The Catherine J. Randall Research Scholars Program continues to provide opportunities for highly motivated students from any college, major, and field of study to research with the University’s top faculty members.

CATHARINE RANDALL
1970

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KATHRYN STOCKETT

As a young girl attending a Presbyterian school in Mississippi, Kathryn Stockett was frustrated with the book selections offered by her librarian. An avid reader, she wanted more than *Sarah, Plain and Tall*, so she turned to her sister’s book collection and eventually her mother’s book collection. By fifth grade, she was expelled after being caught reading *Fear of Flying*, a feminist novel by Erica Jong, in the library.

Though she came to UA almost by accident, it was at the University that she took her first creative writing class and got the courage to pursue her dream of writing a novel.

“I didn’t have the guts to enroll in creative writing my freshman year or my sophomore year,” she said in her lecture at UA in 2014. “My junior year I finally had the nerve to enroll. I ran from my house on 13th Street all the way to the classroom. I walked in sweaty, nervous … and I threw up.”

After graduating with a degree in English, Stockett moved to New York. She said that she started writing *The Help* the day after 9/11 because she was so homesick she wanted to hear the voices of Mississippi again.

Though the novel was initially rejected by 60 agents, when it was finally published in 2009, it spent more than 100 weeks on *The New York Times* Best Seller list.

NAN BODEN

When Google broke ground for their new data center in Bridgeport, Alabama, earlier this year, Nan Boden, the Head of Global Technology Partners for Google Cloud, took the stage. The Google exec was an Alabama native, whose success story began at The University of Alabama, where she received her degree in applied mathematics.

Having grown up in a family of electrical maintenance workers, she told AL.com that her ability to turn her family from blue collar to Google executive in a single generation was a credit to what education and opportunity can do.

“As an 18-year-old considering colleges, I felt a huge amount of pressure,” Boden said. “I know now that I could not have made a better choice than to attend The University of Alabama. I am deeply grateful that The University of Alabama set me on the path that led directly to my technology and business career.”

As the Head of Global Technology Partners, Boden works with companies that build their businesses using Google Cloud, Google Apps, Google Maps, and Google for Education products. Prior to working at Google, Boden was CEO of Myricom, a pioneer in high-performance computer networking. In addition to her UA degree, she has a Ph.D. and master’s degree in computer science from Caltech and an M.B.A. from UCLA Anderson.
“Sonequa was the kind of student any professor dreams of,” said UA acting professor Seth Panitch. “Her preparation each day was absolutely bulletproof, and she came in with a hunger to improve her technique that was the gold standard of the class.”

With such a commitment to her craft, it didn’t take long for Sonequa Martin-Green to find success in Hollywood. Only a year after graduating from UA with a degree in theatre, she landed a role in *Law and Order: Criminal Intent*. By 2013 she had had recurring roles in *Army Wives*, *The Good Wife*, *Once Upon a Time*, and most notably *The Walking Dead*, in which she played Sasha Williams for 69 episodes.

“What I admire most about her work is the ability she has to process in real time—to be fearless in terms of not knowing where a line of thought will take her,” Panitch said. “To have both that level of preparation and confidence in her abilities to improvise away from that preparation is what makes her so singularly dynamic as an actor.”

Most recently, Martin-Green made history as the first black female to lead a *Star Trek* television series. Her work in *Star Trek: Discovery*, for which she portrays an anthropologist of alien cultures, has been favorably reviewed, and earlier this year helped her win a Saturn Award for Best Actress on a Television Series from the Academy of Science Fiction, Fantasy, and Horror Films.

Erica Schwalm, a UA chemistry alumna, has been studying antibiotic-resistant enzymes for the last six years, and in 2016, when she was just 26 years old, one of her groundbreaking collaborations on the topic was featured in *Science*, the leading scientific magazine in the world.

Her research, conducted at Pennsylvania State University, helped to identify the shape of an enzyme that is responsible for modifying bacteria to be antibiotic resistant.

“By knowing the structure, we can theoretically design molecules that would bind in a certain orientation and cause these enzymes not to work anymore,” Schwalm said.

Following her antibiotic resistance research, Schwalm took a job at Merck Pharmaceuticals, a company working on some of the globe’s most prevalent medical needs—from diabetes research to the creation of vaccines.

As an up-and-coming UA legend, Schwalm represents one of the thousands of female students graduating from the College of Arts and Sciences each year who reap the benefits from those who came before them. Our graduates have had a slew of firsts—the first PRSA president, the first female Korean War veteran, UA’s first female teacher, and so much more. We applaud all the women who are firsts, but we also honor you—the women who follow in their footsteps and cement the path laid for equal education for all.”
Thank you, donors!
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When Walter Bryan Jones mortgaged his home in 1931 to save and preserve the lands now known as the Moundville Archaeological Park, his wife Hazel Phelps Jones, a 1921 alumna, stood behind him. Walter Jones was a prominent scientist who served as the Alabama State Geologist and the director of the Alabama Museum of Natural History for decades. His grit and determination helped to save the history and culture of the ancient Moundville people from erosion, looting, and agriculture. But according to his son Warren Phelps Jones, none of his work could have been accomplished without the support of Hazel.

“Mother was the steam behind dad’s ideas,” Warren said. “She was such a pioneer, and though she had every right to complain—I never heard it. I cherish her for that.”

Through all the ups and downs of her husband’s work, Hazel provided meals to her family and the many people who contributed to Moundville’s restoration. The Phi Beta Kappa honoree also helped to develop the prolific photographs Walter took while doing his surveys. In fact, she became the first woman to head the photography department for the Geological Survey of Alabama.

While many people in the Jones family have been awarded and honored for their contributions to Alabama, the University, and Moundville, Hazel's efforts have been largely overlooked.

“She did all this grunt work, and she never received recognition,” Warren said.

Rectifying the oversight, friends and family of Hazel Phelps Jones gave three major donations to the College of Arts and Sciences in her honor earlier this year.

The first gift, a $200,000 contribution from friends and family, will create the Hazel Phelps Jones Award—an honor which will be given annually to a senior female student majoring in math or science who has exhibited exemplary scholarship, leadership, and service to the University. Winners will receive a $5,000 scholarship, and their names will be listed on a plaque housed in Smith Hall.

The other two gifts were given by Hazel’s son Warren P. Jones, who practically grew up in the Moundville park, working alongside his mother and father. To honor his mother, Warren created the Hazel Phelps Jones Endowed Exhibition Support Fund to help refurbish existing exhibits and bring temporary exhibits to the UA museums.

He also contributed $185,000 to the Moundville Archaeological Park to build an open-air structure reminiscent of Southeastern Native American summer houses on the park’s largest mound. The new structure, dedicated as the Hazel Phelps Jones Pavilion, is slated for completion in 2019.

“When I heard about the structure on the chief’s mound, I decided to contribute on one condition—I wanted it to be dedicated to mother,” Warren said.
Class Notes

1950s

Arnold Caruso (Class of ’52, journalism) published a book titled Was Paradise Lost.

Dr. John Llyde Yarbrough (Class of ’57/’61, BS/DMD, biology/chemistry/dentistry) recently retired from his family dental practice in Huntsville, Alabama, after 55 years. He is still active in the administration of dental examinations in many states. He also served as a member of the Board of Dental Examiners of Alabama for two five-year terms.

1960s

Dr. Michael Dowe (Class of ’61/’65, MS/PhD, physics) retired from his full-time job of Chief Scientist at Raytheon Ktech, but intends to consult and participate on select boards. Dowe celebrated his 90th birthday in November 2017.

Carroll L. Watson (Class of ’65, geography) was elected to his 10th term as mayor of Lincoln, Alabama, in 2016. He is a past chairman of the Alabama Real Estate Appraisers Board, past president of the Alabama chapter of the Appraisal Institute, and a past chairman of the East Alabama Regional Planning Commission.

Dr. Stan Lochridge (Class of ’68, pre-med) will retire from the Cardio-Thoracic Surgeons, P.C. in Birmingham, Alabama, in July of 2019. Dr. Lochridge has practiced for over 40 years.

Durwood L. Sims (Class of ’69, geography) retired from his career in correctional education at the Jefferson County Sheriff’s Department in 2015. He also received his PhD in Education from Nova University.

1970s

Dr. James G. Brooks Jr. (Class of ’69, chemistry) recently retired as a physician at the Dallas Bone and Joint Clinic.

Manning Warren (Class of ’70, political science) is the Harter Chair of Corporate Law at the Brandeis School of Law at the University of Louisville and was recently honored as a life member of the American Law Institute. He was also elected a fellow of the European Law Institute.

Charles A. Casmus III (Class of ’71, broadcasting) was named to the All-American team at this I.S.S.A. Senior Winter National Softball Tournament in Huntsville in October of 2017. He was an outfielder for the Georgia Nuggets, who finished second.

Carolyn Woltz Ezell (Class of ’71, anthropology) received the 2017 Druid City Literary Arts Council Award from the West Alabama Arts and Humanities Council. Ezell is the author of the mystery novel series Tuscaloosa Moon under the pen name Carolyn Breckenridge.

Peggy Morgan Himburg (Class of ’71, journalism) retired from teaching in 2015. She returned to her first love of writing as education writer for The Daily Sentinel.

Loring S. Jones III (Class of ’75, political science) recently received the Vulcan Award, the highest award granted to adult volunteer leaders by the Vulcan District, Greater Alabama Council of the Boy Scouts of America.
When Alexa Stabler (Class of ’09/’12, BA/JD, political science/law) steps into the room on the first day of the combine, she knows that heads turn and people stare. She’s one of the only women there, but that doesn’t bother her. She’s there to do her job.

Stabler is a sports agent at her own company Stabler Sports, a full-service sports agency based in Mobile. The agency, which began accepting clients last October, solely represents football players, both signed and free-agents.

“I would really like to see my guys have a positive experience in football,” Stabler said, “and whenever it’s over, use that platform to transition into a successful business life and a successful family life.”

Adams credits much of her motivation to start the agency to her late father, former Alabama quarterback and NFL star Ken Stabler. Although she was born two years after he retired from professional football, Stabler grew up seeing the results of his transition to post-football life.

After graduating with both her political science and law degrees from UA, Stabler became an intellectual property lawyer at Adams IP, a firm she and her husband own in Mobile. But after her father’s death, she wanted to start something in his memory.

“My dad passed away in 2015, and we were very close, so that caused me to re-evaluate life: what I was doing with my time, where I was going, how I was affecting people,” Stabler said. “I wanted to do something that I knew he would be proud of, and I wanted to help people like him.”

Since becoming a certified NFL Players Association agent, Stabler has signed many former Alabama players, including the Green Bay Packers’ JK Scott, the Minnesota Vikings’ Roc Thomas, and the Dallas Cowboys’ Jordan Chunn. Although their current career goals are a priority, Stabler values her relationship with her athletes above all else.

“These clients are probably people I wouldn’t have relationships with otherwise,” Stabler said. “They’re 10 or so years younger than me. They’re guys. They’re people I don’t really interact with in my daily life as an attorney.

“Being exposed to them and seeing how much they love what they do, it’s been wonderful. I really want to help them build better lives.”

Donald L. McCants (‘76, art history) is currently a member of the 2017-2018 Over the Mountain Festival Choir. He was also a member of The University of Alabama Choral Union under the direction of the late Dr. Frederick Prentice from 1974 to 1977.

George F. Thompson (Class of ‘77, English/creative writing) published Nature and Cities: The Ecological Imperative in Urban Design and Planning. The book was designated a Notable Book of 2016 by the American Society of Landscape Architects.

Robert Marshall Dimick (Class of ’80, chemistry) is an orthopaedic spine surgeon at SRMC Orthopaedics in Milton, Florida.

Todd N. Hamilton (Class of ’86/’89, political science/law) was named a senior partner with his firm, now named Smith, Spires, Peddy, Hamilton and Coleman, P.C. in Birmingham, Alabama.

1980s

David LaBounty (Class of ’90, psychology/English) runs one of the most respected and long-running independent literary journals in the country, The First Line. The journal was recently featured on NPR’s All Things Considered.

Etta Cordella Haley-Peoples (Class of ’91, criminal justice) currently works for the federal government.

1990s
Amanda Bennet Pierce (Class of ’92, MM, music/piano performance) currently works at Samford University as an administrative assistant in the Department of Theatre and Dance. Formerly, she worked as a piano teacher and at the Homewood Public Library.

Anthony Buckner (Class of ’95/’96/’00, history/education/education administration) recently celebrated his 20th wedding anniversary with his wife, Sheri. He is the leader of Teaching and Learning for the Jackson County School District and serves on the Board of Directors for both the Jackson County Economic Development Authority and the IMPACT Learning Center.

Debra A. Barrentine (Class of ’96, administrative science) was named the 2017-2018 Communicator of the Year for the Alabama Community College System Public Relations Association for her work as Director of Promotions and Marketing at Northeast Alabama Community College.

Deondra L. Richardson (Class of ’98, criminal justice) works with a law firm in Woodland Hills, CA. She has a 22-year-old son, Quez Keion Arnold.

Chelsey Blomberg Epps (Class of ’08, New College) received her Master of Science in spring 2013 from East Carolina University. She is currently a speech language pathologist.

2010s

Dr. Richard Trammel (Class of ’12, interdisciplinary studies) is the president of a sports psychology consulting firm, Level 3 Sports, in Birmingham. His specialty is working with golfers, but he works with athletes of all sports.

Lindsey White (Class of ’12, dance) is currently working in Los Angeles as a professional dancer. Recently, she danced for Ariana Grande at the 2018 MTV Video Music Awards, as well as on a movie set.

Katherine S. Wainright Hall (Class of ’13, anthropology) is currently working in Labor and Delivery in Kapiolani Medical Center Hospital in Honolulu, Hawaii. She married Zachary Hall in July 2017.

Ashley Taylor (Class of ’14, dance) is a professional dancer and organized a collaborative community arts concert in Annapolis, Maryland.

John Adam Porter (Class of ’14, microbiology) is currently working as a microbiologist and food safety manager for Perdue Chicken. After graduating from UA, he worked as a research assistant and was published for his team’s work on solutions for food safety.

Allison Eckert Beebe (Class of ’15, dance) is the office manager at BES Design Build in Fairhope, AL. She married Daniel Beebe (class of ’14) in June of 2016.

Dylan Paul (Class of ’15, MS, geography) was promoted to Planner II with the Chatham County Planning Department in Pittsboro, North Carolina, in July 2017. He and his wife, Casey, were married on June 2, 2016.

Scarlett Walker (Class of ’16, musical theatre) is currently performing on Broadway in the revival of Rogers and Hammerstein’s Carousel.

Joseph E. Meany (Class of ’12/’16, MS/PhD, chemistry) co-authored a book with physicist Les Johnson on a new wonder-material called graphene. The book is a novel for a general audience to popularize graphene.

Liam Sullivan (Class of ’17, history/political science) is a first-year law student at the Charleston School of Law.

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