

# COLLEGIAN

THE UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES MAGAZINE | FALL 2023





## A Groundbreaking Year

Highlights from a year of innovative strides

In 2022, The College of Arts and Sciences embarked on a journey of groundbreaking achievements that are physically changing The College's footprint. It all began with a large class of enthusiastic freshmen welcomed by a growing faculty.

Our commitment to innovation extended beyond the classroom and to the very foundations of our campus as we celebrated the groundbreaking of the Smith Family Center for Performing Arts. This state-of-the-art facility will be a testament to our dedication to the performing arts and will provide our students with an experiential learning environment equivalent to those in which they will be working as professionals.

As the academic year unfolded, our dedication to pioneering research and innovation took center stage. Professors, such as Allison Grant and Dr. Leah Mungai, have made significant contributions to photography and geography research, respectively. Our faculty and staff from Dr. Kevin Kocot's Lab ventured into the icy depths of Antarctica to explore the region's evolutionary history and biodiversity of invertebrate animals, an area that had previously received limited scientific attention due to its remote location.

Our students continue to carve paths towards excellence for both themselves and others. The Women in Physics and Astronomy (WIPA) group secured a grant enabling them to actively promote and encourage female participation in STEM while our pioneering Pakistan Faculty program, a collaboration with HESSA, has opened new horizons for cultural exchange and academic exploration. Arts and Sciences students across various majors traveled to Washington, D.C. for spring break, delving into the city's intricacies, networking and enriching their academic and professional journey.

I invite you to enjoy the stories of exploration and bold originality in the pages that follow.

Roll Tide! ■

Dean Joseph Messina

FALL 2023

# COLLEGIAN

COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES MAGAZINE

**Joseph Messina, PhD**  
Dean, College of Arts and Sciences

**Kellie Hensley**  
Director of College Relations

**Ashlynn McMahan**  
Editor/Writer/Designer

**Oluwafunmilayo Akinpelu**  
Assistant Writer

**Bryan Hester, Matthew Wood, Mikayla Kantorski, Franklin Kenamer**  
Photographers

Collegian is published each year by the College of Arts and Sciences at The University of Alabama. We welcome your suggestions and comments. Please send address changes and correspondence to Ashlynn McMahan, The University of Alabama, Box 870268, Tuscaloosa, AL 35487-0268; (205) 348-8539; agmcmahan@ua.edu.

THE UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA | College of Arts & Sciences



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# CAMPUS NEWS



## DEVIN CAIN: A JOURNEY TO GRADUATION

December 2024 Devin Cain will walk across the stage in Coleman Coliseum and move his tassel from one side of his mortar board to the other as a graduate of The University of Alabama. Yet that swift, blink of an eye motion, symbolizes the close of a nine-year chapter in Cain's life marked by difficult obstacles and perseverance.

Cain's story begins in his small hometown of Athens, Alabama, where he developed a love for The University of Alabama football team. This passion fueled his desire to attend the University, and in 2015, he began his freshman year. However, financial instability soon threatened to derail his plans, and Cain was forced to take a break from college and return home.

Despite facing a setback, Cain refused to give up on his dreams of finishing his degree at The University of Alabama. With the support of his family and friends, Cain returned to campus in the Spring of 2018 to continue his academic journey. He aspired to become a writer, and this goal was within reach. Cain made the decision to switch his major from psychology and enroll in the English program with a creative writing minor. With a renewed sense of purpose, Cain was ready to take on the challenges that lay ahead and work towards achieving his goals.

To overcome his financial obstacles, Cain took a job at a local gas station, working 8-12 hour overnight shifts, five days a week, while also attending full-time classes. This schedule would have been overwhelming for most people, but Cain's work ethic and determination helped him to persevere.

"When I was coming back in 2018 and trying to get back into school at UA, I knew I needed a job," said Cain. "I went to the gas station every night asking the owner for one. It didn't matter the shift just as long as I was able to work."

However, Cain would face yet another setback that would take him away from the University once again. Rather than giving up, Cain attended Shelton State for a year and a half, where he worked hard to improve his grades and prepare himself for a return to The University of Alabama in 2020.

Once back on campus, Cain knew he needed support and guidance to achieve his goals of graduating. He found that support in his academic advisor, Matt Chenault, who provided him with study tips, organizational tools and bi-weekly check-ins. Chenault's support motivated Cain to stay on track and remain focused on his goals, even when the road ahead seemed daunting.

"Devin and I have a mantra that we share with each other every time we meet for our routine check-ins," said Chenault. "I will say to Devin 'fail to plan' and Devin responds, 'plan to fail.' It's a routine that we use to emphasize the importance of planning and time management."

Through his dedication and hard work, Cain is set to graduate in December 2024. His story serves as an encouragement to others who may be facing similar challenges and is a powerful reminder that anything is possible with the right mindset and fortitude.

As Cain has said himself, "nothing is set in stone and all it takes is the dedication to do things for yourself." These words embody Cain's spirit and his journey to graduation, and they serve as an inspiration to anyone facing obstacles in their own lives. ■

## UA STUDENT INTERNS AT DETENTION CENTER

Merritt Stovall, a criminology major and psychology minor, clinched a competitive internship position at the assessment office located inside the Adult Detention Center of Pima County Superior Court in Tucson, Arizona, where only 6 of the 160 applicants were chosen. Stovall's story is an example of how the ICUE Connector helps students have a robust educational experience and figure out what they want to do after graduation by providing tangible skills and experiences that can showcase the benefits of a liberal arts education.

At the internship, Stovall did the biometrics of jail inmates, carried out criminal background checks on them, and managed pretrial administrative work. "I'm not just behind the scenes doing paperwork," Stovall said while describing her role. "I'm conducting interviews, calls and releases on my own. I've even gotten to mentor and teach new employees! It's nice to be so hands-on and basically doing things myself."

According to Stovall, the internship has reignited her interest in building a profession within federal law enforcement. "Knowing what I want to do is honestly so amazing," she expressed. It has also offered her insight into some flaws within the American criminal justice system and caused her to reckon with how much she still needs to learn about her chosen career path.

As Stovall pointed out, her internship is not without its challenges but the challenges she has faced have propelled her to actively apply her educational training and develop emotional intelligence competencies. "It's interesting how psychology helps with my job. I do a mental health and substance abuse screening for inmates, and the psychology part really comes in when I am asking the inmates questions and [observing] their demeanors. I have learned to be very stern while making sure to let them know that I am there to help them," Stovall said.

Since the internship, Stovall has come to feel more self-empowered and grateful for her education at UA. "This internship has given me a new perspective on life. It has led to me being on my phone [social media] less which is one way to improve your studies," she remarked. "Also, the internship has helped me appreciate the fact that I'm able to attend university."

Drawing from her life-changing experiences at her internship, Stovall encourages other students to pursue out-of-school, not-for-credit extracurriculars. "It's one thing learning stuff in the classroom but it's another thing to be experiencing what you are learning," she asserted. ■



## ART AND ART HISTORY FEATURED IN PUBLIC HEALTH OUTREACH EXHIBITION

Through a unique partnership between public health and the arts, The University of Alabama department of art and art history was one of 30 arts and culture organizations that received support from the CDC Foundation and the National Endowment for the Arts to develop works of art to educate the public and inspire confidence in COVID-19 vaccines. The participating organizations used their chosen art forms to translate public health information about the safety and importance of immunizations into an accessible, memorable and diverse body of work. An exhibition at the David J. Sencer CDC Museum in Atlanta, GA, entitled Trusted Messengers: Building Confidence in COVID-19 Vaccines Through Art showcased original pieces from six of these organizations, including UA art and art history.

Assistant Professor Jonathan Cumberland created a series of five poster designs to build vaccine confidence in the rural west Alabama counties of Greene, Hale, Marengo and Sumter, where vaccination rates tend to be low. The poster designs were featured on billboards, posters and sandwich boards in community institutions, health centers and businesses. Four of the five designs were featured in the Trusted Messengers exhibition.

Professor Jason Guynes, department chair and team lead said, "We are honored to have been a part of this national initiative. It is extremely gratifying that the arts are being recognized as having a critical role to play in an important, lifesaving enterprise, and we hope the CDC and other government agencies will continue to call upon the arts to assist with efforts to keep the public informed regarding matters of national importance."

"Our talented partner organizations have created meaningful, innovative projects that engaged and informed community members," said Catherine Zilber,

MSc, vice president for infectious disease programs at the CDC Foundation. "This new exhibition features impressive art and uplifting messaging that demonstrates the crucial role the arts can play in communicating about important public health issues."

Trusted Messengers: Building Confidence in COVID-19 Vaccines Through Art exhibition ran through March 2023 and also featured work from Studio Two Three in Richmond, VA; Saint Louis Story Stitchers Artists Collective in St. Louis, MO; West Michigan Center for Arts + Technology in Grand Rapids, MI; Vermillion Cultural Association and Creative Care in Vermillion, SD; and the Community Music School of Springfield and the Springfield Cultural Partnership in Springfield, MA.

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*"It is extremely gratifying that the arts are being recognized as having a critical role to play in such an important, lifesaving enterprise."*

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For more information about the exhibition or the David J. Sencer CDC Museum, please visit their website. Look through images of the CDC museum exhibition on Flickr.com.

Funding for this effort is made possible through a subaward from the CDC Foundation and is part of a Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) financial assistance award totaling \$2,500,000.00 with 100 percent funding from CDC/HHS. The contents are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the official views of, nor an endorsement by, CDC/HHS or the U.S. Government. ■

*Image credits: Photos by Mike Jensen, courtesy of the David J. Sencer CDC Museum.*

## CRES PROGRAM PROPELS STUDENT TO NYC SUCCESS

In August 2021, Noah Oladele embarked on a journey from Nigeria to the United States, where he pursued a master's degree in composition, rhetoric and English studies (CRES) within the department of English at The University of Alabama.

On the memorable day of May 5th, 2023, Oladele eagerly joined his fellow graduates, awaiting the moment when his name would be called, marking the culmination of his two-year academic adventure at the University. With his certificate in hand, he stepped proudly across the stage, symbolizing the successful conclusion of this chapter. Today, Oladele stands as a first-year Ph.D. student at New York University's department of media, culture and communication.

For Oladele, an international student, this achievement was no small feat. His journey from UA graduate to what his friends affectionately call an "NYU baby" was a challenging and rewarding endeavor that began with a single decision: applying to UA's CRES program. Oladele was drawn to UA by the program's unique blend of research opportunities and the esteemed faculty members who nurtured it.

Explaining his choice, Oladele said, "Because I have interdisciplinary research interests, I was looking at programs that would give me the liberty to express my diverse interests, then a good friend of mine told me about The University of Alabama. I saw the work that some of the faculty members in CRES were doing. I was blown away by their work, so I decided to apply to the CRES program. The CRES program turned out to be the perfect choice for me."

Beyond academic excellence, Oladele received support from UA at both departmental and college levels. He discovered his talent for writing and performance art during his time at the University and was even invited to participate in two exhibitions, aided by UA's provision of grants for his projects.

"I excelled academically because I had wonderful, understanding teachers," expressed Oladele. "They were there for me whenever I needed them."

Throughout his journey, Oladele was an active participant in various organizations, such as the African Students Association and the Alabama Coalition for Immigrant Justice. These involvements provided him with insights into American culture and life in Tuscaloosa.

As Oladele takes on his new roles as a doctoral student and an adjunct professor at NYU, his deep gratitude for the instrumental role UA played in shaping his academic journey shines brightly. ■



Top: Noah Oladele Bottom: WiPA officers Kaitlyn Hemauer, President; Brenna Wells, Vice President; Celly Jimenez, Secretary; Sarah Foess, Treasurer.

## WiPA SECURES STEM GRANT

Kaitlyn Hemauer, an undergraduate physics and math major and the president of the Women in Physics & Astronomy (WiPA) group at The University of Alabama, has secured a prestigious grant from the American Physical Society (APS). The grant provides funding of up to \$1,000 and will be used to support the group's efforts in promoting women's participation in physics and astronomy.

WiPA's mission is to foster connections between female physicists at all career stages and to encourage participation, recruitment and retention of women in physics. The APS grant will help WiPA achieve these goals by providing funding for outreach activities, conferences and more.

"We are planning to use the funding to expand our organization," said Hemauer. "Specifically, we are using the funds to bring in guest speakers, create incentives to motivate students to present during research panels, and, overall, create more enticing meetings, such as work out classes or observational nights."

The grant was secured through Hemauer's initiative and hard work. She applied successfully on behalf of WiPA group at The University of Alabama. The APS program is highly competitive, and WiPA's success in securing the grant is a testament to the group's dedication to promoting women's participation in physics and astronomy.

"By expanding our group, we are helping involve more women in physics and astronomy, which is an extremely underrepresented group in this field," said Hemauer. "Therefore, by running this club and hopefully expanding it, we are creating a community and a safe space for this demographic."

The department of physics and astronomy will continue to foster growth for the WiPA program, and the APS grant will help to ensure that the group continues to thrive.

"The department will help sustain and grow the WiPA program at the University," said Dr. Patrick LeClair, Department Chair of the department of physics and astronomy.

The grant is a significant boost to WiPA's efforts, and it adds to the support that the group receives regularly from the department. ■

## UA STUDENT STUDIES ABROAD IN COUNTRY OF DESCENT

For 16 days in the summer, Benjamin Hand, a final-year student doing a bachelor's and accelerated master's program in geography, joined 11 students on a faculty-led study abroad trip to Ireland. His travel statement is a testament to the positive results ICUE has achieved since its founding.

Despite being of Irish descent, Hand had not been to Ireland or anywhere outside the U.S., until this trip. The study abroad program gave him the chance to connect with his familial, cultural and national heritage.

"The trip to Ireland broadened my perspective," Hand said. "We got to go to some parts of Ireland where my family is from and, for me who has a personal connection to the place, that was important."

The study-abroad program was designed by Mary Wallace Pitts, an instructor from the geography department. "She was one of the best faculty members that I could have gone on a study-abroad program with," Hand commented. "I have taken so many of her classes and I know her well. Also, it was nice to have somebody with experience in the country there with us." He also lauded her for being flexible yet meticulous with the program.

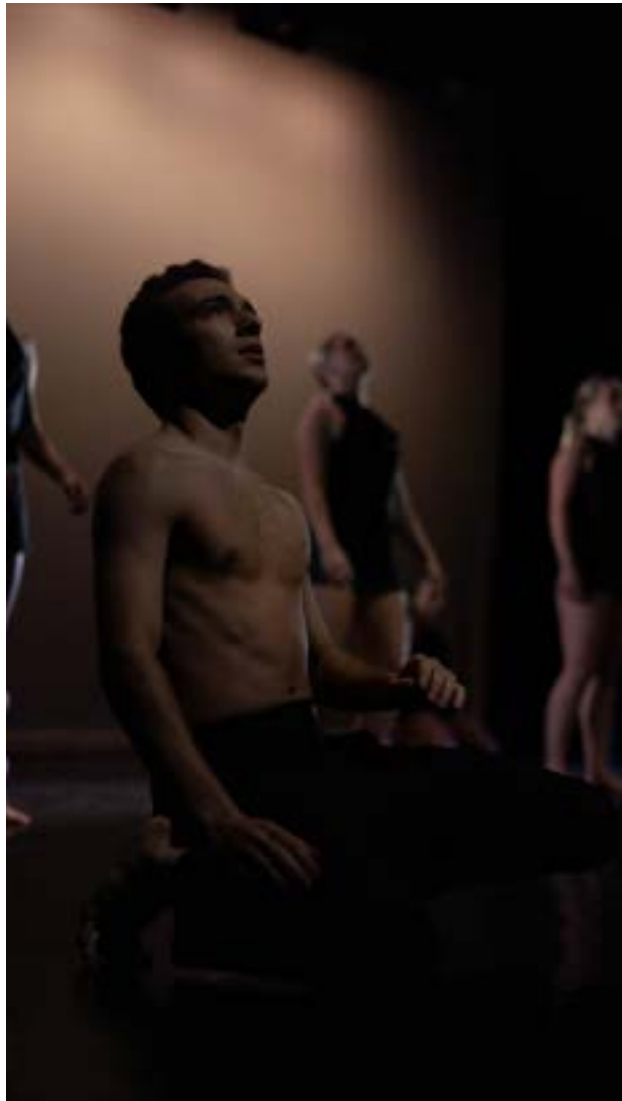
Due to Pitts' comprehensive itinerary, Hand and his peers visited several historical places in Ireland including Dublin, the Aran Islands, Galway, Clifden, County Wicklow, County Wexford, an Irish ecovillage and a Barack Obama-themed service station. While in Doolin in County Clare, Hand even learned to ride a horse for the first time.

Based on his experiences, Hand wrote a comparative analytic report on historical architectural landmarks in Ireland and USA. Hand said, "I have a different perspective of the US now because I have something to compare it to. The scenery and physical landscape in Ireland are very different from the United States."

From an academic standpoint, Hand stated that the tour made him realize that geography is an interdisciplinary field that has relevance to any career path he chooses. "The strong background that I have in the university has given me the tools that I need to succeed wherever I end up going," he said. "I feel more confident and ready to travel abroad to other places because I know now that traveling abroad isn't scary, it's a nice experience, and it is something that I can handle." But, according to him, his first stop after graduation would be Washington, D.C. where he hopes to get a job in the public sector that can afford him the opportunity to "move around a lot" both professionally and spatially.

Due to the impact the trip in Ireland had on him, Hand implored students to make school more meaningful by becoming part of extracurricular activities. He said, "you are not going to get the most out of your experience at The University of Alabama unless you explore everything that the University has to offer." ■





## WOEBKENBERG'S "THE END" TAKES CENTER STAGE IN NYC

Zoe Woebkenberg showcased her dance performance, titled *The End*, at the Young Choreographers' Festival in New York City on June 2, 2023. With her own choreography, Woebkenberg has poured her heart and soul into this piece, which left a lasting impact on the audience.

From a young age, Woebkenberg's passion for dance has burned bright, and her four years at the Capstone have only fueled the fire within her. Here, she explored diverse avenues of choreography and honed her craft. *The End* is a heartfelt dedication to the people she met during her time at UA, reflecting her emotions as she prepares to bid farewell to her friends and fellow dancers.

Drawing inspiration from the haunting melody of James Blake's "When We're Older," Woebkenberg crafted her choreography to embody the raw emotions she feels as she navigates the bittersweet transition from university life to the unknown. This powerful connection between music and movement resonates deeply with her, and she hopes it will resonate with the audience as well.

"I was really inspired by the song "When We're Older," by James Blake, and it's a very sad song," expressed Woebkenberg. "When I first heard it, I was like crying, and I thought to myself, 'Okay, I gotta dance to this!' It really inspired me, drawing from my time here, and I just wanted to wrap it up in the best way I could."

Woebkenberg's remarkable talent and dedication earned her an invitation to the Young Choreographers' Festival in New York City, where she joined a group of 13 exceptional choreographers from across the nation to showcase their work. At the festival, Woebkenberg received invaluable support and resources to enhance her creative process. She was paired with a mentor who will provide guidance and assistance throughout her artistic journey. This personalized mentorship enabled her to refine her choreographic skills and explore new dimensions of her work. Woebkenberg had access to private workshop classes, where she can further develop her technique and expand her artistic horizons, and also interactive sessions, providing a platform for constructive dialogue and valuable insights.

"We will have a session at the festival where attendees can ask questions," stated Woebkenberg. "I'm excited to be on the receiving end of answering instead of asking."

Reflecting on the journey that led her to this moment, Woebkenberg is grateful for the unwavering support of her closest friends and collaborators. Together, they tirelessly experimented with different movements, pushing boundaries and testing limits, until they discovered the perfect fusion of expression and storytelling. The results were a performance that left the audience captivated. ■



## THE INTERSECTION OF RECREATION AND EDUCATION

In the heart of Northport, Alabama, a unique community effort has given rise to the Van de Graaff Park Eco Trail, a stunning example of how local organizations can come together to promote conservation and environmental education. Multiple groups, including The University of Alabama's Conservation Biology Society, Rotary Club of Tuscaloosa Morning and PARA, joined forces to create this trail that now stands as a testament to the power of collaboration and inclusivity.

The UA Conservation Biology Society played a vital role in bringing the Eco Trail to life. Their research and design prompts for the interpretive signs, along with UA Professor Craig Wedderspoon's creation of stunning sculptures, enhance the Eco Trail's educational value. The partnership provides visitors with an immersive and interactive learning experience that connects them to nature and promotes environmental awareness.

"The intended point of this project is to get people more connected to nature and to encourage people to use that area," said Thomas Franzem, former UA Conservation Biology Society President.

The Eco Trail at Van de Graaff Park is an outdoor learning experience that values inclusivity. Its unique approach integrates art sculptures with educational and natural components, creating a sensory-rich environment that is accessible to all visitors. By incorporating interpretive elements into the trail signage, the Eco Trail ensures that individuals with visual impairments or other disabilities can fully engage with the natural surroundings. This inclusive design not only adds value to the park's recreational and educational offerings, but it also promotes sensitivity to nature and encourages a connection to the environment for all visitors. The Van de Graaff Park's commitment to inclusivity makes the Eco Trail a valuable resource for all who seek to explore and appreciate the beauty of nature.

"The sculptures provide a tactile interaction with the signs," said Kevin Shaw, current UA Conservation Biology Society President. "And that just makes a more inclusive learning environment for anyone that may have a disability."

The Grand Opening ceremony, held on April 4, 2023, was a celebration of community collaboration and conservation efforts. Representatives from The University of Alabama's Conservation Biology Society, PARA, local organizations and the community came together to commemorate the completion of the trail. The event showcased the hard work, dedication and passion of all involved in the project, from the research and design of the interpretive signs to the creation of the 3-D sculptures. Visitors were able to experience the trail, appreciate the natural surroundings and interact with the educational signage and sculptures. The ceremony demonstrated the effectiveness of community partnerships in enhancing public spaces and promoting environmental awareness.

"This is an intersection between recreation and education, which is something that drives our community and that's important for us for many years to come," said Michael Crady, PARA's Chief Financial Officer, during the grand opening. "We're proud of this because it really signifies community partnership, whether that be with the University, Tuscaloosa Morning Rotary or many others. We're extremely proud to partner with everyone for this project." ■

## ALUMNA CREATES FOUNDATION TO INSPIRE THE NEXT GENERATION OF AVIATION PROFESSIONALS

Alumna Jessica Sanders Walker's experience at the Capstone was enriched by female leaders serving as her mentors and friends. These relationships played a critical role in her personal and professional growth and inspired her to pay it forward by uplifting and guiding others on their path to success.

"We could see women filling these roles, it was the opportunity for them to really guide us. For us to watch them come out from behind their desk and sit next to us and say, 'We're here for you. We want to mentor you. We're your friends. We genuinely care,'" said Walker. "I hope to this day the University still has people like them because that experience was priceless having women especially be able to show us the pathway and continuously encourage us."

Walker is now the Vice President of Sanders Aviation, and Sanders Flight Training Center, a certified Part 141 flight training school that has grown from a small operation to a large-scale flight training school. The school boasts 20 airplanes, trains nearly 1,000 students each year and prepares for commercial airline positions.

To inspire, motivate and build a pipeline for the next generation of aviation professionals, Walker recently started a non-profit organization called Operation Aviation Foundation. The foundation is dedicated to introducing underrepresented individuals and underserved communities to aviation careers and aims to provide pathways to airlines and other aviation careers. The foundation hopes to inspire the next generation of aviation professionals.

"We've got to open the door for people from all backgrounds to make up a diverse percentage of who's in the cockpit," said Walker.

This summer, the foundation will host its first camp, providing a unique and immersive experience for thirty children selected through a competitive essay process and nominated by local leaders. Campers will learn from a diverse group of experts from the FAA, NASA, meteorology, airlines and military. The foundation is passionate about creating opportunities for children in the community and helping them see the unlimited potential within the field of aviation.

"We're going to engage the campers through this program and hopefully spark their interest in a career in aviation," said Walker.

The summer camp will culminate with an exciting expo open to all children and the greater community, showcasing various aircraft exhibits and presentations by professional speakers.

Operation Aviation Foundation will provide children from underrepresented communities access to resources and opportunities to inspire them to pursue careers in aviation. Through exposure, exploration, engagement and elevation, the foundation is working to build a brighter future for underserved youth and the aviation industry. ■

## PROMOTING BRAIN HEALTH AMONG STUDENT-ATHLETES

On March 31, 2023, The University of Alabama hosted Brain Day, an event aimed at promoting brain health and preventing brain injuries among student-athletes. The event was organized by faculty members from both The College of Arts and Sciences and The College of Human Environmental Sciences, in partnership with the Alabama Life Research Institute and the UA Department of Intercollegiate Athletics.

Brain Day was comprised of a comprehensive tour of campus athletic training and sports medicine facilities, as well as a visit to the MRI Research Facility. It enabled students and coaches to participate in conversations and presentations on various aspects of brain health, such as concussion symptoms and recovery; the role of nutrition, exercise and sleep in brain health; and preventing brain injuries in themselves and their teammates.

Brain Day had participation from seven schools, including Central, Selma, Aliceville, Central, Greensboro, Bryant and Greene County. Students were exposed to a range of sessions, covering topics such as sleep, exercise, brain techniques, substance use, concussion and nutrition.

Thrilled with the event, coaches saw it as an opportunity to expand their horizons beyond the playmaking of the game. One particularly impressed coach stated that Brain Day was a "huge opportunity" for both players and coaching staff to gain valuable insights into how the brain works, and the importance of nutrition, rest and other factors that affect brain health.

Central High School football coach, Demario Pippen, remarked, "I think this is a massive opportunity for us to learn more than just the X's and O's and physicality of the game. We are seeing how the brain works and how important nutrition and rest are to the kids for fueling their bodies. So, I think this is a significant opportunity for my coaching staff."

Brain Day showcased the University's unwavering commitment to ensuring the well-being of student-athletes. By providing practical knowledge and guidance, Brain Day helped ensure that student-athletes can pursue their athletic goals while maintaining overall health. ■



## EXPLORING CAREER OPPORTUNITIES AND BUILDING CONNECTIONS IN WASHINGTON D.C.

The Washington D.C. Professional Preparation Program provides students with the opportunity to immerse themselves in the professional world of the nation's capital. The program offers a chance for students to explore a wide range of career options, make connections and gain practical experience.

This spring, a group of 25 students traveled to D.C. to attend meetings and events designed to showcase the many internship programs and career tracks available to them. Their experience was not just limited to learning about potential careers but also extended to experiencing the cultural richness of the city, through international dining, attendance at a Kennedy Center Millennium Stage performance, museum visits and a view of the cherry blossoms in bloom. The students who participated in the program had a diverse range of interests and career aspirations, spanning various fields such as politics, STEM, arts and policy development.

This year's program offered an impressive array of opportunities for students to gain valuable insights into the workings of government and public service. Senator Katie Britt, an alumna of The University of Alabama, delivered an inspiring presentation on how her college experiences helped shape her successful career. The program also featured informative and engaging meetings with UA alumni Chandler Shields, Deputy Chief of Staff for Representative Dale Strong, and Yarden Wolf, Chief of Staff for Representative Eric Swalwell, who shared their unique career paths and insights into the inner workings of congressional offices.

The program organized a reception for the students to meet and network with alumni of the University, who warmly engaged with them and shared their personal and professional experiences. Their generosity continued beyond the reception, as they extended invitations for office visits and shared their personal connections with the students. This level of support and mentorship from alumni is a testament to the strong sense of community and commitment to student success that is fostered at The University of Alabama.

In addition to networking opportunities, the program offered experiences designed to provide students with a more comprehensive understanding of public service. Visits to Homeland Security, the Kennedy Center and the Secret Service offered insights into the complexities of policymaking and the interplay between various agencies and organizations.

The tour of the Capitol was a standout experience during the trip. Officer Tyrone Bond and his colleagues from the Capitol Police force led the tour and went above and beyond by not only showcasing the Capitol, but also discussing their important roles in law enforcement and what inspired them to pursue their careers.

The program offers far more than just a trip to Washington D.C. For some, mastering the use of the Metro system, honing their professional image and perfecting their networking skills represent significant learning opportunities. For others, exposure to the countless career opportunities available in the public sector helps to broaden their perspectives and shape their future goals.

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*"A few learned that while they might want to work for the government, they don't want to live in a big city, which we consider as one of the greatest learning experiences: learning what you don't want to do," stated Pam Derrick, DC program lead. "The students who claimed that they had "Potomac Fever" after viewing the monuments during a night tour, are ready to return and have already started pursuing summer internships."*

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The impact of the program on the students has been remarkable. Many have continued to pursue their professional development through internships, graduate school programs and international experiences. The bonds formed during the program have proven to be enduring, with many former participants remaining close friends and dedicated supporters of the program. This kind of community support and commitment to personal and professional growth is what sets the program apart.

"This year's group also shows great interest in expanding their career interest and utilizing the contacts they made during the trip. It will be interesting to see what they achieve," exclaimed Derrick.

Looking ahead, the program will continue to provide a unique opportunity for students to immerse themselves in the professional world of Washington D.C. For any student looking to explore their professional aspirations and make a lasting impact in the world of public service, this is truly an opportunity not to be missed. ■



*Top: A&S students took on Capitol Hill to learn about possible career paths, network with professionals, and watch government in action. Bottom: A&S Students at Russell Senate Office building following a discussion with Senator Britt from Alabama. Also pictured, Mike House, JD, a UA Law School graduate who is a Blackburn Institute Advisory Board member.*





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### Antarctic Research Expedition

Kocot and a team of students embarked on an expedition to Eastern Antarctica to study the evolutionary history and biodiversity of invertebrate animals in the region.

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## RETURN MY VOTE

UA PROFESSOR DEVELOPS TOOL TO AID  
IN VOTING RESTORATION

Richard Fording, a political science professor at The University of Alabama, found while researching for his voting rights class, that there was an astounding number of people in Alabama that did not have the right of suffrage. Through Return My Vote, Fording, UA students and the Greater Birmingham Ministries (GBM) are seeking to aid voting rights restoration in Alabama.

Many states, including Kentucky, Florida and Alabama, have strict disenfranchisement policies for people who have been convicted of felonies. Professionals advising individuals who are leaving prison and reentering society often do not understand the voting rights component.

“The law is very confusing,” said Fording while talking about the problem of voting restoration, “A lot of people just don’t know where to get information to determine if they’re eligible for voting or not. And if they need to get their rights back, they don’t know what they need to do.”

While there are many organizations around the state that host in-person voting restoration clinics, these stopped during the pandemic.

“That made me realize immediately that there needed to be some type of virtual platform for people to be able to talk to experts that can help them understand if they’re eligible or not, and what they need to do to get their rights back,” said Fording.

In response to this challenge, Fording partnered with GBM, an organization who was already doing impressive voting rights restoration work, to develop Return My Vote.

Return My Vote is a virtual voting rights restoration clinic for Alabama citizens providing free consultation to determine an individual’s eligibility status and assist those registering or restoring their voting rights. Not only can Alabamians request live consultations through the website, but they can also access email or text consultations.

Return My Vote has been incorporated into internships and community-engaged learning courses taught by the political science faculty to train students as voting rights consultants. Student consultants are also sourced from Return My Vote’s collaboration with Vote Everywhere, a nationwide university-based organization that

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*“We believe that political participation and political engagement is healthy for people who have been in prison and who might be at risk of going back to prison. It makes them feel part of the community.”*

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*Left: Dr. Richard Fording at a public event in Selma helping people check their voting eligibility and restore their voting rights.*



equally deals with voting rights restoration within the UA campus.

As consultants, students work directly with clients to research their status through the criminal justice records database, inform them of the necessary steps to restore their voting rights, and if needed, walk them through the process of petitioning the state for their rights. Students who have excelled as consultants have been promoted to a manager position in which they assist with training, outreach, branding and web content.

Sam Robson is a political science major, the current president of UA's Vote Everywhere chapter and an RMV project assistant and consulting expert.

"To see the work being led by undergraduates is inspiring and seeing how it has started to have consequences for the people we are trying to help across the state has given me a lot of hope," commented Robson.

Spurred by his participation in a year-long community engaged learning fellowship program through UA's Division of Community Affairs, Fording is incorporating a research component into the RMV project.

Using data from the RMV clients, Fording will track the broad and long-term impact of voting restoration on the lives of clients.

"We believe that political participation and political engagement is healthy for people who have been in prison and who might be at risk of going back to prison. It makes them feel part of the community."

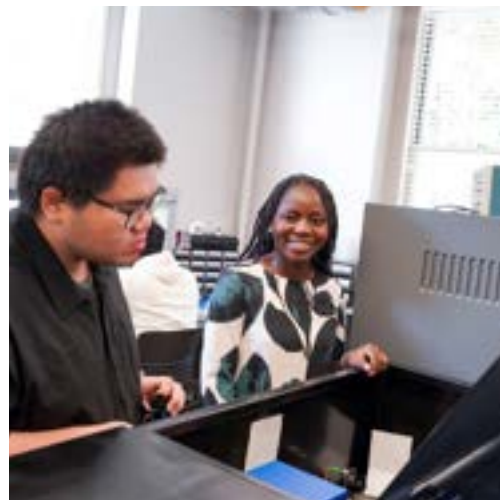
RMV received \$2,000 in seed funds for online access to Alabama's Alacourt records through Fording's community-engaged learning fellowship. Through their partnership with Greater Birmingham Ministers, Return My Vote was awarded \$75,000 from the Southern Poverty Law Center enabling them to financially compensate student workers and interns.

While these funds aid RMV to continue to serve the Alabama community, Fording hopes that Return My Vote can serve as a blueprint for collegiate student organizations to form community partnerships and continue voting restoration work in other states. ■



*Pictured from left to right, Amelia Pugh, Sam Robson, Alexis Cumbie, Seth Self and Olivia Davis received the award for best student-led project at the "excellence in community engagement" awards banquet.*





Top: Students, Charles Rasor and Jahnvi Verma, with one of the labs atomic clocks. Middle: Atomic Clock  
Bottom: Students, Catherine Asagwegbe Obaze and Hung Lam, with the labs laser technology; Left: Dr. Thejesh N. Bandi.

# JOURNEY INTO THE QUANTUM WORLD

## ATOMIC CLOCKS AND PRECISION TIMING

The Precision Navigation, Timing and Frequency (PNTF) lab as a base research unit has recently secured a transformative grant from the National Science Foundation (NSF), heralding a new era in precision timing education in the United States. The importance of precision timing cannot be overstated, as it supports over one-third of the nation's economy, a staggering \$11 trillion annually, and is indispensable for national security. Surprisingly, there has been an absence of degree programs in this field dedicated to training young students, until now.

In a visionary move, UA has introduced the first master's and Ph.D. concentrations in precision timing, a program developed in collaboration with input from esteemed industry and government partners. Named the Alabama Collaborative for Contemporary Education in Precision Timing (ACCEPT), this innovative initiative is set to offer comprehensive training to undergraduate and graduate students, including 24 funded trainees, in disciplines such as physics, mathematics, electrical and computer engineering, and more. The program encompasses a blend of coursework, professional development, and practical research, designed to bridge STEM disciplines and prepare students for careers in precision timing, which are integral to both our economy and national security.

The mission of this groundbreaking research goes beyond academia and directly impacts the broader community. Dr. Thejesh N. Bandi, a distinguished researcher and professor in the department of physics and astronomy, is at the forefront of this endeavor. His work focuses on atomic clocks, resiliency in PNT, space navigation, along with a parallel commitment to educating undergraduate and graduate students in this niche field.

An atomic clock is a highly precise timekeeping device that relies on the fundamental properties of atoms to provide incredibly accurate measurements of time. Unlike conventional clocks, such as wristwatches, which operate with a precision of one second, atomic clocks offer a level of accuracy on the order of nanoseconds, or billionths of a second. The primary motivation for the development and use of atomic clocks is the demand for extreme accuracy in various applications. One of the most notable applications is in global positioning systems (GPS), where precise time measurement is critical for determining accurate positions. Small discrepancies in time can lead to substantial errors in location calculations.

"The second hand of a clock moves by one tick; that signifies one second. So, if you were to take that one tick of a second and divide it by a billion equal parts, you've got a nanosecond," said Bandi. "So, one nanosecond of time precision, corresponds to about 30 centimeters error of in GPS positioning."

The atomic clock's function is based on the unique energy levels of atoms and the principles of quantum mechanics. When atoms

absorb specific amounts of energy, their electrons transition to higher energy states. Utilizing this quantized energy level property is fundamental to the precision of atomic clocks. Different atoms have different energy level spacings, resulting in specific frequencies of oscillation when transitioning between energy states. The precision timing enabled by atomic clocks, with their extraordinary accuracy, is crucial for countless applications beyond daily timekeeping.

One of the key industry supporters of this initiative is the local branch of Microchip, a leading company specializing in building atomic clocks. Their expertise and contributions are invaluable to the success of PNT research at UA. Microchip have been a pioneer in advancing atomic clock technology, and their support is instrumental in providing students with hands-on experience in this field. Their partnership with the University enhances the program's capacity to equip students with the knowledge and skills required to excel in precision timing.

As part of the research endeavor, Bandi has also initiated a program known as the Tide Clock Timing Club (T<sup>2</sup>C<sup>2</sup>), a platform for undergraduate students to gain hands-on experience in atomic clock technology. Through weekly meetings, these students delve into various facets of atomic clocks, from understanding and measuring GPS signals to working with vacuum systems and laser technology. This early exposure equips them with a profound understanding of atomic clocks and their real-world applications, setting the stage for a promising future in this field.

"The idea here is to give hands on experience to the undergrads and also discuss about atomic clocks and their ubiquitous applications," stated Bandi. "What they are, what are the applications and why we need to give that knowledge in the very beginning."

Looking ahead, Bandi envisions groundbreaking developments in precision timing. He is in the process of establishing a precision timescale laboratory, a pioneering initiative among universities. This laboratory will foster research and training, possibly incorporating artificial intelligence, to create opportunities for novel methods. Also, Bandi is exploring the realm of optical clocks, which operate at much higher frequencies offering unprecedented time resolution. His goal is to craft compact optical clocks that maintain high precision while reducing size, potentially leading to portable and robust optical clocks for ground and space applications.

This venture, led by Bandi, not only advances the field of atomic clocks but also nurtures the next generation of precision timing experts. The impact of this research ripples through various sectors of our daily lives, and the University's forward-looking approach, supported by Microchip and other industry partners, is poised to shape the future of precision timing in the U.S., making it more accessible, reliable and versatile. ■



# ANTARCTIC RESEARCH EXPEDITION

From March 7 to May 4, 2023, Dr. Kevin Kocot, associate professor in the department of biological sciences, and his team of students and postdoctoral researchers embarked on a research expedition to Eastern Antarctica. Supported by the National Science Foundation, the primary objective of the expedition was to study the evolutionary history and biodiversity of invertebrate animals in the region, which have received limited scientific attention due to their remoteness.

One of the main goals of this project is training the next generation of taxonomists, equipping them with a combination of traditional techniques like light and electron microscopy, along with modern methods like DNA sequencing. This integrative taxonomic approach aims to accelerate the documentation and description of species inhabiting biodiverse ecosystems.

Throughout the expedition, the team made several significant discoveries, including nearly 50 new species of invertebrate animals, and collected thousands of specimens overall. These specimens were carefully photographed and preserved and are now deposited in the Alabama Museum of Natural History Invertebrate Zoology collection, of which Dr. Kocot serves as a curator. The specimens will be made available for research purposes to scientists from institutions worldwide, further contributing to scientific knowledge.

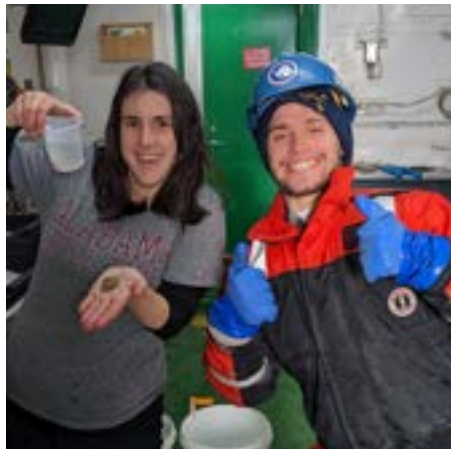
The expedition also had the vital goal of reconstructing the evolutionary history of Antarctic taxa, particularly focusing on how polar invertebrates have adapted to their icy habitats. To achieve this, Dr. Kocot is collaborating with Dr. Sarah Gerken and master's student Victoria Vandersommen at the University of Alaska Anchorage to employ cutting-edge genomic techniques and compare the genomes of polar species with their temperate relatives.

The significance of this research was highlighted by Emily McLaughlin, a PhD candidate from Dr. Kocot's lab and a fellow voyager, who emphasized that despite common assumptions, the deep ocean still holds vast unexplored biodiversity.

"A lot of people think the diversity in the world has already been described but in the deepest regions of the ocean, that is not the case," said McLaughlin. "Very little of the diversity has been explored and actually described. And the more we know about this diversity, the more we can protect a lot of animals and ecosystems in various regions."



*The team's home during the cruise was the RVIB Nathaniel B. Palmer, which is a 94-meter research ship with icebreaking capability.*



Top: Antarctic scenery. Middle: An image, taken by PhD student Chandler Olson, of a Solenogaster, these animals are the primary focus of study for the lab. Bottom: Carmen Cobo and Chandler Olson celebrating finding a 'giant' aplacophoran mollusc.

Additionally, the expedition provided valuable formative experiences for other early-career scientists. Chandler Olson, a third-year PhD student specializing in malacology, expressed how the journey transformed his approach to field biology, allowing him to observe his subject matters in their natural habitats instead of studying museum specimens.

Nick Roberts, a PhD candidate studying evolutionary relationships and genomics of microinvertebrates, also shared their profound personal growth, gaining confidence and a sense of purpose in their career. They attributed these positive changes to the collaborative and knowledgeable team they had the privilege of working with during the expedition.

All the team members of the Kocot lab, which also included postdoctoral researchers Franzi Bergmeier and Carmen Cobo-Lovo and lab technician Will Farris played essential roles in the expedition's success. The successful expedition also owes credit to the non-scientific crew members, whose dedication and expertise ensured smooth operations on the ship.

The experiences and discoveries made during the expedition have been shared through various channels, including a blog on [www.icyinverts.com](http://www.icyinverts.com) and social media platforms using the hashtag #IcyInverts. Olson has contributed to public awareness by uploading educational videos about rare mollusks encountered during the trip on his YouTube channel, "Seahorse and Co."

The team is now actively working on disseminating their findings to the scientific community. McLaughlin's dissertation, which is applying an integrative taxonomic approach to characterize the diversity of a diverse but understudied group of worm-like molluscs from Antarctica, will be a crucial update to an existing 1978 monograph on the taxonomy of the group. Also, Roberts is planning to publish academic papers focusing on the genomics of microscopic organisms based on specimens from Antarctica and Dauphin Island, AL, where they and Dr. Kocot are currently engaged in another collaborative project with Dr. Kelly Dorgan at the Dauphin Island Sea Lab.

The remarkable achievements of Dr. Kocot and his students have significantly contributed to the field of marine biology, shedding light on the unexplored biodiversity of the Antarctic region and inspiring future generations of scientists. ■



Scan to access the Seahorse and Co YouTube channel.

## UNPACKED: WHAT'S INSIDE MY RESEARCH BAG

In the pursuit of knowledge, the bags of university researchers - with unique tools, devices and data - serve as a window into the how and why of their rigorous work.

We sat down with three Arts and Sciences researchers - Allison Grant, Alvon Reed and Leah Mungai - to gain insight into their areas of research and methodologies through the lens of the contents of their research bags.

In highlighting their work, the breadth of research conducted at The Capstone begins to come into focus. Certainly, research is conducted among the quiet shelving of libraries or with carefully collected samples under a microscope. But the quest for deeper understanding also takes researchers around the world, into the field, to the stage, in observance of the human experience, to the intersection of interdisciplinary thought, and beyond.

These unassuming bags bear witness to the relentless pursuit of excellence. Observe the research tools of vastly different disciplines and uncover the common threads that unite them in their quest for understanding.

The University of Alabama achieved Doctoral Universities-Very High Research Activity Status (aka R1 classification) in 2018, which as of 2021 places UA in the top 4% of degree granting universities.



Top: Allison Grant  
Middle: Alvon Reed  
Bottom: Leah Mungai



# ALLISON GRANT

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF ART | PHOTOGRAPHY  
DIRECTOR OF GRADUATE STUDIES | STUDIO ART

## QUESTION 1: WHAT IS YOUR CURRENT RESEARCH FOCUS?

I make photographs and the work that I've been working on for the last five years is a long-form project about raising my children as climate crisis escalates. [Raising them] in a place that is beautiful, but that also has a lot of fossil fuel extraction and chemical facilities that spread particulates and toxins into the air and water and puts our community at risk.

You can't really see climate change. You can see the consequences of climate change. Some photographers photograph things like glacial melt, fires, floods, hurricanes, etc. I'm photographing the causes that are local to my home. I create a 100-mile radius from my home and I'm photographing these places that are extracting and refining the materials that we need to move away from and that have a complicated relationship to our economy and to labor.

The project is also about love and what it means to raise children. The sort of astonishing wonder and beauty that's contained in there and some of the darkness and fear that's there.

I had my daughter, and I knew I wanted to do something with this topic. There's a long history of photographers dealing with domestic issues, motherhood and childhood, and the sort of closeness and tenderness that exists there. [I'm considering the] reality of what's happening alongside imagining the future that our children are going to inherit. And wondering, 'what does it look like next generation or a few generations down the line?' There's this way motherhood puts you in touch with youth and long expanses of history. You think about all the people who came before you and raised all of the babies that led to your existence and how unlikely that is.

So, it's a multifaceted, woven-together kind of project. A lot of the pictures are taken outdoors in a field. Some of them are taken in my home. But sometimes I'm traveling to these different sites that I want to photograph. What I wear and take is really critical to my success.

## QUESTION 2: WHAT'S THE MOST USEFUL/IMPORTANT THING IN YOUR BAG?

I just have one camera and one lens that I use for that work. The most important item to me is I have a Fuji GFX 50 R camera with a 32 to 64 Fuji lens. So, it's a little telephoto and a little bit zoom. And it's an amazing camera because it's medium format and renders space differently. It's just magical. It has this stillness. The images have this stillness and slowness that looks like medium or large format photography [shot using] film. But the camera can shoot more like a 35-millimeter camera in terms of its versatility and its size. And it's pretty lightweight for what it is. If I didn't have this camera I would be lost in the world.

## QUESTION 3: WHAT IS THE MOST UNEXPECTED ITEM IN YOUR BAG?

I don't know if I have a great answer, but I brought my hat because I walked through a lot woods. There will be some little spot that I'm hiking through and it's just a really important to protect my head and keep the sun off my face. That's probably the most unexpected thing in my bag.

## QUESTION 4: PENCIL OR PEN?

Pencil. Always. Yes, pencil can be erased. If you get it on your art, or something happens, it's archival and it can be erased. Pens are dangerous with our [work].

1. Fuji GFX 50 R (medium format camera)
2. 32-64 Fuji lens
3. Hat
4. Water bottle
5. Low Pro camera bag
6. Charger
7. Lens cleaning cloths
8. Card reader
9. Manual
10. Hard drive
11. Cell phone
12. Protein bar





# ALVON REED

ASSISTANT PROFESSOR | THEATRE & DANCE

## QUESTION 1: WHAT IS YOUR CURRENT RESEARCH FOCUS?

My current research focuses on jook joint life and culture. Jook joints are informal establishments where drinking, dancing, socializing and sometimes gambling take place. Generally, they are in the American South and always, I would say, off the beaten path.

I specifically focus on dance, so the movement of the jook joint. I look at dances from about 1916 to the present. This semester, I will be creating choreography for the musical that I am creating called Heddy Mae's Jook Joint. This is where, or how, it all ties in. It's a musical about a woman and her legacy. It's about a jook joint, the legacy of her jook joint. And it follows her story of migration from Tuscaloosa, Alabama to St. Louis, Missouri.

The musical takes place over 70 years. We start it in 1938 and we move through 2018. I'm really looking at specific periods: the 1930s, the 1960s, and the 20-teens. Looking at the similarities in movement, but also the differences. What are the repeating themes that keep happening over and over to cause the body to respond in the way it does? And then also the final aspect of this is looking at what has remained the same and what has changed culturally.

## QUESTION 2: WHAT IS THE MOST USEFUL/IMPORTANT THING IN YOUR BAG?

There are two actually. One is my resistance band. And the second is a foot roller. I use my resistance band to warm up every day. It's also a way to stay engaged with my body. I have to stay connected to the movement because the evolution of the movement is part of me. I'm a part of the evolution.

This was my second item, my foot roller. I'm so active on my feet in terms of dancing — teaching ballet and jazz within the program. It just allows the feet to become a little more supple before I engage in more rigorous movement.

## QUESTION 3: WHAT ITEMS COULD YOU NOT DO WITHOUT?

My notebook is so important to me because it contains every idea about the musical, or about teaching, or about anything. It's the place from which inspiration is drawn. I consider myself to be a copious note taker. And so having this has allowed me to stay engaged with the work even after the event has passed. The notes are there to guide me just in case I get lost in the process.

## QUESTION 4: PENCIL OR PEN?

Pen because it's easily accessible. And with the pen I can make out my scribbles fairly easily. I also feel that when I use the pen, it helps me remember. Right? So, it becomes me. I'm the body practitioner, right? Moving the pen and writing it out helps it become part of who I am and what I'm doing. Pen. That's permanent.

1. JanSport Backpack
2. Resistance bands
3. Foot roller
4. Notebook
5. Sanitizing wipes
6. Hard Drive
7. Jookin' by Katrina Hazzard Donald
8. The Warmth of Other Suns by Isabel Wilkerson
9. Rooted Jazz Dance by Lindsay Guarino, Carlos R. A. Jones, and Wendy Oliver
10. Juke Joints
11. Betsy Brown by Ntozake Shange
12. Ring, Shout, Wheel About: The Racial Politics of Music and Dance in North America by Katrina Dyonne Thompson
13. Babylon Girls by Jayna Brown
14. Hidden History of Mississippi Blues by Roger Stolle
15. Between Beats by Christine J. Wells
16. After August by Patrick Maley





# LEAH MUNGAI

POSTDOCTORAL RESEARCH ASSOCIATE & VISITING SCIENTIST | GEOGRAPHY

## QUESTION 1: WHAT IS YOUR CURRENT RESEARCH FOCUS?

I grew up in Kenya in a small farming community. We are very outdoorsy people. My first major was information systems, but I found my way back [to farming] when I was doing my masters. I needed to use that technical expertise for something, and I just found it natural to go back into farming. My research mostly looks at the human-environment interactions [in geography].

For most of my dissertation, I worked in a different country called Malawi. It's more Southeast Africa [than Kenya]. And I was looking at smallholder farmers and how they are facing the challenges of climate change in a changing landscape. I found myself more on the mapping side — I want to map their land use. [In the U.S.] the farms are very homogeneous, so people tend to plant things on square parcels. Not so in many countries in Africa, because of the landscape. We have farming land, and then we have all this other land, but farmers can grow whenever the soil is fertile.

I care about their crops and what they are growing, but I want to connect all these things. So, when it's small farmers, we want to help them produce sustainably. We really care about the bigger picture, too. It's [about] food security, and we also want a sustainable environment. We need development, but what are we losing in the farmland? People ask, 'Wait, why is food expensive?' and you start to see how it's connected.

## QUESTION 2: WHAT IS THE MOST IMPORTANT THING IN YOUR BAG?

I think as a geographer, who uses very interesting tools, I might just say a range finder, because it's not your usual gadget. Unlike a [regular] GPS, which will help you collect points, a GPS range finder is this little innocuous thing that allows you to measure an object's distance. It's quite accurate, so that's the best thing about it.

In this paper we just finished, I wanted to know the distances to roads and rivers from the field. Can you imagine getting 200 [GPS] points of fieldwork over four or five weeks? If you have the right tools, you've got double data with the GPS rangefinder and your camera. And if you just get all this information and upload it, your validation is going to be really nice.

## QUESTION 3: WHAT ITEMS COULD YOU NOT DO WITHOUT?

The camera is always good. In my paper, I want to show people different types of agricultural fields. Fields should have crops, but what if you go there when they have been cultivated? It's still an agricultural field, but it looks different. [The camera] also has a GPS, so you can geotag your photos.

You need a notebook. You know, you don't have to write down everything, but sometimes when you find something, you're like "it's gonna go down on paper." So, plus your notepad you need a laptop. Maybe it rains on the day you're going to the field; you will want to Ziploc your laptop. [The laptop] has your topography sheets. Before when we didn't have touch [screen] everything, you know, you would use a sheet of paper [with your mapped points]. I download all my points before I go [into the field]. You've already done your sampling design, so you know where you're going and are not randomly looking for points.

## QUESTION 4: PENCIL OR PEN?

I use both. I use a pen a lot because when you're in the field you need something that won't rub off. I do like these [multi-point stackable pencils] because, unless you lose one of these [cartridges], you don't have to worry about sharpening anything in the field. ■

1. GPS Rangefinder
2. Camera
3. Notebook
4. Batteries (backup)
5. GPS (backup)
6. Plastic Gallon Bags
7. Memory Cards
8. Laptop
9. Topography (topo) maps
10. Pencil
11. Europe/Africa plug adapter
12. USB drive
13. Cell phone





## TRANSFORMING HIGHER EDUCATION THROUGH INTERNATIONAL COLLABORATION

The collaborative effort between The University of Alabama, the University of Utah and the Institute for International Education, is part of the USAID funded Higher Education System Strengthening Activity (HESSA) in Pakistan. HESSA stands as a remarkable initiative aimed at enhancing the higher education system in Pakistan. This program provides faculty members from Pakistan with an invaluable opportunity to immerse themselves in a transformative journey of knowledge and skills acquisition, ultimately leading to a significant improvement in the overall quality of higher education.

In 2022, esteemed leaders from The College of Arts and Sciences participated in a year-long Women's Leadership Program, led by associate provost and dean of the graduate school, Dr. Susan Carvalho along with a group of UA faculty including Dr. Dana Patton, an associate professor of political science; Dr. Delores Robinson, professor and chair of the department of geological sciences; and Dr. Lisa Pawloski, professor of anthropology and associate dean of international programs. This initiative aimed to address gender disparity in higher education administrative leadership and development, providing women educational administrators in Pakistan with essential skills and knowledge to advance in their careers. The program included a transformative journey involving a series of workshops and trainings for 30 women educational administrators in Pakistan. The first cohort was followed by a second cohort during Jan. - Nov. 2023.

Emphasizing the objective, Carvalho stated, "The goal is that two years from now, they will all have positions of higher authority, responsibility, and impact than they have now, creating a larger space for women's leadership in Pakistani higher education."

The workshop served as a platform for addressing the widespread gender disparity in higher education administrative leadership and development. Pawloski articulated the purpose by stating, "The idea is to help women leaders who are interested in moving up in administration by giving them some of the skills their male counterparts might have had more access to."

In Feb. 2023, the second Pakistani Women's Leadership cohort had the opportunity to immerse themselves in a two-week stay at The University of Alabama, where they engaged in intensive workshops covering diverse leadership aspects and interacted with influential women speakers from UA and Stillman College. The overarching objective of the program was to create opportunities for these women to assume leadership roles within their respective higher education institutions. Following the workshop, the women embarked on a six-month online boot camp, collaborating with mentors to build their leadership portfolios and implement projects positioning them more effectively within Pakistan's educational labor sector.







Similarly, The University of Alabama welcomed a diverse cohort of educators from Pakistan from Feb. 18 – March 4, 2023. This program aimed to enhance teaching and learning skills among faculty members from 16 universities across Pakistan. The program began with faculty members from UA traveling to Pakistan in June to meet the cohort, serving as the foundation for a nine-month program that continued with online collaboration and support. The Pakistani faculty cohort engaged in workshops, hands-on activities, site visits and networking opportunities during their two-week visit to the University. “I am very grateful for this opportunity and will definitely implement all the skills we have learned here,” exclaimed Tahseen Fatima, participant from the Pakistan Cohort. A second Teaching and Learning cohort visited the University in Sep. 2023.

Both the Women's Leadership and Teaching and Learning programs emphasized the importance of collaboration, the exchange of ideas and the promotion of diversity, equity and inclusion. The participants formed strong networks of support and advocacy, which have the potential to transform teaching and learning practices in Pakistan. The faculty cohort worked on developing workshops and presentations focused on various topics, equipping them to become catalysts for positive change, both at the faculty and administrative levels, and enhancing the overall educational landscape in Pakistan.

“They are working with each other as a strong network. They now have advocates and can rely on each other for promotion and support,” said Pawloski. “I think that they're going to do really great things.”

These four cohorts' experiences at The University of Alabama were transformative journeys filled with learning, collaboration and personal growth. They gained new teaching and learning strategies, expanded their professional networks and deepened their understanding of the U.S. higher education system. As they return to their home institutions, they carry with them the potential to ignite positive change and empower their fellow educators. ■





# THE RISING TIDE

The College of Arts and Sciences is proud of our legacy. Our students are tomorrow's leaders—they're changemakers, innovative thinkers, and creative trendsetters with determination and curiosity. Our faculty are among the best, solving issues both globally and in their own backyards, and setting a standard of excellence among their peers and for students. We want to continue to empower them to change the world.

Through UA's Rising Tide Campaign, the College is seeking \$100 million to help our students and faculty on their journeys. More students will be able to explore their passions and dreams on campus without the barrier of finances. Faculty members can focus on cutting-edge research and creative activities through endowments and fellowships. Our facilities will be upgraded to further foster an environment where students and faculty alike can thrive in their academic endeavors.

Together, we can create an unfathomable impact on the lives of our campus community. Every contribution counts to enabling our students and faculty to dream bigger than we ever have before. The tide is rising—let's make a wave together! ■

*For more information, visit [risingtide.ua.edu](https://risingtide.ua.edu)*





A LOOK INSIDE THE NEW  
**SMITH FAMILY CENTER FOR  
 THE PERFORMING ARTS**

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“It’s a huge confidence boost to every student here to know that someone believes in you, whether that’s with applause or the funding of a new facility,” said, UA graduate student, Kara Kuczkowski

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In 2017 the University announced plans for Bryce Main grounds as a world-class facility for the performing arts and a vibrant centerpiece of campus. Now that facility has a name – The Smith Family Center for the Performing Arts.

The University announced a \$20 million commitment made in memory of Mark Smith, cofounder of the global telecommunications company ADTRAN, in a press conference in February 2022.

Fueled by four generations of love for the arts, the Smith family’s gift is primarily to honor Mark Smith, an Alabama native who passed away in 2007. Smith grew up in a house full of musicians, and he always emphasized the importance and power of music with his family. “Our family’s passion for arts goes back many generations,” said Mark’s son, Clay, who made the gift alongside his wife, Cameron, and his mother, Linda. “Music and the arts have impacted our family tremendously. They defined my father, and they helped define me. To give back to the community in this way while honoring my dad’s memory is incredibly rewarding.”

Bryce Main will house faculty offices and rehearsal space for the theatre, dance and opera programs, as well as museums dedicated to both University history and the history of mental health in Alabama. Connected to Bryce Main will be the Smith Family Center for the Performing Arts, comprised of four performance theaters and flexible space for rehearsals, recitals and smaller performances.

“Connecting the Smith Family Center for the Performing Arts to the Randall Welcome Center illuminates the visibility and value the University is placing on the performing arts as potential students engage with our facility from their very first visit,” said Sarah Barry, immediate past chair of the Theatre and Dance Department.

Our theatre, dance and opera programs are nationally recognized as leaders in the performing arts. Renowned for their training, these programs send students all over the world as performers, designers, technicians, choreographers, educators, and more. Students have landed roles in *Star Trek*, *Hamilton*, *the Rockettes*, and other productions both in the US and abroad.

Since this project was announced in 2017, the department has added new degree programs including a BFA in theatre and an MFA in dance. The faculty has grown from 23 to 29, allowing the

expansion of course offerings and improving faculty to student ratios to enhance training and personal connections.

As our outstanding faculty continues to attract and prepare some of the nation’s most talented students, the new innovative rehearsal and production spaces will allow them to unleash their fullest potential in facilities equivalent to those in which they will be working as professionals.

The Smith Family Center for the Performing Arts is the next stage in our progress. The state-of-the-art performance venues, classrooms, workshops, and rehearsal spaces will be built specifically for the department, enhancing production value and enabling the use of new resources and modern technology. The theatre and dance faculty will be in one hub, allowing for better collaboration and enriching connections within the department.

“I like to think of the new Smith Family Center for the Performing Arts as a postcard of the University—it’s absolutely beautiful and a piece of history. But it will also be a place where the arts are recognized. It’s going to be a theater that actually looks like a theater, and is just as remembered as the performances inside,” said Kara Kuczkowski, a graduate student seeking an MFA in Theatre Arts Management.

Construction is already underway for the Smith Family Center for the Performing Arts, marked by a significant groundbreaking event that took place on October 20, 2023. The ceremony included several notable speakers, including Dean Joseph Messina, President Stuart Bell, Clay Smith, Robert Abernathy and Lauren Brendel, who shared the importance of this project for the College and the students. The guest list was illustrious, featuring attendees such as Bill and Mary Battle from the Campaign Cabinet, the Smith Family—including Clay, Linda and Cameron and the former College Arts and Sciences Dean Robert F. Olin, making this event an remarkable moment for all.

The University has more than one hundred years of performing history with its first recorded performance being Shakespeare’s *Taming of the Shrew* in 1907. These new facilities will set the stage for the next 100 years of education, innovation, and discovery at the Capstone. ■



# THE INAUGURAL ROBERT F. OLIN ENDOWED DISTINGUISHED LECTURE SERIES IN SCIENCE AND MATHEMATICS

The Robert F. Olin Endowed Distinguished Lecture Series in Science and Mathematics made its highly anticipated debut on April 19, 2023, captivating The University of Alabama's academic community. This prestigious event was established and endowed by Robert F. Olin, dean emeritus and professor of mathematics at the University, who has made remarkable contributions to the field of mathematics and The College of Arts and Sciences.

The lecture series aims to attract audiences from both within and beyond The University of Alabama community, offering a unique opportunity for attendees to engage with renowned scholars, experts and researchers from diverse scientific fields. These distinguished individuals share their knowledge and inspire the audience with valuable insights, exploring how the sciences have impacted society and humanity through their own research and the work of others in their field.

"As an undergraduate, I think one of the most important things is to explore and get exposed to different areas. This will help you find your passion," exclaimed Dean Olin. "Then find a career from that passion, because if you're excited about what you're doing, you will be very successful in life."

Dean Robert F. Olin served The College of Arts and Sciences from 2000 to 2019 and was chair and professor in the department of mathematics at Virginia Tech prior to becoming the dean, where he left a lasting impact on the field of mathematics. He is known for his innovative approach to education and his dedication to exploring the social implications of science. One of Dean Olin's most significant accomplishments was the development of the Mathematics Emporium, an online platform that revolutionized math education. The Mathematics Emporium allowed students to learn math through interactive activities and personalized instruction, encouraging critical thinking and active participation in the learning process.

The speaker for the inaugural lecture was Dr. Francis Su, the Benediktsson-Karwa Professor of Mathematics at Harvey Mudd College. Su's perspective on mathematics goes beyond memorizing formulas and crunching numbers; he sees mathematics as a discipline capable of unlocking the beauty and wonder of the world. Through his teaching and writing, Su has inspired countless students and educators to perceive math in a new light.

"I hope people will see themselves differently, as it relates to their relationship to mathematics. I want to reframe the way people think about math so that they can begin to see it as something that connects to them personally. Not just what math does for society at large, but how math shapes you," declared Su.

Su's emphasis on inquiry-based learning has been one of his greatest strengths as an educator. Rather than simply lecturing, he encourages his students to explore mathematical concepts independently, fostering deep thinking and a thorough understanding and appreciation of mathematics.

"Over time, I began to think, if I believe math is more about the virtues that it builds, rather than particular skills that you learn, how come it's not reflected in the way that I teach," inquired Su. "So, I began to change the way I teach, which includes assigning more reflection to have students think a little bit about what they're learning rather than just asking them to regurgitate procedures."



*Pictured from left to right, Dean Joseph Messina, Dr. Francis Su and Dean Robert F. Olin.*





Su's dedication to teaching earned him the prestigious Haimo Award for distinguished teaching by the Mathematical Association of America in 2013. He has also made significant contributions to geometric combinatorics and the application of mathematical principles to the social sciences through his research.

Su's most significant contribution to the world of mathematics is his book *Mathematics for Human Flourishing*, published by Yale University Press in 2020. In this book, he passionately defends mathematics as a discipline that enriches and transforms our lives, going beyond practical problem-solving to reveal the beauty and joy within it. Su's writing has inspired readers worldwide to perceive mathematics from a fresh perspective, whether they are struggling with complex mathematical concepts or seeking a deeper appreciation of the world's beauty.

The first lecture in the Robert F. Olin Endowed Distinguished Lecture Series in Science and Mathematics focused on Su's ideas about mathematics and its potential for human flourishing. Titled "Mathematics for Human Flourishing: Reflections on Teaching and Learning," the lecture was a captivating and thought-provoking event that left the audience inspired to delve deeper into the subject.

Su began the lecture by sharing personal anecdotes about his journey with mathematics, highlighting the beauty and significance he discovered along the way. He also shared stories about his students, showcasing their growth and development through their engagement with mathematics. One of the primary themes of the lecture emphasized that mathematics surpasses mere problem-solving and formula memorization. Su conveyed that mathematics is a way of thinking and perceiving the world, enabling individuals to appreciate its intricacies and wonders.

The lecture explored how mathematics plays a pivotal role in nurturing virtues essential for personal and professional success. Su's examples illustrated the transformative power of mathematical engagement in fostering virtues such as perseverance, empathy and creativity. Through compelling narratives, he portrayed the journey his students embarked on as they further explore into the realm of mathematics, developing a resilient spirit and finding joy in intellectual exploration.

Su also emphasized the often-overlooked aspect of empathy in mathematics education. By engaging with diverse problem-solving perspectives, students gained a deep appreciation for the various ways mathematical reasoning can be approached, fostering an empathetic understanding and connection with others. He shattered the misconception that mathematics is a rigid and formulaic discipline, celebrating the creativity that emerges within mathematical pursuits, showcasing fresh perspectives and innovative solutions.

Su's discourse elevated the perception of mathematics, emphasizing its profound impact on personal growth and professional achievement. His words left the audience inspired to harness the virtues of mathematics and embrace the endless possibilities it offers.

The inaugural lecture in the Robert F. Olin Endowed Distinguished Lecture Series in Science and Mathematics proved to be a powerful and inspiring event, challenging the audience to reconsider their perspective on mathematics and its potential for human flourishing. The lecture paid homage to Dean Olin and his commitment to promoting the intersection of the humanities, social sciences, mathematics and natural sciences at The University of Alabama, setting a high standard for future speakers in the series. ■



Top: Su presenting. Middle: Dean Olin and his wife, Mrs. Sue Olin. Bottom: Dr. Tricia McElroy and Dr. Raymond presenting Dean Robert F. Olin with a certificate of appreciation for his contributions to the College.

## LAMPKIN'S LEGACY: PIONEERING PROGRESS IN PEDIATRIC ONCOLOGY AND BEYOND



Dr. Beatrice Lampkin, an accomplished alumna of The College of Arts and Sciences, defied the limitations imposed upon her and dedicated herself to effecting positive change.

Lampkin is known for her advances in pediatric oncology and philanthropic pursuits. Yet, at the young age of 7 she was diagnosed with polio. This diagnosis would go on to shape much of her life, as it left her with physical limitations that she would have to overcome throughout her academic and professional career. However, Lampkin was determined not to let her illness hold her back. She focused on excelling in every area of her life, drawing strength from her love for music and her studies.

As a student at The University of Alabama, Lampkin joined the Million Dollar Band and pursued a degree in chemistry. She was an outstanding student, constantly surpassing expectations in her studies, and using her love of music to enrich her life and the lives of those around her. After completing her undergraduate studies, Lampkin pursued her medical degree.

Lampkin's career in medicine was nothing short of remarkable. She specialized in pediatric oncology and developed groundbreaking research and treatment methods that revolutionized the way childhood leukemia was approached. Her discovery of the optimal time to administer chemotherapy had a profound impact on the survival rates of children with this disease, raising them to an incredible 90%.

Motivated by her experiences working with children and their families, Lampkin co-founded the Cincinnati Ronald McDonald House, an organization that provides a home away from home for families of critically ill children.

"During the time that I was the director of the division, we realized that our parents needed to be around the children that were being treated," stated Lampkin.

"So, a friend of mine, Dr. Paul McHenry, and I got together and decided we needed to do something for these families."

Today, the Cincinnati Ronald McDonald House stands as the largest of its kind in the world, serving as a lifeline for countless families during their darkest hours. Lampkin understood the importance of parents being able to stay close to their children during treatment, and her tireless efforts to create a safe and supportive environment for families have had a great impact.

In addition to her medical work, Lampkin also recognized the need for intervention in the lives of children whose parents struggled with substance abuse.

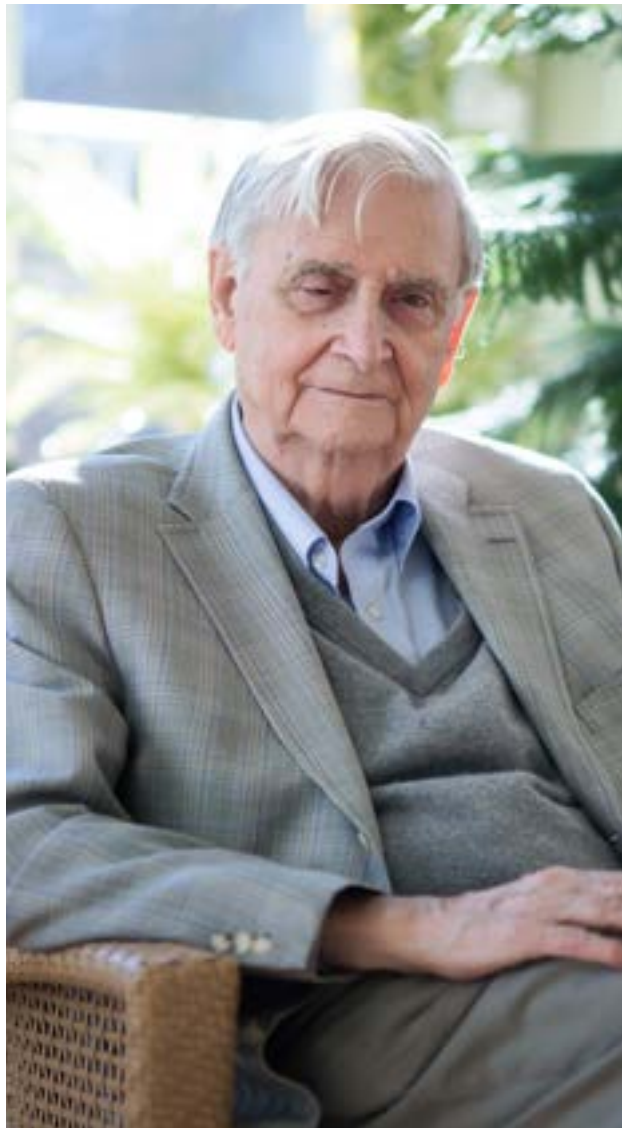
"I would just like to see that every place that treats substance abuse of parents realize that they must take a history regarding all of the children in the family," exclaimed Lampkin. "Because it's [in] the children that we've got to help prevent the substance abuse [from] occur[ing] again."

To address this need, she founded the Giving Life A Dream (GLAD) House, a comprehensive program that offers after-school activities and support for children. The GLAD House has been immensely successful in breaking the cycle of addiction, providing children with a safe and nurturing environment where they can thrive and develop healthy habits.

"It's a very comprehensive and intensive program," said Lampkin. "It takes about a year for children to achieve their goals regarding behavioral changes."

Lampkin's legacy serves as a reminder that no challenge is too great and that anyone can make a positive impact if they have the courage to pursue their dreams. Her commitment to helping others, despite facing numerous obstacles, is a testament to the power of determination and hard work. ■

## IN MEMORIAM



### DR. EDWARD OSBOURNE WILSON

Dr. Edward Osbourne Wilson, an internationally acclaimed scientist, passed away on December 26, 2021. The Pellegrino University Research Professor, former lecturer at Duke University, and Emeritus in Entomology for the Department of Organismic and Evolutionary Biology at Harvard University, was considered the world leading authority on myrmecology, the study of ants. Hence, he was nicknamed “ant-man.”

Born in Birmingham, Alabama, Wilson developed a precocious interest in insects. His fascination heightened following a fishing accident that caused partial blindness which, upon undergoing corrective surgery, led him to possess a 20/10 vision. Throughout his teenage years, Wilson surveyed of all the ants of Alabama and recorded original discoveries such as the Alabamian fire-ants.

He went on to attend The University of Alabama where he earned his B.S and M.S degrees in biology. He then pursued his Ph.D. at Harvard University and received it in 1955. Wilson joined the faculty of Harvard in 1956 and remained there until his full retirement in 2002. He then proceeded to Duke University to be a special lecturer.

As a prolific biologist and naturalist, Wilson has received over 250 awards in his lifetime including the prestigious Crafoord Prize awarded by the Royal Swedish Academy. Wilson is also a two-time winner of the Pulitzer Prize for his publications *On Human Nature* and *The Ants*. In 2020 the Alabama Museum of Natural History, at UA, organized an exhibit in his honor.

Apart from his irrefutable passion to preserve nature, Wilson is known for his philanthropism. Clear evidence of this is the Edward O. Wilson Biodiversity Fellowship supported by an endowment established on account of the gift that he made to UA in 2014. The endowment has produced fellows who carry out groundbreaking research into biodiversity and sociobiology, two areas of studies in which Wilson specialized.

Indeed, Dr. E.O Wilson has left behind an indispensable legacy that will forever remain with us. ■

### GLORIA NARRAMORE MOODY

Gloria Narramore Moody, a former music bachelors and graduate student at The University of Alabama, passed away on July 24, 2022.

Throughout her life, Moody excelled as a prodigious classical piano performer, an arts educator and a Julliard scholar. The UA alumnus made immense contributions to her alma mater, the most notable being her assistance with initiating the creation of the renowned Moody Music Building.

Beyond UA, Moody devoted her musical talent to serving communities within and outside Alabama. She was the president and chairman of many musically inclined organizations, she served on Boards of Directors of the Alabama Symphony and made gifts to music institutions through the platform of the Gloria Narramore Moody Foundation.

Moody who was 88 at the time of the death is survived by her sister Benny Wells, her children Lee Thomas Walter (Bobby), Hugh Rowe Thomas Jr. (Susan), Frank Moody Jr. (Leslie), Louise Moody and Jane Moody. She is also survived by seven grandchildren and four great-grandchildren.

For her philanthropic acts of service, she has received several awards, one of which is UA’s Henry & Julia Tutwiler Award. Moody was inspiration to everyone who got to work with her, including students and castmates. She will be dearly missed by the faculty, staff and students of The College of Arts and Sciences, as well as many others. ■



# MCCOLLOUGH INSTITUTE FOR PRE-MEDICAL SCHOLARS

100% ACCEPTANCE AMONG  
THE FIRST GRADUATING CLASS WHO APPLIED  
TO MEDICAL SCHOOL

The McCollough Institute for Pre-Medical Scholars, endowed by Dr. Gaylon and Mrs. Susan McCollough, has become a standout in the medical education community, attracting widespread attention due to its success in cultivating aspiring physicians. The inaugural class of the program achieved an extraordinary feat, as 100% of those who applied successfully gained admission to medical institutions nationwide.

Dr. Gaylon McCollough expressed his delight, stating, "Susan and I are so pleased that 100% of the graduates of first graduating class of the McCollough Institute for Pre-Medical Scholars, who applied to medical school, were accepted. This is a phenomenal achievement. We wish to express our appreciation to all who made this dream come to fruition."

This remarkable accomplishment serves as a testament to the program's effectiveness in producing highly qualified and well-prepared medical candidates, thereby setting a new benchmark for excellence in medical education.

What sets The McCollough Institute apart is its distinctive approach to medical education, transcending traditional methods. Through its interdisciplinary approach emphasizing the history and philosophy of medicine, the program fosters a dynamic community of learners driven by a passionate curiosity about the field of medicine. It places an emphasis on academic excellence, leadership, community engagement and undergraduate research.

"It's been a joy to see the scholars in the inaugural class develop and mature into their chosen profession," shared Dr. Ted Poston, Director of the McCollough Institute for Pre-Medical Scholars. "I'm thrilled that each scholar was able to gain entry to an excellent medical school. Some scholars were able to return to medical school in their hometown while others will be moving onto new communities. I look forward to seeing them succeed in their professions."

The impact of The McCollough Institute extends beyond its impressive medical school acceptance rate. Graduates of the program who choose not to pursue medical school embark on diverse career paths, including law school, various healthcare-related roles and graduate studies. The program equips its students with versatile skills that empower them to make significant contributions to their respective fields, exemplifying the institute's commitment to nurturing well-rounded and accomplished professionals.

The McCollough Institute for Pre-Medical Scholars stands as a shining beacon of excellence and innovation in medical education. Dr. Gaylon and Mrs. Susan McCollough's visionary endowment has given rise to a transformative program whose unique features and approaches have propelled students towards resounding success. ■



## ETH Zürich in Switzerland

Joy Becher

**Major:** Psychology and Chemistry

**Major Concentration:** Pre-Health Professional

**Minor:** Interdisciplinary Studies in Medicine

## Kentucky College of Osteopathic Medicine

Ashlyn Dull

**Undergraduate Major:** Biology & Biological Sciences

**Graduate Level:** Biology & Biological Sciences

**Minor:** Interdisciplinary Studies in Medicine

## University of Tennessee Health Science Center

Kaitlyn Clamp

**Major:** Biology

**Minor:** Interdisciplinary Studies in Medicine and Psychology

## McGovern Medical School at

## The University of Texas Health Science Center

Jessica Tabary

**Major:** Chemistry

**Major Concentration:** Pre-Health Professional

**Minor:** Interdisciplinary Studies in Medicine

Jack Strubel

**Major:** Philosophy

**Major Concentration:** Philosophy and Medicine

**Minor:** Interdisciplinary Studies in  
Medicine and Neuroscience

## University of West Virginia Medical School

Emily Pack

**Major:** Biology

**Minor:** Interdisciplinary Studies in Medicine and  
Addiction & Recovery



## VCOM-Carolinas

Lillian Slaughter

**Major:** Biology

**Minor:** Interdisciplinary Studies in  
Medicine and Spanish

## Mercer University School of Medicine

Phoebe Guidry

**Major:** Chemistry

**Minor:** Interdisciplinary Studies  
in Medicine

## UAB Genetic Counseling Program

Spencer Favor

**Major:** Biology and History

**Minor:** Interdisciplinary Studies in Medicine and Spanish

## UAB Medical School

Jacques Vanzyl

**Major:** Biology

**Minor:** Interdisciplinary Studies in Medicine and Psychology



## ALUMNI, WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

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