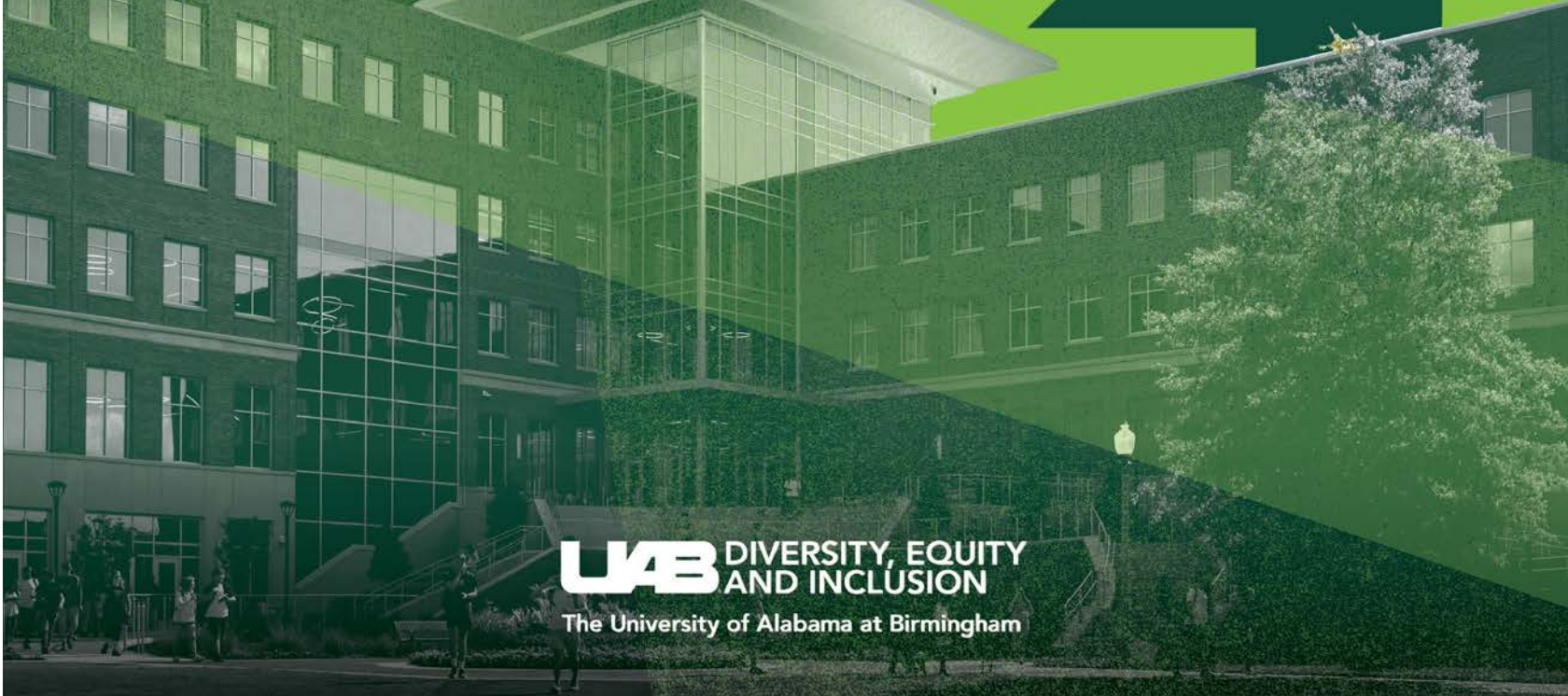




# 2021 YEAR IN REVIEW



**UAB** DIVERSITY, EQUITY  
AND INCLUSION  
The University of Alabama at Birmingham

**OFFICE OF THE VICE PRESIDENT  
FOR DIVERSITY, EQUITY,  
AND INCLUSION**

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2021 YEAR IN REVIEW

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## A MESSAGE FROM THE VICE PRESIDENT

In a year where the world looked to return to business as usual from remote lockdowns, loss, and global unrest, the reality was anything but ordinary. A host of news outlets and social media platforms vividly showed how the new normal transformed our cities, communities, and relationships. Through their lenses, they shared 2021's most unforgettable moments in news, sports, and entertainment and showed us the unwavering tenacity of the next generation.

This Year in Review provides a window into how we as individuals, teams and departments have challenged assumptions and taken action to help ensure a more equitable academic community for all. As we look back at 2021, I know that some people tend to think about what we could not do or missed. The beauty of this Year in Review is that it provides a lens to view what we did accomplish.

*This report highlights critical efforts in 2021 to:*

- Continue standing on the promise of intentional inclusive excellence
- Enhance the campus climate and sense of belonging
- Reach diverse communities
- Strengthen public communication
- Deliver other valuable resources and services

Learning from each other, students, patients, and community partners has been invaluable. We have challenged our perceptions, understanding, and approaches to diversity, equity, and inclusion resulting in a sustainable framework and intentional action. While equity is always at the core of our mission, we will continue to evolve our focus, initiating conversations – and

action – on race and inequity across our organization.

In 2021, the ODEI team came together to build on our commitment to anti-oppression, anti-racism, equity, and inclusion. We made this resolve a living and critical part of our work and interactions throughout the year. We have made significant gains — and we still have a great deal of work to do to meet our goals and standards. Many have often heard me say, "If we cannot create the world we want here on this campus, we have no business telling the larger society how to do anything."

At UAB, diversity, equity and inclusion are more than a call to action. It's the way we show up for work every day, and it impacts our performance across the enterprise. We'll need to have fortitude as we reach for our aspirations while strengthening our commitment to diversity and inclusion, health equity, racial justice, economic fairness, and unifying moments—even when these issues aren't making headlines. This past year, I've been inspired by the nimbleness and resilience of UAB leadership, students, faculty, and staff. We'll all keep striving to be better every day, use and develop our unique gifts, and continue living the shared values of UAB to drive us forward.

Warmly,

**Paulette Patterson Dilworth, Ph. D.**  
Vice President of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion



## VISION

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UAB Inspiring Equity and Inclusive Excellence, Every Day.

## MISSION

---

Our mission is to champion equity and inclusion and, in particular, to advocate for inclusive excellence and equity so that UAB students, faculty, staff, community partners and friends can flourish and excel. Our mission is inspired by what we value, what we learn from research and what we teach and share with the world. It is our goal to inspire our people to take a courageous step to inspire equity and inclusive excellence throughout our state, nation, and the world, every day.

## DEFINITIONS

---

### Diversity

Diversity is a defining feature of Alabama's and UAB's past, present, and future; and refers to the variety of personal experiences, values, and worldviews that arise from differences of culture and circumstance. Such differences include race, ethnicity, gender, age, religion, language, abilities/disabilities, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, geographic region, and more.

### Equity

Equity is the guarantee of fair treatment, access, opportunity, and advancement for all students, faculty, and staff in every stage of UAB's education and career development, while at the same time striving to identify and eliminate barriers that have prevented the full participation of marginalized groups.

### Inclusion

Inclusion is the act of creating an environment at UAB in which any individual or group can feel welcome, respected, supported, and valued. An inclusive climate embraces differences and offers respect in words and actions so that all people can fully participate in the University's opportunities.

**WAB**





# WHO WE ARE

## SHARED VALUES

---

### Integrity

We act ethically and do what is right.

### Respect

We treat others with courtesy and civility.

### Diversity and Inclusiveness

Everybody counts every day. We actively seek varied perspectives in our decision-making.

### Collaboration

We trust each other and work cooperatively across disciplinary boundaries in the spirit of shared governance.

### Excellence and Achievement

We constantly innovate, solve problems and improve ourselves and others through learning.

### Stewardship

Fiscal and environmental sustainability guide our decisions.

### Accountability

We are answerable to each other and act with the best interests of the university in mind.

# STRATEGIC GOALS AND ACTIONS

## Access & Success

Enhance recruitment, retention and graduation rates of students from underrepresented populations. Increase recruitment, hiring, retention and promotion of faculty and staff from underrepresented populations.

## Positive Campus Environment

Improve and sustain a culture where students, faculty, staff, alumni, community partners, friends and visitors feel included and supported.

## Diversity Education

Improve and increase diversity education and training opportunities to enhance cross-cultural competency and awareness for students, faculty, staff, and members of the community.

## Campus & Community Engagement

Serve the campus and Birmingham community by seeking, establishing, strengthening and sustaining relationships with diverse groups, businesses, industry, organizations, institutions and community partners to advance and promote equity and inclusion.

## Communication

Provide clear, cohesive and comprehensive communication regarding diversity, inclusion and equity to all university stakeholders.

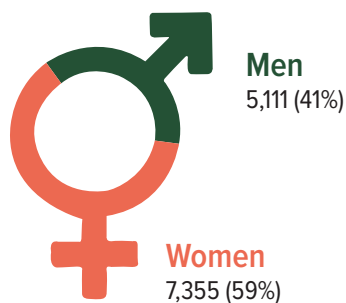


The letters 'UAB' in a large, bold, green font mounted on a light-colored building facade. The background of the entire page features a photograph of a building with the 'UAB' logo and trees in the foreground.

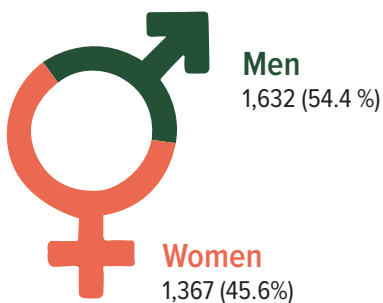
# BY THE NUMBERS

## EMPLOYMENT

University Workforce 12,466



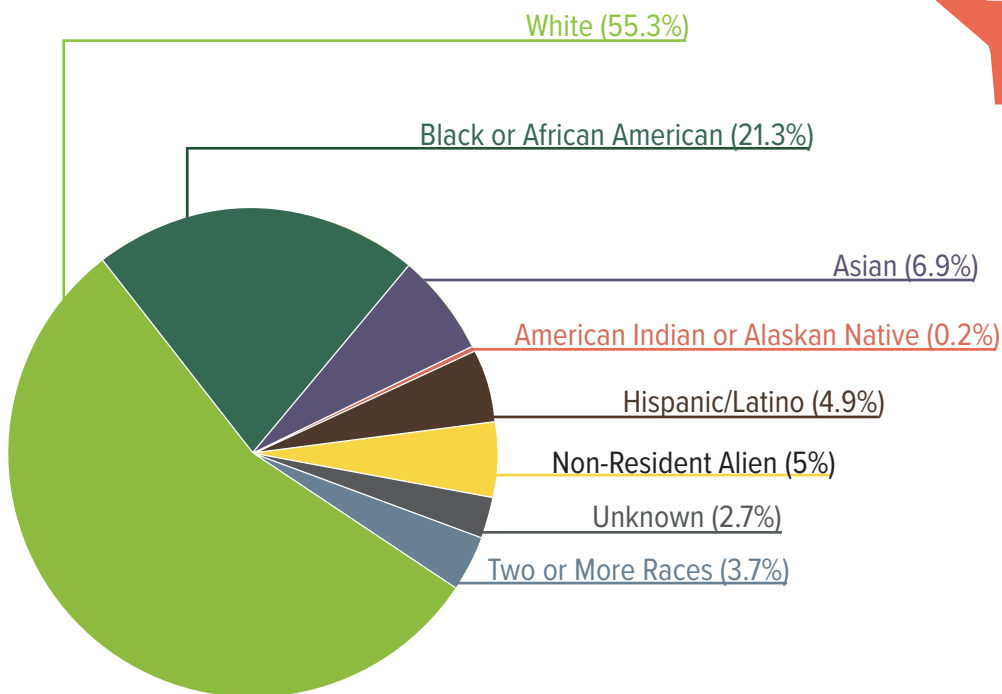
Total Faculty 2,999



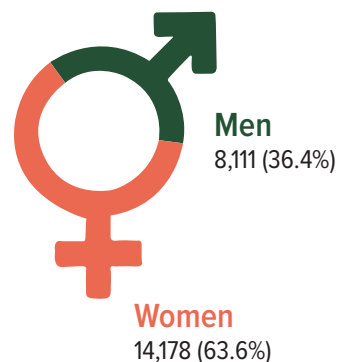
**37.7%**  
from Underrepresented Groups

## ENROLLMENT

Fall 2021 22,289



**44.7%**  
from Underrepresented Groups



(Source: Institutional Effectiveness & Analysis)

# UAB receives Higher Education Excellence in Diversity Award



WRITTEN BY: YVONNE TAUNTON

THE UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA AT BIRMINGHAM RECEIVED THE 2021 HIGHER EDUCATION EXCELLENCE IN DIVERSITY AWARD FROM INSIGHT INTO DIVERSITY MAGAZINE, THE OLDEST AND LARGEST DIVERSITY-FOCUSED PUBLICATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION.

UAB is one of only 100 colleges and universities in the nation identified as a HEED winner by INSIGHT Into Diversity magazine. The university was also named a Diversity Champion.

As a recipient of the annual HEED Award — a national honor recognizing United States colleges and universities that demonstrate an outstanding commitment to diversity and inclusion — UAB will be featured among other recipients in the November 2021 of INSIGHT Into Diversity magazine. This is UAB’s fifth HEED award since 2016 and fourth consecutive Diversity Champion win.

“We are proud to be recognized again by INSIGHT Into Diversity,” said UAB President Ray L. Watts. “Our institution cherishes our Shared Values that include

integrity, respect, diversity and inclusiveness. Our Student Affairs’ Multicultural and Diversity Programs and Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, among many other student, faculty and staff groups and initiatives, do a tremendous job in bringing these values to life.”

INSIGHT Into Diversity magazine selected UAB as a HEED Award recipient for its extensive diversity and inclusion efforts.

“In the past year, UAB’s faculty, staff and students have not only shown their resiliency amid a global pandemic, they have also shown a commitment to further social justice and equity at our university and beyond,” said Paulette Patterson Dilworth, Ph.D., UAB vice president for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion. “Through initiatives such as the Civic Engagement Academy and Racial Equity and Justice Task Force, and resources including the university’s new Faculty Search Guide and Inclusive Language Guide and Course, UAB is continuing the work of making our university a welcoming, inclusive environment.”

Forbes names UAB one of America’s Best Employers for Diversity

“OUR  
INSTITUTION  
CHERISHES  
OUR SHARED  
VALUES THAT  
INCLUDE  
INTEGRITY,  
RESPECT,  
DIVERSITY AND  
INCLUSIVENESS.”

Ray L. Watts, MD.  
UAB PRESIDENT

“The HEED Award process consists of a comprehensive and rigorous application that includes questions relating to the recruitment and retention of students and employees — and best practices for both — continued leadership support for diversity, and other aspects of campus diversity and inclusion,” said Lenore Pearlstein, publisher of INSIGHT Into Diversity. “We take a detailed approach to reviewing each application in deciding who will be named a HEED Award recipient. Our standards are high, and we look for institutions where diversity and inclusion are woven into the work being done every day across their campus.”



For more information about the 2021 HEED Award, visit [insightintodiversity.com](https://insightintodiversity.com).

# Forbes names UAB one of America's Best Employers for Diversity

WRITTEN BY: ALICIA ROHAN

THE UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA AT BIRMINGHAM, CONSISTENTLY RECOGNIZED FOR ITS ACHIEVEMENTS IN DIVERSITY, HAS BEEN NAMED **AMERICA'S NO. 4 BEST EMPLOYER FOR DIVERSITY** BY **FORBES**. ITS DIVERSE COMMUNITY BRINGS CONNECTIONS BOTH TO SOCIAL AND ETHNIC GROUPS AND TO INDIVIDUAL LIFE EXPERIENCES.

"Inclusive excellence is not simply something we aim to do; it is who we are as an institution," said Paulette Dilworth, Ph.D., vice president for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion at UAB. "Being counted among the top five employers for diversity in the entire country speaks to the intentionality of inclusion and equity efforts throughout the UAB enterprise. Each day, our employees are making an effort to live out our Shared Values of integrity, respect, diversity and inclusiveness, and accountability."

Forbes' Best Employers for Diversity were chosen based on an independent survey of more than 50,000 employees working for companies employing at least 1,000 people in their United States operations. Respondents were asked questions regarding the topics of age, gender equality, ethnicity, disability, LGBTQA+ and general diversity concerning their own employer.

"Being named a Best Employer for Diversity is particularly rewarding because it shows that our

focused efforts are noticed and appreciated, but the significance reaches far off-campus," said UAB President Ray L. Watts. "As the largest single employer in Alabama, with more than 23,000 employees, our richly diverse workforce makes Birmingham and our region a better place to live, work and play."

This announcement comes on the heels of UAB's being named America's No. 1 Best Large Employer by Forbes in February.

"A diverse workforce better serves and meets the needs of a diverse community," said UAB Medicine CEO Reid Jones. "UAB Medicine takes great pride in delivering world-class care to all patients who need us, and a focus on diversity is critical to our ability to deliver on that promise."



## Intentionally Building a Diverse Workforce

BUILDING AND TRAINING A **DIVERSE** AND **INCLUSIVE** WORKFORCE IS A CORNERSTONE OF UAB'S OFFICE OF DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION. SEVERAL PROGRAMS ARE SET UP TO CHAMPION **EQUITY** AND **INCLUSION** AND, IN PARTICULAR, TO ADVOCATE FOR INCLUSIVE EXCELLENCE AND EQUITY ACROSS CAMPUS.

In an effort to recruit and develop a diverse faculty population, Office of the Vice President of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion partners with the Office of the Provost to offer a newly designed UAB Faculty Searches: A Guide to Best Practices that follows the steps of the recruitment process and integrates additional resources for hiring the most qualified candidate.

For continued development, a four-part Diversity Education curriculum offers employees education topics designed to provide the campus commu-

nity with a greater understanding of diversity, equity and inclusion and its importance as a shared value at UAB. The online module provides a framework for understanding basic diversity concepts for all employees at UAB and is designed to explore the impact of identities in workplace interactions and relationships and provide strategies for improving our practices and culture. The curriculum includes four instructor-led courses, including Cultural Awareness Building Blocks, Unconscious Bias, Safe Zone Training and Bystander Intervention.

**“Inclusive excellence is not simply something we aim to do; it is who we are as an institution.”**

Paulette Dilworth, Ph.D.  
*VICE PRESIDENT FOR DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION AT UAB*



## Promoting Diversity, Equity and Inclusion at all Levels:

UAB HAS STRATEGICALLY CHARGED GROUPS ACROSS CAMPUS WITH **IDENTIFYING OPPORTUNITIES** AND **LEADING THE WAY** AT ALL LEVELS OF THE UNIVERSITY. GROUPS INCLUDE:

### // **EQUITY LEADERSHIP COUNCIL:**

Plays a central role in raising awareness, promoting understanding and diversity education, monitoring faculty and staff searches and other hiring processes, and consulting on matters of equity. Equity advisers leverage their direct experience with local culture to advise their deans regarding strategy, policy, diversity education, climate and accountability.

### // **COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN:**

Is dedicated to promoting gender inclusion and equity by supporting and improving options and opportunities for women at every stage of their education and career. The commission's members support work-life balance initiatives, training and development of emerging leaders, and community outreach to improve the academic climate and work environment at UAB.

### // **UAB MEDICINE:**

Focused on recruiting and retaining a diverse employee population to support its diverse patient population.

### // **ALLIANCE FOR LGBTQ EQUALITY:**

Supports and advances the UAB Strategic Diversity Plan through inclusion of "the full range of human difference and potential that manifests itself in individual members of the campus community," including those who are LGBTQ members of the campus community and their allies. The alliance seeks to enrich diversity and contribute to a high-quality intellectual, cultural, educational and work environment for all members.

### // **AFRICAN AMERICAN FACULTY ASSOCIATION:**

Is committed to recruiting, retaining and supporting African American faculty, providing faculty with support and mentoring for professional development, advocating for African American faculty and their needs and concerns, promoting communication and networking between association faculty and other faculty groups, supporting faculty and student activities, and encouraging participation in campus governance.

### // **VETERANS SERVICES:**

Supports the policies and practices of equal opportunity in education and employment, including the hiring of veterans and their families. UAB was named Birmingham's Most Veteran-Friendly Employer in 2016 by the Birmingham Business Journal for its commitment to increasing the number of veterans in its workforce and has been actively involved in veteran recruitment and outreach.

### // **AWARE:**

Provides disability-management services when an employee's job is affected by a physical, mental or emotional impairment. Through a unique partnership between UAB and the Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services, the AWARE Program assists current employees and their departments, job seekers going through the application process, and employees returning from long-term disability or medical leave.

*In addition, the university is involved in national associations and institutions to further develop the diversity on its campus, including the National Center for Faculty Development & Diversity.*



## UAB names 2021 President's Diversity Champion Award Winners

WRITTEN BY: ASHLEIGH ALDRIDGE

THREE INDIVIDUALS AND ONE STUDENT ORGANIZATION AT THE UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA AT BIRMINGHAM WERE HONORED WITH THE 2021 PRESIDENT'S DIVERSITY CHAMPION AWARD DURING A VIRTUAL CEREMONY FEB. 18, 2021.

Established in 2006, the annual award sponsored by UAB's Office of the President and the Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion recognizes employees, students and organizations that have helped create a more culturally diverse, inclusive university community through their achievements. Nominations are solicited from the UAB community for all categories, and awards are given for projects or activities that best reflect the implementation of unit and/or campus diversity goals.

### 2021 Faculty President's Diversity Champion: Tina Simpson, M.D., MPH

Simpson is a professor and vice chair of Faculty Development in the UAB School of Medicine's Department of Pediatrics and is actively involved in diversity, equity and inclusion activities at UAB as well as at the national level. Simpson is the departmental diversity liaison for the School of Medicine's Office for Diversity and Inclusion. She has helped lead several diversity education initiatives within the Department of Pediatrics. Simpson led the 2017 Maternal and Child Health Bureau MCH-funded Diversity and Health Equity Peer Learning Collaborative, which was composed of eight teams from training programs across the country and designed to help MCH training programs more effectively address diversity and health equity. Simpson is a member of the Society for Adolescent Health and Medicine's Diversity Committee and in 2020 cowrote a position statement regarding immigrant youth in Immigration and Customs Enforcement detention centers and a manuscript calling for the use of anti-racism approaches to address health inequities.

Because of her involvement with the Birmingham Mayor's Office Division of Youth Services, Simpson has been recognized by the city as a "Hidden Hero." She was honored by BHAM Black Pride as the first recipient of the "Dr. Tina Simpson Invisible Warrior Award."



**Tina Simpson, M.D., MPH**

2021 FACULTY PRESIDENT'S DIVERSITY CHAMPION



### 2021 Staff President's Diversity Champion: Jordan Perchik, M.D.

Perchik began his diagnostic radiology residency in the UAB School of Medicine's Department of Radiology on July 1, 2018. He developed an early interest in medical student education and mentorship and joined the Near-Peer student-resident mentorship program, the Radiology Diversity and Inclusion Committee, and the international radiology outreach organization RAD-AID; he is now a resident leader in these

organizations. He has mentored and connected with medical students and fellow residents of diverse backgrounds and experiences, facilitated their pursuit of meaningful research, and worked to address health disparities in radiology. Perchik's efforts have improved inclusion and representation of women and under-represented minorities in the UAB Radiology Residency and have contributed to overall advances in resident wellness.



**Jordan Perchik, M.D.**  
2021 STAFF PRESIDENT'S DIVERSITY CHAMPION

Perchik has also worked to improve transgender health literacy in radiology at the local and national levels. He, along with a supportive team in the UAB Department of Radiology, has recently published a systematic review of transgender research in radiology literature, developed sessions in transgender health literacy for the resident education curriculum, and advocates for equitable delivery of health care for transgender and gender-diverse individuals.

**Graduate/Professional Student  
President's Diversity Champion:  
Nia Taylor**

Taylor is a third-year dental student in the UAB School of Dentistry and is enrolled in a dual-degree program to pursue both her DMD and MBA degrees, with an expected graduation date of May 2022. With a bachelor's degree from the University of Pennsylvania, Taylor then came to UAB, where she graduated with a master's degree in biomedical and health sciences in 2018. Since then, she has been actively engaged in student activities at UAB School of Dentistry; her current involvement includes serving as treasurer of the Student Research Group, program director of the Dental Business Club, an ambassador for the 2020-21 admissions cycle and president of the Student National Dental Association. Taylor has also volunteered as a dental student mentor to undergraduate students for the past three summers at

UAB's Summer Health Professions Education Program.



**Nia Taylor**

2021 GRADUATE/PROFESSIONAL STUDENT PRESIDENT'S  
DIVERSITY CHAMPION

**2021 Student Organization President's Diversity  
Champion: MSHA DEI Student Council**



The M.S. in Health Administration Diversity Equity and Inclusion Student Council in the School of Health Professions is a 27-person committee of the MSHA Student Organization established in the summer of 2020. That summer presented varying emotional predicaments; students were not only navigating the COVID-19 pandemic but were digesting an influx of media showing social injustices across the country. Class leaders decided to organize a Zoom forum where students could speak candidly, share experiences and ask honest questions.

The purpose of the MSHA DEI Student Council is to prioritize diversity, equity and inclusion as fundamental pillars of the MSHA program, while also bringing heightened social awareness to the faculty, staff and students of the program. Using a collaborative platform as a foundation, the council is critical in helping faculty and staff integrate DEI into all aspects of the MSHA program, including the curriculum, admission process, lunch and learns, and guest lectures. The council ensures the perpetuity of a platform that calls attention to the diverse perspectives of current students and alumni.

## Constituent Groups

### African American Faculty Association

The African American Faculty Association at the University of Alabama at Birmingham is committed to recruiting, retaining, and supporting African American faculty, providing faculty with support and mentoring for professional development, advocating for African American faculty and their needs and concerns, promoting communication and networking between Association faculty and other faculty groups, supporting faculty and student activities, and encouraging participation in campus governance.

#### // THE AFRICAN AMERICAN FACULTY ASSOCIATION ASPIRES TO:

**PROMOTE** justice and equity for African American faculty

**CELEBRATE** the accomplishments of faculty and students

**CREATE** an environment that is inviting and conducive to the recruitment and retention of more Black faculty

**BECOME** unified in our efforts to represent the concerns and needs of Black faculty

### Alliance for LGBTQ Equality

The Alliance is an employee-resource group of The University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB), the UAB Health System (UABHS), the University of Alabama Health Services Foundation (UAHSF), and the Callahan Eye Foundation Hospital. It exists to provide advocacy, support, and networking for faculty and staff members of UAB's Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and Allies (LGBTQA) community. Membership is open to all such employees and retirees.

The Alliance maintains an open line of communication with UAB's administration regarding issues of concern to faculty and staff at UAB/UAHS/UAHSF.

#### // ONGOING TOPICS OF DISCUSSION INCLUDE:

**CREATION** of an LGBTQ services office for members of the UAB community

**CREATING** the option of indicating a "Preferred Pronoun" in UAB's student database

**MAKING** Accessible Single-Use Restrooms available when required by building code



## Equity Leadership Council

THE EQUITY LEADERSHIP COUNCIL (ELC) IS ESTABLISHED TO **PROMOTE** DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION AT **ALL** LEVELS OF THE UNIVERSITY.

The overarching goal of having a diverse University community is to better educate our students, faculty, and staff to be active, informed, productive participants in a diverse society and interdependent world. Comprised of members from across all academic and administrative support divisions of the University of Alabama at Birmingham, the ELC serves as an advisory council to the Vice President and Chief Diversity Officer. Comprised of students, faculty, and staff from UAB enterprise, the ELC works to help UAB

achieve its goals of promoting diversity and institutionalizing equity and inclusion as core values.

The Council meets regularly during each academic year. Equity Advisors have a central role in raising awareness, promoting understanding, diversity education, and monitoring the faculty and staff search and other hiring processes, and consultation on matters of equity. Equity Advisors leverage their direct experience with local culture to advise their deans regarding strategy, policy, diversity education, climate, and accountability. Although Equity Advisors report directly to their deans and department administrators, they also work closely with and provide invaluable advice to the Vice President for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion.

## ELC members host retreat aimed at advancing UAB's Strategic Diversity Plan

Members of the Equity Leadership Council (ELC) met in October 2021, their first time meeting in-person since 2020, for an in-person retreat at the UAB Hilton Hotel. The day-long retreat was designed to discuss the university's Strategic Diversity Plan, which was implemented in fall 2019, and ways to further implement the plan across the institution. ELC members were challenged to work in small teams to address each of the Strategic Diversity Plan objectives: 1. Access and

Success, 2. Positive Campus Environment, 3. Diversity Education, 4. Campus and Community Engagement and 5. Communication.

Author, speaker and leadership professional joyce gillie gossom, Ed.D., served as the retreat facilitator. Each member joined one of five accountability groups based on the plan's objectives. The groups have since begun work on actionable items to help revitalize the plan and reenergize the UAB community. Those actions include an internal communications campaign and establishing diversity, equity and inclusion FAQs for the university website. The goal of the ELC is to promote diversity, equity and inclusion at all levels of the university.

# Mission

To ensure UAB serves the needs of women faculty, staff and students by examining and advocating for inclusiveness and equitable opportunities for all.

# Vision

UAB: Where women are inspired and empowered to thrive.

# Goals

- ▶ Advise the president and UAB administration on issues, policies and practices that affect women at UAB.
- ▶ Assess the current climate and conditions in which women work, live and study and UAB.
- ▶ Propose initiatives to ensure that UAB equitably serves the needs of its women employees and students.
- ▶ Support and provide resources for the development, education and advancement of women at UAB.



## UAB Commission on the Status of Women

THE UAB COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN (CSW) IS **DEDICATED** TO PROMOTING GENDER INCLUSION AND EQUITY BY SUPPORTING AND IMPROVING OPTIONS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN AT **EVERY** STAGE OF THEIR EDUCATION AND CAREER.

The Commission's members support work-life balance initiatives, training and development of emerging leaders and community outreach to improve the academic climate and work environment at UAB. These efforts build on UAB's commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion and are evidenced by the educational achievements of women students, the innovative teaching, scholarship and research by women faculty, and the professional advancement of women staff and administrators. Collab-

oration with campus and community organizations help us open new doors of opportunity, and we will continue to build a network that enables women at UAB to thrive.

CSW plays an active role on UAB's campus and in the Greater Birmingham community through their ongoing initiatives including Suits for Success, an annual clothing drive that generates work-appropriate attire donated by the UAB community for My Sister's Closet, an outreach program of the YWCA created to provide clothes for women interviewing for or holding jobs. The Commission also hosts interactive programs and events including the 'Picture a Scientist' documentary and panel discussion to explore the opportunities and challenges for women scientists, past, present and future.

# The Commission on the Status of Women President's Leadership Award



2021

**Susan D. Marchase Outstanding  
Woman Administrator**



**Katie Crenshaw J.D.**

---

**Commission on the Status of Women  
President's Leadership Award**



**Sarah Nafziger, M.D.**





## CSW Sees You

THE UAB COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN **HONORED** THE CAMPUS COMMUNITY FOR THEIR **COMMITMENT TO EXCELLENCE** IN 2020 DESPITE THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC, DURING A VIRTUAL CEREMONY ON WEDNESDAY, APRIL 21, 2021.

“CSW Sees You” was co-sponsored by the UAB Office of the Vice President for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion. More than 60 individuals, units and departments were recognized during the ceremony. Katie Crenshaw, J.D., UAB’s Chief Risk and Compliance Officer, received the 2021 “Susan D. Marchese Outstanding Woman Administrator.”

Sarah Nafziger, M.D., vice president for Clinical Support Services for UAB Medicine and director of Employee Health, received the

inaugural “Commission on the Status of Women President’s Leadership Award.”

“The year 2020 brought so many unimaginable challenges and unfathomable circumstances along with a comparable number of opportunities for members of the UAB community, said Anita Clemon, assistant vice president for Institutional Equity and “CSW Sees You” chairperson. “Recognizing the year that we experienced was far from “normal,” CSW wanted to honor and acknowledge all individuals and/or departments that went above and beyond to persevere in their efforts during the pandemic.”

The eight recipients of the “2020 Outstanding Women Awards” were also acknowledged during the virtual ceremony.



# **ACCESS & SUCCESS**



# More progress, less stress: Top takeaways from the Faculty Success Program

WRITTEN BY MATT WINDSOR

TAMIKA SMITH, PH.D., WAS HESITANT. A COLLEAGUE WHO HAD BEEN THROUGH THE **FACULTY SUCCESS PROGRAM** PUT ON BY THE **NATIONAL CENTER FOR FACULTY DEVELOPMENT AND DIVERSITY (NCFDD)** RECOMMENDED THAT SMITH TAKE PART IN THE 12-WEEK SUMMER PROGRAM.

The program promises to help faculty of all ranks improve their research productivity, work-life balance and personal growth through empirically tested methods. And if she was selected to receive one of the grants offered by UAB's Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, attendance was free.

Still, "I thought, 'I don't need anything else on my plate,'" recalled Smith, an assistant professor in the Department of Health Behavior in the School of Public Health. "But when I looked into it and saw that it had a 99 percent success rate, I was impressed. So I said, 'Let's see about this.'"

**"In the cohort I participated in, we all agreed how wonderful this program was. The first half focused on writing productivity, and the second half focused on self-care, which I enjoyed because most academic programs don't even touch on this. It is amazing the difference that it has made."**

Smith's verdict? "It was an amazing experience," she said. "In the cohort I participated in, we all agreed how wonderful this program was. The first half focused on writing productivity, and the second half

focused on self-care, which I enjoyed because most academic programs don't even touch on this. It is amazing the difference that it has made. My writing projects were weighing me down before, but now I know how to make time for them — and make consistent progress."

Smith also continues to meet with one of the members of her cohort to hold each other accountable to their goals. "When you listen to the first lecture, they kept talking about accountability," Smith said. "You think to yourself, 'What are they going to do to us if we don't produce?' But then you see how the accountability that is built into the program is so helpful to reaching where you want to be with your writing goals."

## Tamika Smith

PH.D., ASSISTANT PROFESSOR, DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH BEHAVIOR



## 100 percent success rate at UAB

Smith's experience is echoed by the other 20 UAB faculty members who have completed the Faculty Success Program since the university became an institutional member of the NCFDD in 2017. In an NCFDD-sponsored survey released earlier this year, 100 percent of UAB respondents said the Faculty Success Program had improved their writing productivity, and 95 percent reported better work-life balance.

The NCFDD provides career development and mentoring resources for faculty at more than 450 colleges and universities. More than 475 faculty, postdocs and graduate students at UAB have taken advantage of the university's institu-


tional membership, according to the survey. Membership includes access to the NCFDD's Core Curriculum webinars, focused on skills necessary to "thrive in the academy"; interactive, online Guest Expert Webinars; multi-week courses on preparing tenure and promotion materials and manuscript revision; and 14-day writing challenges. In 2020, 39 UAB registrants wrote for 7,028 minutes as part of these challenges, which use special software to encourage participants to write for at least 30 minutes each day over the fortnight.

"We are pleased so many faculty members are utilizing the NCFDD resources and that tools are effective in helping participants find a healthy balance between their on-campus productivity and their prioritization of personal well-being," said Pam Benoit, Ph.D., UAB's senior vice president for Academic Affairs and provost. "This initial feedback from NCFDD participants is encouraging, and we look forward to even more faculty participating in the future."

**"The point of this program was to moderate everything. There was a lot of emphasis on planning ahead, creating long-term, short-term and mid-term goals, so when you have time, you are not surprised by it and at a loss for what to do with yourself. We were encouraged to do small blocks of regular writing to keep it part of our daily lives."**

**Marliese Thomas**

ASSISTANT PROFESSOR AND FINE ARTS LIBRARIAN, UAB LIBRARIES



## Identifying barriers ‘keeping you from doing what you want to do’

Marliese Thomas, assistant professor and fine arts librarian for UAB Libraries, has returned to academia after spending several years working for a software company that produces digital tools for libraries. “When I returned to a faculty position, I was really starting from scratch as far as my research program,” Thomas said. So, when she saw an announcement in the eReporter about the Summer Success Program, it immediately caught her attention. “Writing is something that I have struggled to be doing consistently,” Thomas said.

“I appreciated the holistic view that the program takes,” Thomas said. “It was not completely focused on writing skills but in understanding what is going on in your life that is keeping you from sitting down and writing — the barriers that are keeping you from doing what you want to do.”

One of those barriers is the tendency of many of us to “focus on the really big project due right now,” Thomas said. “We go all-in and then say, ‘When the semester is over, I can rebalance.’ But then another emergency — work or personal — comes up, and you end up being this pendulum swinging back and forth from one hyper-focused situation to the next.

“The point of this program was to moderate everything,” Thomas continued. “There was a lot of emphasis on planning ahead, creating long-term, short-term and mid-term goals. So when you have time, you are not surprised by it and at a loss for what to do with yourself. We were encouraged to do small blocks of regular writing to keep it part of our daily lives. You’ve been working on all these different parts of your life to make small amounts of progress in everything along the way. You don’t have to waste the time to sit down and say, ‘I haven’t done this in a while; I have to remember how to do this again.’”

Thomas says she has already recommended the program to many of her colleagues. “I have appreciated it so much,” she said. “Not just professionally; I have been able to apply a lot of the techniques we have learned to my personal life, as well. It had an impact in all areas of my life.”

## Daily writing pays off

Grace Jepkemboi, Ph.D., professor in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction in the School of Education, also participated in this summer's Faculty Success Program. "A faculty member at another university told me about the program a few years ago and how much it had helped increase her productivity," Jepkemboi said. "When I saw the request for applications, I did not hesitate to apply, and I was not disappointed at all. This program helped me to be more centered, consistent and focused." Jepkemboi joined the Faculty Success Program's alumni program this fall; she is one of 65 UAB faculty who have registered for the alumni program.

Jepkemboi says she continues to practice daily writing — 30 minutes per day from Monday to Friday — with two writing partners. "We hold each other accountable every week," she said. "I am so thankful to UAB for providing this opportunity to me. It is one of the best programs tailored to increase faculty productivity."

"Our goal for the university's NCFDD membership has always been to see faculty members, postdocs and graduate students elevate their work and research by tapping into the unlimited resources available to them," said Paulette Patterson Dilworth, Ph.D., UAB's vice president for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion. "We hope to see more instructors at all levels actively engage and participate."

**"When I saw the request for applications, I did not hesitate to apply, and I was not disappointed at all. This program helped me to be more centered, consistent and focused."**

Grace Jepkemboi

PH.D., PROFESSOR, DEPARTMENT OF CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

## About the Keystone Fellowship

Founded in 2017, the Keystone Fellowship Program (KFP) aims to cultivate the next generation of engaged scholars whose doctoral program, research and career interests align with solving problems with direct implications on diversity, equity, and inclusion in higher education, our surrounding Birmingham communities, the nation, and the world. Specifically, the program seeks out students who have a demonstrated interest in developing and implementing innovative and sustainable approaches to address complex social needs affecting historically underserved and marginalized communities.

Since its establishment, KFP has been especially effective in enabling students from under-represented groups to complete their doctoral studies and further their career interests. In addition to receiving monthly stipends, Fellows enjoy access to a rich array of activities that promote their holistic development through mentoring relations with faculty, collaboration with peers, and the exchange and implementation of ideas with a broad audience of academic and community leaders. Furthermore, Fellows from a range of disciplines support one another's research, make presentations at conferences and colloquia, participate in community engagement projects, and publish working papers.

## The Office of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Welcomes New Keystone Fellows

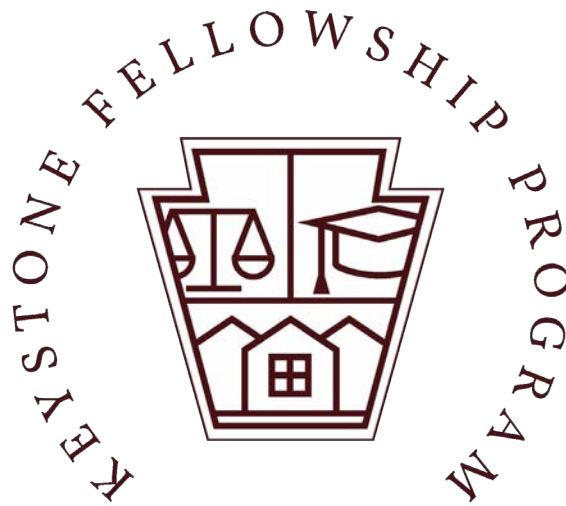
THE OFFICE OF DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION AND CAMPUS AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT (CACE) WELCOMED TWO NEW **KEYSTONE FELLOWS** IN THE FALL 2021, **ASHLEY CONOWAY** AND **MAIZONNE FIELDS**.

Conoway is working towards her PhD in Health Education and Health Promotion (HE/HP) within the Community Health and Human Services Program in the UAB School of Education. Hailing from Greenwood, MS, she completed her undergraduate degree in Biology at Xavier University of Louisiana and has received her Master of Science in Basic Medical Science from UAB. Currently, she works as a researcher in the Department of Preventative Medicine on several projects concentrated on reducing chronic disease disparities in the Alabama Black Belt. While studying in HE/HP, Conoway worked on a health edutainment project with men at Donaldson State Prison where they wrote, performed, and published two seasons of the radio drama, *Corrections*, about health and wellness in the prison environment.



Working with the incarcerated population inspired her to learn more about how people who have experienced incarceration in their formative years adjust and take care of themselves once they are released. Her current dissertation research is focused on how interactions with the criminal justice system affect self-care behaviors.





Maizonne Fields is currently a first-year student in UAB's Developmental Psychology PhD program. Broadly, her research interests focus on adult development and aging. This includes health disparities, dementia, and caregivers of those with demen-



tia. More specifically, she is interested in 1) the impact of dementia diagnosis on caregiver identity and family system infrastructure that may lead to caregiver burnout; 2) the management of chronic disease with inadequate levels of support; 3) differences in access and utilization of healthcare and community services that may affect the caregiving experience in African American families; and 4) the role of advanced planning in disease management and reducing stress related to healthcare decisions.

Currently, Fields is working on the Caring for Adults with Difficulties (CFAD) research study that examines stressors of caregivers to aging adults, their social support networks, caregiving demands, and personal experiences. She also serves as the coordinator for the Community Outreach, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (CODI) core through UAB's Alzheimer's Research Disease Center.

## UAB AWARDED NSF ADVANCE GRANT TO ADDRESS GENDER EQUITY IN STEM

ACHIEVING  
GENDER EQUITY  
IN STEM



6

PARTNERSHIP  
SCHOOLS

1.25  
million awarded



## Alabama ADVANCE Partnership for Gender Equity

FUNDED BY THE NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION (NSF), THE ALABAMA ADVANCE GRANT IS AIMED AT **INCREASING** THE PARTICIPATION AND **ADVANCEMENT** OF WOMEN IN SCIENCE TECHNOLOGY, ENGINEERING AND MATHEMATICS (STEM).

The Alabama Advance grant was awarded to the Office of the Vice President for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion at the University of Alabama at Birmingham, partnering UAB with the University of Alabama in Huntsville, Auburn University, Alabama A&M university, Miles College, and Oakwood University. The three-year grant was created to advance faculty in science, technology, engineering and math fields that will build on prior NSF ADVANCE efforts, while implementing evidence-based initiatives that promote gender equity in STEM.

In March 2021, UAB's Alabama ADVANCE Partnership for Achieving Gender Equity in STEM (APAGES) hosted the Alabama ADVANCE Spring Symposium, featuring Freeman Hrabrowski, Ph.D., who discussed "Empowered and Inclusive Campuses: Broadening Racial and Gender Diversity in STEM." Following the symposium, monthly seminar series were held to discuss the recruitment and retention of women and minorities, tenure in STEM fields, the balance of work and family, and other topics important

to the advancement of women in STEM. The virtual series featured various speakers from UAB and surrounding institutions and included Mona Fouad MD, MPH; Cynthia Warrick, Ph.D.; Kecia Thomas, Ph.D.; Annice Yarber-Allen, Ph.D.; Ansley Abraham, Ph.D.; Marcia Owens, J.D., Ph.D; and many others.

All events were co-sponsored by the University of Alabama in Huntsville and hosted by the Alabama ADVANCE Partnership for Achieving Gender Equity in STEM (APAGES), the University of Alabama at Birmingham, Alabama A&M University, Miles College, Oakwood University, and Auburn University as part of the APAGES ongoing programming activities.

// PARTNERSHIP ACTIVITIES

**ESTABLISH** an ADVANCE Office







**HOST** annual statewide ADVANCE conference

**CONDUCT** department chair and search committee training


**COLLABORATE** with the Auburn University INCLUDES project

**CONDUCT** seminars on unconscious bias, career development, and spouse/partner relocation

**PREPARE** annual evaluation

 <p><b>AUBURN UNIVERSITY</b></p> <p>DR. OVERTOUN JENDA, PI, INCLUDES THE ALLIANCE FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES FOR INCLUSION, NETWORKING, AND TRANSITION OPPORTUNITIES IN STEM (TAPDINTO-STEM)</p>	 <p>DR. JEANETTE JONES, PI, DISTINGUISHED PROFESSOR OF BIOLOGY AND FACULTY TRUSTEE</p>	 <p>DR. JARRALYNNE AGEE, PI, PROVOST AND SR. VICE PRESIDENT OF ACADEMIC AFFAIRS</p>
 <p>DR. KEN LAIHING, PI, PROFESSOR AND DEAN, SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SCIENCES</p>	 <p><b>THE UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA AT BIRMINGHAM</b></p> <p>DR. PAULETTE PATTERSON DILWORTH, LEAD PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR AND VICE PRESIDENT FOR DIVERSITY, EQUITY &amp; INCLUSION, THE UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA AT BIRMINGHAM</p>	 <p><b>THE UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA IN HUNTSVILLE</b></p> <p>DR. LETHA ETZKORN, PI, DEPARTMENT CHAIR AND PROFESSOR, COMPUTER SCIENCE</p>


# ALABAMA ADVANCE SEMINARS



**REGISTER TODAY**

**Alabama ADVANCE SPRING SYMPOSIUM**

Register: [bit.ly/AdvanceSpringSymposium](http://bit.ly/AdvanceSpringSymposium)



**UAB ADVANCE VIRTUAL SEMINAR**

MONTHLY TOPIC: **BEST PRACTICES FOR RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION OF WOMEN AND MINORITIES**

SPEAKERS: DR. RECIA THOMAS, UAB DEAN OF THE COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES; DR. VEDNA KEITH, UAB PROFESSOR AND CHAIR, DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY

OCTOBER 20, 2020 2:00 PM

Register here: [bit.ly/AdvanceVirtualSeminar](http://bit.ly/AdvanceVirtualSeminar) October




BIRMINGHAM, AL

**ALABAMA ADVANCE SYMPOSIUM**

THEME: **FORGING CHANGE, TRANSFORMING INSTITUTIONS**

11:30 AM SEPT. 24, 2020



Alabama ADVANCE

**Culture and Climate of Academic Departments and STEM Organizations**

1PM




ADVANCE

**The Underrepresentation of Women**

Especially Women of Color, in Academic Leadership and Decision-making Positions


1PM



Alabama ADVANCE

**The Relevance of HBCUs in STEM Education**

1PM




Alabama ADVANCE

**Implicit and Explicit Bias in Science and Medicine**

1PM

SCAN QR CODE TO VIEW PAST SEMINARS



## Bridge to the Doctorate Program

THE **BRIDGE TO THE DOCTORATE FELLOWSHIP** PROGRAM AT UAB IS A **FUNDING OPTION** FROM THE NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION (NSF) CREATED IN RESPONSE TO THE SHORTAGE OF RESEARCHERS **NATIONWIDE** FROM UNDERREPRESENTED GROUPS IN SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, ENGINEERING, AND MATHEMATICS (STEM).

The program is administered at UAB through the ALSAMP program which is headquartered at The University of Alabama. The ultimate goal of the BD Program is to prepare historically underrepresented minority students to persist and complete STEM doctoral degree programs. The BD Program is directed by Dr. Louis Dale, Professor Emeritus of Mathematics, Dr. Paulette Patterson Dilworth, Vice President for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, Dr. Carolyn Braswell, ALSAMP Program Director and Dr. Marius Nkashama, Professor of Mathematics.

Selected BD Fellowship Recipients must be U.S. citizens, U.S. nationals or permanent residents of the United States, earned their STEM baccalaureate degrees

and been active participants in LSAMP activities as undergraduate students.

### // PROGRAM SUPPORT INCLUDES

\$32,000 stipend per year for the first two years of doctoral study in a STEM discipline for each student

Cost of Education allowance to the institution for tuition, health insurance and other normal fees up to \$12,000 per year for two years for each student

Travel assistance for participation in regional and national research conferences

Participation in local skills workshops and seminars

Professional development, networking, and a diverse and interactive community.

## ALSAMP

The Alabama Louis Stokes Alliance for Minority Participation (ALSAMP) Summer Bridge Program hosts scholars for a 10-week residential program at UAB. The ALSAMP Summer

Bridge Program seeks to identify and aid recently graduated scholars who are planning to attend UAB and majoring in a STEM discipline. The program serves as preparation for a successful transition from high school to UAB.

## Multicultural Scholars Program

THE **MULTICULTURAL SCHOLARS PROGRAM (MSP)** IS AN **ACADEMIC ENRICHMENT AND SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM** DESIGNED TO SUPPORT THE RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION OF **UNDERREPRESENTED** STUDENTS AT UAB.

The program has supported scholars for over 20 years and continues to thrive in assisting them to reach their educational and professional goals through knowledge investment and social development. The motto that best embodies this initiative and its focus is “each one, reach one.” As a cohort, all MSP scholars are encouraged to live by the motto of “Each one, reach one” by paying it forward in support and service throughout their communities.

In 2021, 19 students were actively involved in the MSP through the Office of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion. Benefits of MSP include a peer mentoring program, graduate and professional school preparation, service-learning experiences, awards/graduation program and MSP alumni chapter.

## First Generation Scholars

THE OFFICE OF THE VICE PRESIDENT FOR DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION ANNOUNCED THE **CROWDFUNDING CAMPAIGN** FOR THE **FIRST GENERATION SCHOLARS FUND**.

The fund was created to increase enrollment and support of underrepresented students from rural and urban communities. The fund is established on a vision of investing in and strengthening the overall competitiveness of diverse groups of underrepresented students in higher education. First-generation students –those who do not have a parent who has graduated from college –make up over 28% of UAB’s first-year entering students. The First Generation Scholars fund aims to help

these students to realize their full potential and maximize their educational opportunities without the additional worry about the cost of their education.



*Scan QR code for access //*



## ODEI Launches John Lewis “Good and Necessary Trouble” (GANT) Endowed Scholarship

IN 2021, THE OFFICE OF THE VICE PRESIDENT FOR DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION LAUNCHED AN **ENDOWED SCHOLARSHIP** TO HONOR LATE CONGRESSMAN AND ALABAMA-NATIVE JOHN ROBERT LEWIS.

The John Lewis “Good and Necessary Trouble” (“GANT”) Endowed scholarship is a service-learning opportunity that integrates research and community-based practice in addressing social change throughout UAB and surrounding areas. Spendable earnings from the scholarship will be used to assist deserving first-generation students at UAB. The naming was formally accepted by the University of Alabama System Board of Trustees at its February 2021 meeting.

The John Lewis “Good and Necessary Trouble” (“GANT”) Endowed scholarship is a service-learning opportunity that integrates research and community-based practice in addressing social change throughout UAB and surrounding areas.

Each year, the GANT Scholarship will provide a monetary award to UAB students who demonstrate a continued commitment to academic excellence, leadership, and commitment to community engagement. Additionally, students are paired with a mentor who provides academic support in their personal and academic development. Scholars will also develop their resumes and/or curriculum vitae, write personal and research statements, and

obtain letters of recommendation.

### // **GANT SCHOLARS PROGRAM OBJECTIVES**

**MENTOR** students on areas of interest involving community engagement

**PROVIDE** scholars with opportunities to engage in the community through internships and applied research within their field of interest

**EXPOSE** scholars to theory, research, and practice of social justice within underserved communities

**CONNECT** students in a supportive GANT cohort with access to resources and develop a community of mutual support and collaboration

**TRAIN** students to apply for internships and research opportunities

**EMPOWER** scholars to pursue graduate/professional school within their academic field and become agents of change in their communities

**A committee of cross-campus representatives was formed to create the GANT scholarship. Those members were:**

**Jazmine Benjamin**, *Graduate Student Government*

**Rodrena Bush**, *Health System*

**Paulette Patterson Dilworth, PhD**, *Vice President for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion*

**Rebecca Gordon**, *Advancement*

**Kristina Ria Herald, PhD**, *School of Health Professions*

**Tyler Huang**, *Undergraduate Student Government Association*

**Tina Kempin Reuter**, *Institute for Human Rights, College of Arts and Sciences*

**Brandon Wolfe, PhD**, *Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion*

**Emily Wykle**, *Office of the President*



# UABHS Donates to John Lewis Health Equity Program Support Fund

SCHOOL OF HEALTH PROFESSIONS

UAB HEALTH SYSTEM DONATED \$25,000 TO ESTABLISH THE JOHN LEWIS HEALTH EQUITY PROGRAM SUPPORT FUND. THE GIFT, IN HONOR OF THE ALABAMA NATIVE AND CIVIL RIGHTS HERO, SUPPORTS THE UAB ACADEMY FOR ADDRESSING HEALTH DISPARITIES THROUGH HEALTH CARE LEADERSHIP.

The Academy, housed in the School of Health Professions' Department of Health Services Administration, is a summer enrichment program for undergraduate students aimed at reducing health disparities through the development of diverse, inclusive health care leaders.

The students who attend identify as Black, Latinx, Native American or multi-cultural; are from rural, urban, and other underserved communities; and are the first in their families to attend college or graduate school.

"As part of our commitment to social equity we wanted to recognize John Lewis, an Alabama native, who's life personified social equity and racial equality," said Will Ferniany, Ph.D., CEO, UAB Health System and the UAB/SVHS Alliance. "The purpose and goals of The Academy reflect what John Lewis strived for and I can think of no better way for a Health System to honor his legacy."

The immediate goal of the program is to increase the diversity of students entering graduate degree programs and better positioning them to help fight health disparities in Alabama and the U.S. The selected students, who will be called UAB John Lewis Health Equity Scholars, will also be provided assistance with preparation of graduate school application materials and knowledge about the wide array of career opportunities including health care leadership, health policy, health informatics, health care quality and safety, public health, and more.

The Academy, which was created in 2017, also delivers direct exposure and access to leaders, organizations, and communities for first-hand lessons about the intersection of social determinants and health outcomes. The ultimate goal is to inspire

the students so that they may work to get in "good trouble" and improve disparities through policy, organizational practice and leadership.

"We are grateful for this generous support of the Academy and I believe it is a fitting tribute to Representative Lewis and his legacy for Alabama and the nation," said Christy Harris Lemak, Ph.D., chair, Department of Health Services Administration. "The support fund will enable us to improve the Academy and enhance our ability to develop inclusive leaders for the future."

Representative John Lewis, who passed away on July 17, 2020, was born in 1940 to sharecroppers near Troy, Alabama. He was a legendary civil rights leader who participated in numerous historical moments including the "Bloody Sunday" march across the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma in 1965. He served 17 terms in the U.S. House of Representatives, representing a district in the Atlanta area, and was called the "Conscience of Congress" by his colleagues.



**BMEN**





## Success in College

WRITTEN BY WESLEY PETERSON

**HISTORICALLY**, COMPLETING COLLEGE HAS BEEN MORE **CHALLENGING** FOR AFRICAN AMERICAN MEN THAN ALMOST ANY OTHER STUDENT COHORT.

Black male students enrolled in four-year public institutions graduate at a lower rate than the national average. In 2008, the University of Alabama at Birmingham took steps to combat the disparity, including student-initiated efforts that led to the creation of the Blazer Male Excellence Network.

BMEN is a peer-mentoring group offered by Student Affairs' Student Multicultural and Diversity Programs for black male students entering UAB. The BMEN program provides students with tools and strategies to help them navigate their college experience.

Over the past 13 years, BMEN has connected new students with a cohort of trained student mentors to provide academic and social support. UAB faculty and staff members, as well as professionals from the community, have supported the program.

"The 2021-22 BMEN cohort performed excep-

tionally well during the fall semester," says Sharifa Wip, SMDP's mentor programs coordinator and BMEN advisor. "The group recorded an overall 3.4-grade point average, while ten of the 22 mentees received Presidential Honors by earning a 4.0 GPA. No member of this year's cohort earned less than a 2.0, and two members will travel abroad with UAB Education Abroad during Spring break."

Eleven BMEN participants will graduate during spring and summer commencement ceremonies.

Retaining students is just as critical. Nationally, black males have the lowest retention rate of any group on most college campuses. The BMEN program helps connect Black men to the university by providing them with the tools and strategies to assist them in navigating their college experience by exploring issues such as masculinity and cultural identity.

All current cohort members returned to UAB.





**POSITIVE**

**CAMPUS ENVIRONMENT**

## UAB Introduces the Racial Equity & Justice Taskforce

THE NATIONAL RESPONSE TO THE MANY RECENT RACIAL INJUSTICE INCIDENTS HAS BEEN THE **FOCUS** OF PUBLIC AND PRIVATE CONVERSATIONS AND HAS LED TO A **PROFOUND** AWAKENING FOR MANY. AT UAB, WE HOSTED A SERIES OF OPPORTUNITIES FOR STUDENTS, FACULTY, AND STAFF TO COME TOGETHER TO EXPRESS THEIR THOUGHTS ON THIS NATIONAL TURMOIL ABOUT RACISM IN OUR COUNTRY.

We were fortunate to have many members from the UAB community who participated in these listening sessions. It is important to acknowledge the many people who have reached out during this time to ask with sincerity, “What can I do?”

At UAB that we have a community of students, faculty and staff who come from a broad array of backgrounds and perspectives. Fortunately, this diversity can serve to our advantage as we seek to ambitiously address the racial challenges and opportunities for change present in a large institution such as ours. Because academia is a microcosm of society, college campuses must address the issues of racial inequality. In recognizing the challenges at hand, the Task Force will explore and identify the path forward for UAB to become a leader in promoting a climate of civility and respect. We are defined by our rich diversity of people, ideas, expressions, and viewpoints.

Advancing racial equity is difficult work. It involves developing remedies that impact the structures, systems, and practices that enable real fairness and opportunity access and equality. At UAB, we should acknowledge our steps along a journey to identify, examine and address historical and current racial inequities. In doing so, our campus can engage an ongoing process to promote racial healing, justice, and wellbeing by creating a more inclusive history and an equitable future for all UAB family members as we strive to become an anti-racist community.



## Task Force for **RACIAL EQUITY AND JUSTICE**

The university-wide task force will focus on racism, racial equity, and justice to provide tangible recommendations to create a more equitable, just, supportive, and nurturing anti-racist community. This 24-member group, including students, faculty, and staff will be engaging broadly with the UAB community to identify and propose action steps. An Anti-Racism Action Plan that engages the UAB enterprise, including the Health System and the health sciences colleges, to address racism as a social determinant of health. The Anti-Racism Action Plan will accelerate structural and systemic change supporting equity in health and wellbeing.

This initiative was launched with the expectation that each of the focus areas will generate many action steps that will take root on our campuses and in our community for generations to come. Above all, each was planned to confront racism and racial inequities with specific, practical solutions.

Beyond these anticipated enterprise-scale initiatives, several units throughout the university have begun planning specific steps to address racism within their areas of focus. The Task Force will support and draw from these efforts and continue to look for opportunities to coordinate, connect and scale up the most promising ideas.



#### // THE CHARGE OF THE TASK FORCE

**DEFINE** what it means to be an anti-racist campus community.

**IDENTIFY** actions for faculty, staff, students, and place as a center for dialogue, healing and well-being.

**DEVELOP** an action plan to:

- Educate campus on anti-racist aspirations, concepts and behavior.
- Perform a campus scan of current perspectives about racial equity.

*Other elements of the charge include hosting inclusive, candid conversations about racism; identifying aspects of the campus community that contribute to inequities and differential outcomes; identifying effective practices that address these problems; and transcending prior approaches.*

#### // THE TASK FORCE CO-CHAIRS

Paulette Patterson Dilworth, Ph.D., Vice President for Diversity, Equity & Inclusion and Tina Kempin Reuter, Ph.D., Director of the Institute for Human Rights and Associate Professor in the Department of Political Science and Public Administration and the Department of Anthropology, have committed to co-chair the work that is focused on engagement and action.



## Task Force Membership

**Carlos Alemán,**

*Chief Operating Officer, IHICA!*

**Ashleigh Aldridge,**

*Communications Director, UAB  
Office of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion*

**Jim Bakken,**

*UAB Chief Communications Officer  
University Relations*

**Josie Banks,**

*Executive Director, UAB Human  
Resources*

**Jazmine Benjamin,**

*UAB Black Graduate Student Association*

**Chris Biga,**

*Associate Professor Sociology, UAB  
College of Arts & Sciences*

**Alicia Booker,**

*UAB Ombudsperson*

**Chris Brown,**

*UAB Vice President for Research*

**Courtney Champion,**

*UAB University Compliance Coordinator*

**Paulette Patterson Dilworth,**

*UAB Vice President for Diversity,  
Equity & Inclusion*

**Rashada LeRoy,**

*President and CEO, LRY Media  
Group*

**Shyla Fields,**

*Program Manager,  
Office of Identity, Inclusion and  
Collective Conscience*

**Ria Baker Hearld,**

*Associate Professor Health  
Services Administration, UAB  
School of Health Professions*

**Tyler Huang,**

*UAB Undergraduate Student  
Government Association*

**Chris Jones,**

*Director of Student Multicultural  
Programs, UAB Student Affairs*

**T. Marie King,**

*Community Advocate*

**André Lessears,**

*UAB Health System Chief Diversity  
Officer*

**Hyeyoung Lim,**

*Associate Professor, Criminal  
Justice, UAB College of Arts &  
Sciences*

**Myles Moody,**

*Assistant Professor Sociology,  
UAB College of Arts & Sciences*

**Kathryn Morgan,**

*Professor, UAB College of Arts &  
Sciences*

**Anthony Purcell,**

*Associate Vice President, Chief,  
UAB Police*

**Tina Kempin Reuter,**

*Director, UAB Institute for Human  
Rights*

**Christina M. Rodriguez,**

*Professor, Psychology, UAB  
College of Arts & Sciences*

**Verlon Salley,**

*VP Community Healthy Equity,  
UAB Health System*

**Ninecia Scott,**

*Postdoctoral NIH-IRACDA Fellow*

**Angela Stowe,**

*Director, UAB Student Counseling  
Services*

**Rahul Thadani,**

*Executive Director, UAB Human  
Resources*

**Carolyn Williams,**

*Director, Birmingham Education  
Foundation*

**Brandon Wolfe,**

*Assistant Vice President, Campus  
& Community Engagement, UAB  
Office of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion*

**Emily Wykle,**

*Director, UAB External Affairs  
Office of the President*

# Blazers Against Hunger: How Blazer Kitchen Provides Food and Compassion

WRITTEN BY RICK LEWIS

IN 2015, TAMIKA BRIGHT HAD BEEN WORKING AT THE UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA AT BIRMINGHAM FOR ONLY A **WEEK** BEFORE A **TRAGIC** INCIDENT CHANGED HER LIFE. IN AN ATTEMPT TO PUT OUT AN ACCIDENTAL GREASE FIRE AT HER HOME, BRIGHT RECEIVED THIRD-DEGREE BURNS TO THE RIGHT SIDE OF HER BODY, LEAVING HER BADLY INJURED.

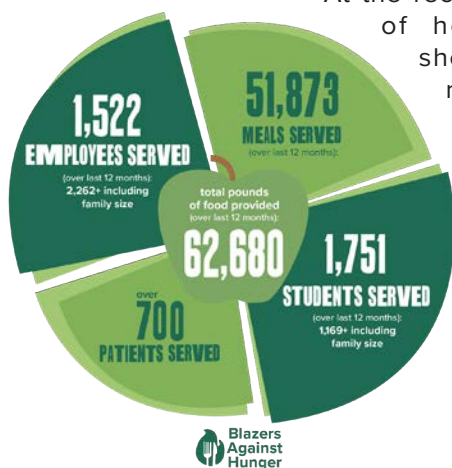
While her job as an administrative support specialist in the Department of Environmental Health and Safety was secure during the medical leave she had to take to heal, the injury put Bright in a difficult financial position.

Fund program aimed at helping employees with unforeseen medical costs with funds donated by other UAB employees. The financial support she received from the EEAP alleviated a great deal of the stress on her and her family throughout her injury and recovery and inspired a desire to give back.

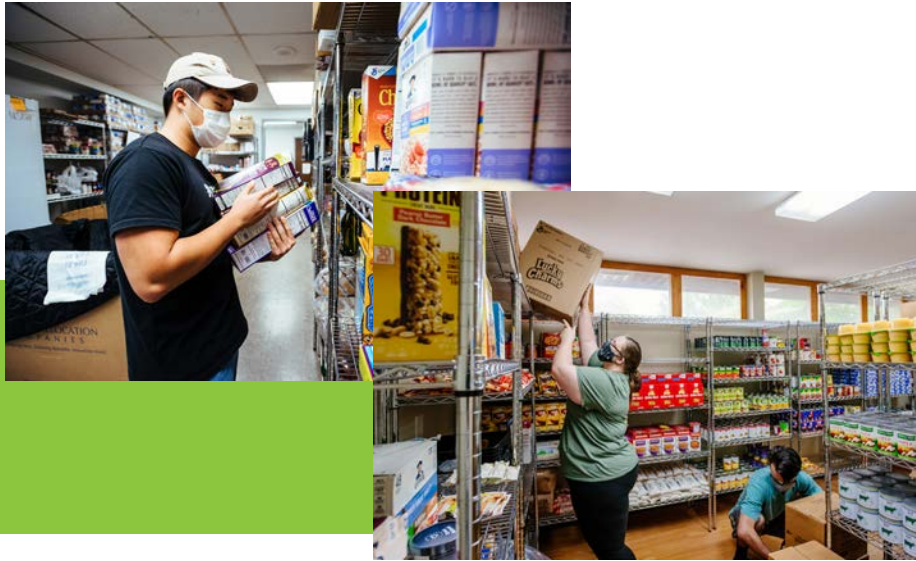
“I was thinking to myself, if I could give [the Benevolent Fund] a million dollars, I would. It was just amazing,” Bright said. “They helped with bills, and funds were just deposited into my account.”

From then on, Bright became a steadfast donor to the Benevolent Fund, always willing to give to make sure others had similar care when in need. She did not know, however, how soon she would need the Benevolent Fund’s help again. In 2020, Bright found herself in a challenging situation once more after the passing of her husband.

At the recommendation of her manager, she applied to receive support from UAB’s Employee Emergency Program, a Benevolent







## Blazer Kitchen: providing food, supplies and support

Unable to adequately provide food for herself and her teenage son, she returned for support from the Benevolent Fund, but this time from Blazer Kitchen.

One of the most intimately impactful programs run by the Benevolent Fund, Blazer Kitchen's on-campus food pantry serves food-insecure students, employees and patients in nine UAB Medicine clinics by providing a space for people to collect fresh, frozen and non-perishable food items, as well as personal care items like toiletries — all at no cost.

“There were times when I had to choose between gas and eating,” Bright explained. “As moms, we look out for our kids, and I didn’t want my son to go hungry.”

In accessing resources from Blazer Kitchen, she

was able to ensure that she and her son had enough healthy food on their table, especially fresh fruit — her son’s favorite.

On Thursday, Nov. 18, Blazer Kitchen hosted its annual Blazers Against Hunger one-day giving event. Held each year to support the work of Blazer Kitchen, Blazers Against Hunger ensures that Blazer Kitchen can continue to meet the needs of the growing UAB community.

“Having a resource at UAB where both nourishment and the compassion offered is a life-changing option for many,” said Benevolent Fund manager

## Important African American historical collections added to UAB Libraries

WRITTEN BY KAREN TEMPLETON

The University of Alabama at Birmingham Libraries added new resource collections focused on African American studies and history. The libraries have added several seminal primary-source collections in support of African American studies, African American history, history, and interdisciplinary fields in the humanities and social sciences to their collections.

“I am particularly thrilled to make this announcement in February as we celebrate and honor Black History Month,” said Kasia Gonnerman, UAB Libraries dean. “I’ve already received a number of enthusiastic responses from several UAB faculty, who look forward to incorporating these new resources into their teaching and research.” The new acquisitions, which can be accessed from the library data-



Lisa Higginbotham. “But it is even more powerful knowing that the support Blazer Kitchen provides is funded by donations from the UAB community.”

Beyond the Blazers Against Hunger one-day giving event, Blazer Kitchen is always accepting help to further its mission of reaching all Blazers struggling with hunger. For recipients like

Bright who have and continue to depend on Blazer Kitchen’s resources, any amount of support and/or donation makes the difference.

“We could have easily been in the hunger pile, but we weren’t — Blazer Kitchen saved me. It saved my family,” Bright said. “You never know what people are going through, and I’ve always been a person to smile through my pain. So, when you think you’re not helping someone, you really are.”

**Any amount of support goes a long way.”**

bases, comprise three sub-collections — Black Studies Center, Black Abolitionists Papers and ProQuest Civil Rights Era — as well as 14 historical newspapers, including The Chicago Defender (1912-1975), The New York Times (1851-2017), The Baltimore Afro-American (1893-1988), Philadelphia Tribune (1912-2001) and Pittsburgh Courier (1911-2002).

UAB is currently evaluating and refining courses as part of implementing its Signature Core Curriculum, which

will officially replace the existing core beginning in 2022. It is anticipated that many of the newly acquired collections will become applicable in the implementation of the new curriculum, as a key component is integrating classroom learning with local and world events.

“Approaching learning from important historical and cultural perspectives is integral to the evolving UAB undergraduate experience,” said UAB Provost Pam Benoit. “Access to the

new materials that provide a deeper understanding of Black history and its central place in the Birmingham community is a tremendous asset to our faculty and students.”

UAB librarians are available to work with faculty and students using these new collections, and the UAB Libraries are planning to launch an undergraduate research award for the three most notable academic research papers or projects demonstrating the use of the new resources.

UAB Libraries include the Mervyn H. Sterne Library, which supports teaching and research in the arts and humanities, business, education, engineering, natural sciences, and mathematics plus social and behavioral sciences, and Lister Hill Library of the Health Sciences, which provides services and resources for users in medicine, nursing, optometry, dentistry, public health, health professions and joint health sciences.

## Bowen named inaugural associate dean for School of Nursing’s Office of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion

WRITTEN BY JENNIFER LOLLAR

FELESIA R. BOWEN, PHD, DNP, APRN, PPCNP-BC, FAAN, **JOINED** THE UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA AT BIRMINGHAM SCHOOL OF NURSING AUGUST 23, 2021, AS THE **INAUGURAL** ASSOCIATE DEAN FOR DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION. SHE ALSO IS A PROFESSOR IN THE DEPARTMENT OF ACUTE, CHRONIC AND CONTINUING CARE.

As the first Associate Dean for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, Bowen will continue to build on the foundations the School has built and establish a path forward in the School’s pursuit of a more inclusive learning and working environment. She also plans to expand the community’s perceptions of a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion office, moving from traditional siloed courses or lessons on inclusion and ensuring DEI is present and threaded through the curriculum and all aspects of the UAB School of Nursing.

“I want DEI to be more than a buzzword, I want it to be the foundation of our School’s culture. This is an inaugural office, and I have a vision for this being more than just a DEI office,” Bowen said. “I talk about belonging a lot, so I look at this as an opportunity to create activities and spaces where people feel like they belong; where people feel comfortable when they come in for work or classes, so they don’t have to codeswitch—that’s exhausting. I want our SON community to be

one where people feel safe and empowered to be their authentic selves.”

The work of the office intersects with all the pillar missions of UABSON. The office has begun initiatives to address student, staff, and faculty engagement, staff and faculty development around issues pertaining to DEI, and minoritized student pathways to nursing and recruitment of faculty and staff.



# DIVERSITY EDUCATION

“USING  
LANGUAGE THAT  
DEMONSTRATES  
CULTURAL HUMILITY  
AND INCLUSIVE  
EXCELLENCE  
IS ACCESSIBLE  
FOR US ALL AND  
INSTRUMENTAL IN  
THE REALIZATION OF  
OUR SHARED VALUE:  
DIVERSITY AND  
INCLUSIVENESS.”

Michelle Allen, ED.D.

DIVERSITY EDUCATION DIRECTOR IN UAB'S OFFICE  
OF DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION





## Diversity Education Thrives in Hybrid Environment

WRITTEN BY MICHELLE ALLEN, ED.D., DIVERSITY EDUCATION DIRECTOR

THROUGHOUT 2021, THE OFFICE OF THE VICE PRESIDENT FOR DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION (ODEI) CONTINUED TO OFFER DIVERSITY EDUCATION COURSES VIRTUALLY TO OVER **2,700 PARTICIPANTS** IN OVER **100 SESSIONS**.

As the ongoing global pandemic and racial pandemic continued, many campus constituents and local businesses sought opportunities to increase their understanding of diverse identities, unconscious biases and systemic and systematic oppressions. Two new courses were

also added to the diversity education curriculum, Faculty Hiring (Search Committee Training) and the Inclusive Language Course. Nearly 600 UAB constituents and hundreds from community partners in the greater Birmingham area participated in the newer courses.

In addition to the sessions that were facilitated for UAB faculty, staff, and professional students, we also expanded our diversity education efforts to the greater-Birmingham area.

## Diversity Education Course Offerings - Building Blocks Learning Plan



### Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Advocacy (DEIA)

In fall 2021, in an effort to expand our mission for diversity, equity, and inclusion in all areas of endeavor, ODEI collaborated with the UAB Graduate School to develop a 15-credit hour graduate certificate in Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Advocacy (DEIA). The certificate, which will accept its first cohort in Fall 2022, is not only the first of its kind at the UAB, it is also the first graduate certificate in Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Alabama. The Graduate School will begin accepting applications for the certificate in Spring 2022.

*The courses will be taught by ODEI personnel.*

#### // THE COURSES ARE

DEIA 510: Diversity Policy Politics and Practice

DEIA 520: Equity and Inclusion

DEIA 530: Leadership in Social Justice Advocacy, Self and Others

DEIA 590: Engaged Scholarship in Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Advocacy

### CULTURAL AWARENESS BUILDING BLOCKS

Cultural Awareness Building Blocks provides the framework for gaining a nuanced understanding of the various meanings and the potential impact of, diversity in higher education and the workplace. The session explores the impact of identities in workplace interactions and relationships, and presents strategies and resources to better navigate and embrace cultural difference.

Cultural Awareness Building Blocks is the foundational session in the series of four classes required to achieve the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Certificate, and/or the faculty CTL Global Awareness Certificate.

#### // PARTICIPANTS WILL

- Increase their understanding of cultural awareness and how it applies to their work and personal interactions.
- Become familiar with key concepts of diversity, equity and inclusion.
- Learn strategies and resources that contribute to an inclusive and welcoming environment.

## UNCONSCIOUS BIAS

Bias is a “personal, sometimes unreasoned judgment” that can provide unconscious and often erroneous information. Understanding how our personal and cultural biases influence our decision-making and interpersonal interactions is an important step to reducing unconscious bias. Unconscious Bias is the second in the series of four classes required to achieve the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Certificate, or the faculty CTL Global Awareness Certificate.

### // PARTICIPANTS WILL

- Increase their understanding of unconscious biases and its presence in professional and personal behaviors and interactions.
- Become familiar with common types of personal, cultural and social bias.
- Learn about promising practices that reduce bias and contribute to an inclusive and welcoming environment.



## Beyond Building Blocks

### FACULTY HIRING (SEARCH COMMITTEE)

THE OFFICE OF DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION OFFERS **IMPLICIT BIAS TRAINING** FOR **FACULTY SEARCH COMMITTEES**.

This course was created to complement UAB's guidelines for Faculty Hiring and Searches. The course discusses every aspect of the search process and offers practical strategies for avoiding the pitfalls of unconscious bias in hiring.

### // PARTICIPANTS WILL BE ABLE TO

Identify and address common sites of unconscious and structural bias that foster inequity in faculty hiring

Implement inclusive practices in every stage of the hiring process from sourcing applicants to conducting interviews

Understand and contextualize the disproportionate impact of systemic bias on underrepresented and marginalized candidates



## Inclusive Language

THE PRACTICE OF BEING **MINDFUL** AND **INTENTIONAL** IN OUR WRITTEN AND ORAL COMMUNICATION IS THE FOUNDATION OF BRIDGING GAPS BETWEEN CULTURE AND IDENTITY AND FOSTERING **RESPECTFUL** AND CIVIL RELATIONSHIPS.

Using language that demonstrates cultural humility and inclusive excellence is accessible for us all and instrumental in the realization of our shared value: Diversity and Inclusiveness.

### // PARTICIPANTS WILL BE ABLE TO

Demonstrate effective usage of inclusive language when communicating verbally to and about marginalized and subordinated identities/populations/communities.

Demonstrate effective usage of inclusive language in written form when communicating to and about marginalized and subordinated identities/populations/communities.

Understand the importance of using compassionate and conscientious language when talking to and about marginalized and subordinated persons/communities.

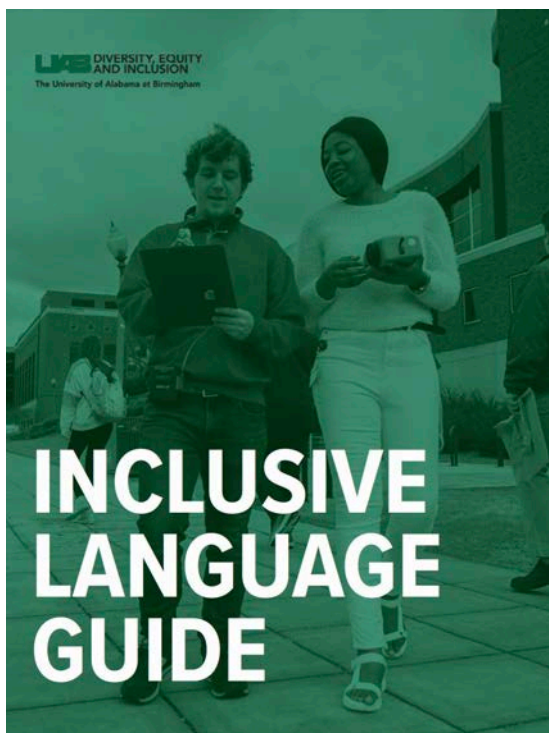
Advocate for the use of inclusive language as it relates to their school/unit/department.

*The Cultural Awareness Building Blocks, Unconscious Bias, SafeZone, and Bystander Intervention courses are prerequisites.*

# UAB Launches Inclusive Language Guide and Course to Encourage

WRITTEN BY ASHLEIGH ALDRIDGE

THE UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA AT BIRMINGHAM INTRODUCED AN **INCLUSIVE** LANGUAGE COURSE. THE COURSE, LAUNCHED IN SEPTEMBER 2021, AND CREATED AND FACILITATED BY THE OFFICE OF THE VICE PRESIDENT FOR DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION (ODEI), IS DESIGNED TO **HELP STUDENTS**, FACULTY AND STAFF BECOME MORE INCLUSIVE IN THEIR COMMUNICATION, INCLUDING PRESENTATIONS, LECTURES, RESEARCH AND MORE.



The Inclusive Language course is the latest addition to the Diversity Education curriculum. The 90-minute, instructor-led course is an interactive discussion that provides context on the benefits of inclusive language, the strategic approaches to the use of inclusive language, and interactive activities on how to use inclusive language in all forms of communication. The Cultural Awareness Building Blocks, Unconscious Bias, SafeZone, and Bystander Intervention courses are prerequisites.

“Being mindful and intentional in our written and oral communication is the foundation of bridging gaps between culture and identity and fostering respectful and civil relationships,” said Michelle

Allen, Ed.D., diversity education director. “Using language that demonstrates cultural humility and inclusive excellence is accessible for us all and instrumental in the realization of our Shared Value: Diversity and Inclusiveness.”

Launched in tandem with UAB’s Inclusive Language Guide, both the course and guide were developed to be educational tools and resources for ensuring that all of the diverse identities within the UAB Enterprise are respected and valued in all forms of communication. The intention is to assist faculty, staff, and students in understanding the impact of language that

affirms rather than stigmatizes underrepresented, marginalized, and subordinate identities.

“Inclusive language is an integral tool in our pursuit of inclusive excellence,” said Paulette Patterson Dilworth, PhD, vice president for Diversity, Equity & Inclusion.” Our efforts to foster an environment that values and welcomes diversity of thought, identity and experience are rendered futile without a commitment to inclusive language. The use of terminology, pronouns, and descriptors that honor the members within the UAB enterprise and the communities we serve is vital in the execution of our university’s Shared Values and Strategic Diversity Plan.”



The guide is a living document that will be revised periodically to align with current best practices in the field of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion.

*Click the QR code to view and download the guide.*

## SAFE ZONE TRAINING

The SafeZone program offers LGBTQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer/Questioning) awareness training is designed for all UAB faculty and staff. This two-hour session provides an opportunity to learn about identities, terminology, concepts of gender and sexuality, and ways to create a welcoming and inclusive campus. Participants will also be able to sign up to receive a SafeZone trained sticker to communicate their LGBTQ friendliness, although this is not a requirement of the session. SafeZone is third in the series of four classes required to achieve the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Certificate, and/or the faculty CTL Global Awareness Certificate.

### // PARTICIPANTS WILL

- Increase their understanding of issues and concerns experienced by Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer/Questioning faculty, staff and students.
- Become familiar with current LGBTQ concepts and terminology.
- Acquire access to reliable resources and accurate information that contribute to safer, more inclusive learning and work environments.

## BYSTANDER INTERVENTION

Bystander behavior has been the focus of social psychological research for over four decades. Originally developed to reduce the incidence of sexual assault and sexual violence on college campuses, the bystander model is now also used for noticing and intervening with harassing behaviors related to bullying and discrimination of all kinds. Bystander Intervention is the fourth in the series of four classes required to achieve the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Certificate, and/or the faculty CTL Global Awareness Certificate.

### // PARTICIPANTS WILL

- Increase their understanding of common types of microaggressions, bullying and harassment.
- Become familiar with the widely accepted steps to action model for bystander interventions.
- Learn about types of intervention and explore potential barriers to action.

# Diversity Education Lays Foundation for Decreased Healthcare Disparities

WRITTEN BY SATINA RICHARDSON

## SCHOOL OF OPTOMETRY

THE **EDUCATION** STUDENTS RECEIVE AT THE UAB SCHOOL OF OPTOMETRY EXTENDS BEYOND SUBJECTS RELATED TO OPTOMETRY AND VISION SCIENCE. IT INCLUDES **EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES** THAT WILL PRODUCE GRADUATES WHO ARE PREPARED TO BUILD DOCTOR-PATIENT RELATIONSHIPS THAT CAN YIELD BETTER **OUTCOMES** AND DECREASE HEALTHCARE DISPARITIES.

During March 2020, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, didactic classes became virtual and new ways to learn clinical skills were introduced due to social distancing requirements. Technology introduced at that time, such as telehealth and TelScreens, HIPAA-compliant digital projection systems connected to cameras showing the patient and slit lamp images, remains in use.

The cry for social justice that occurred in 2020 following the tragic murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor and Ahmaud Arbery resulted in the introduction of diversity education to the curriculum. Such opportunities had previously only been avail-

able to faculty and staff.

First year students completed a course called Cultural Awareness Building Blocks during orientation.

“This course is an essential part of our orientation experience,” said Gerald Simon, OD, associate dean of student affairs. “Altering the week-long agenda was a timely and appropriate change.” Led by UAB’s Office of Equity Diversity and Inclusion, the session provided the framework for gaining a nuanced understanding of the various meanings and the potential impact of diversity in higher education. The impact of identities, interactions and relationships is explored, and the session pres-



ents strategies and resources to better navigate and embrace cultural differences.

“Offering this opportunity to first year students lays a rich foundation for seeds of cultural humility in their future practice and hopefully a perspective shift that will lead to more equitable and inclusive patient care experiences,” said Michelle Allen, EdD, diversity education director in UAB’s Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion.

Keisha Elder, OD, MS, FAAO, the School’s first director of diversity, equity and inclusion, is leading diversity education efforts at the UAB School of Optometry. She added that having a diversity exercise during orientation also sets the tone for how students should conduct themselves as UAB optometry students.

“Diversity is one of our core values, so the session also helps students get a better idea of what this, and other core values

mean to the School,” she said.

All students will also receive training annually as part of the optometry curriculum.

According to Allen, “It is important that students are offered opportunities like this throughout their matriculation and career to ensure that they are perpetually assessing and implementing strategies that support the need for equity and inclusion related to their diverse identities and model this for individuals within their scope of care as well.”

Clinical management is one of the optometry courses that now includes diversity education. When Elder, also an associate professor, teaches during this course she communicates what cultural competency means and how providing culturally competent care yields a better quality of care, better outcomes and decreases health disparities.

“I want to make sure that our students interacting with patients see that we have similarities and differences,” she said. “They need to provide culturally sensitive care that can break down communication barriers between patients and doctors, make sure the patient is comfortable interacting with them and having them as a member of their healthcare team.”

## OFFERING THIS OPPORTUNITY TO FIRST YEAR STUDENTS LAYS A RICH FOUNDATION FOR SEEDS OF CULTURAL HUMILITY IN THEIR FUTURE PRACTICE

**Michelle Allen**  
ED.D., DIVERSITY EDUCATION  
DIRECTOR IN UAB’S OFFICE OF  
DIVERSITY, EQUITY,  
AND INCLUSION





**CAMPUS & COMMUNITY**

**ENGAGEMENT**

# ODEI's Campus & Community Engagement Hosts Critical Dialogues on Race and Culture during Speakers' Series

WRITTEN BY ASHLEIGH ALDRIDGE

THE OFFICE OF THE VICE PRESIDENT OF DIVERSITY, EQUITY & INCLUSION HELD SPACE FOR SOME OF THE NATION'S BEST LITERARY MINDS AND THOUGHT LEADERS THROUGH CAMPUS & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT'S CULTURAL LENS FILM & SPEAKER SERIES.

The series is designed to introduce films, scholars, authors, artists, and activists to campus to address various topics and how those topics are defined and portrayed through the media. Using these illustrations, the series aims to explore and drive discussion, while addressing legitimized myths and barriers along the road to finding common ground.

In March 2021, in recognition of Women's History Month, UAB hosted internationally renowned writer, poet, and activist, Alice Walker, who made history as the first African American woman to win a Pulitzer Prize for Literature as well as the National Book Award in 1983 for her novel, "The Color Purple." In the fall, Clint Smith, staff writer for The Atlantic, and author of the #1 New York Times Bestseller, "How the Word is Passed: A Reckoning with the History of Slavery Across America", joined UAB for a robust discussion on this brutal history of the slave trade and its imprint on today's society. The discussion was moderated by Michelle Allen, Ed.D, Diversity Education Director in ODEI. October saw two critical conversations on the history of deportation and the treatment of immigrants with Dr. Adam Goodman, author of The Deportation Machine, a conversa-

tion on exploring racial inequality through the lens of policy with Dr. Carol Anderson, a professor of African American studies at Emory University and author of several books, including her latest work, "The Second: Race and Guns in a Fatally Unequal America."

All events were co-sponsored by UAB's ODEI, UAB's Student Multicultural and Diversity Programs, Institute for Human Rights, UAB Commission on the Status of Women, UAB African American Studies Program, UAB Graduate School, and the University of Alabama's Division of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, the University of Alabama in Huntsville's Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, and Samford University's Office of Diversity and Intercultural Initiatives.





## CACE introduces Social Justice Movie Club

The Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion has partnered with Student Multicultural and Diversity Programs and the Professional Book Club Guru to create a virtual movie club for students, faculty, staff, and alumni. Each month, the club selects and discusses a critically acclaimed movie, ranging from box office hits to powerful documentaries. The movie club connects through a private text-based forum where all participants can discuss the current movie and network with each other. Joining the club is completely free and all movie selections will be available to stream on Netflix or Amazon Prime. The club kicked off in September 2021 with the feature film, Roma.



**Alice Walker**

FEATURED SPEAKER IN THE MARCH FOR WOMENS HISTORY MONTH IN A CONVERSATION MODERATED BY PAULETTE PATTERSON DILWORTH, PHD.



## Magic City Data Collective: UAB students helping solve community challenges through data analysis

WRITTEN BY SAVANNAH KOPLON

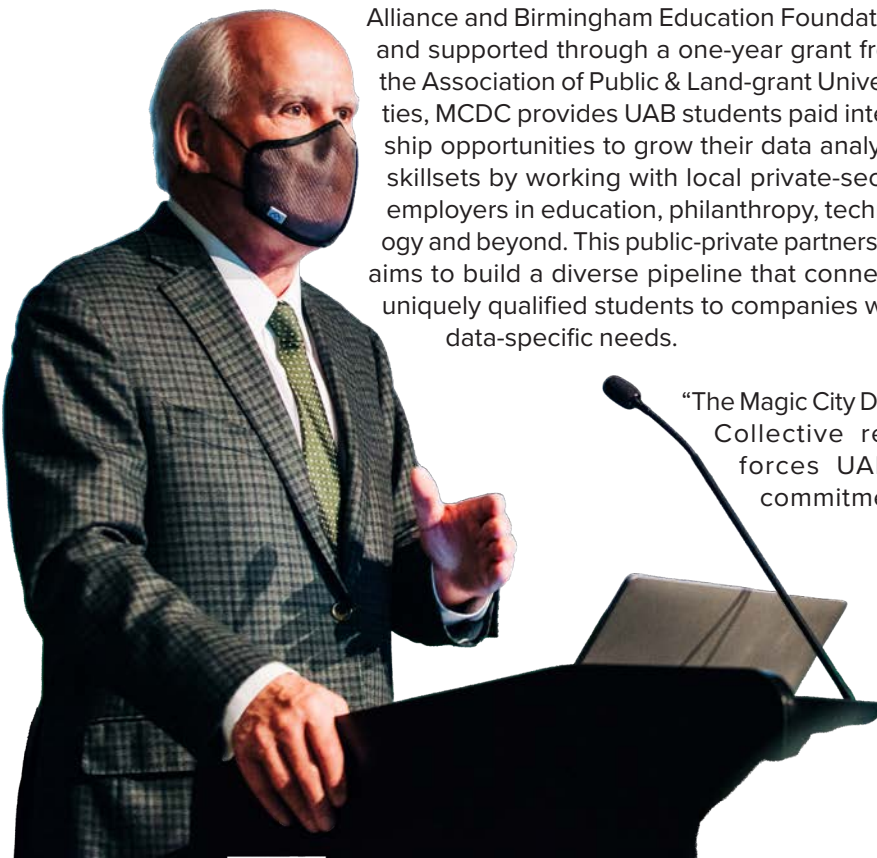
FOR UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA AT BIRMINGHAM STUDENT DARRYL MCINTOSH, A SENIOR MAJORING IN COMPUTER SCIENCE, COMPUTER PROGRAMMING WAS NOT JUST A PERSONAL **PASSION** BUT A **CAREER PATH** IN WHICH HE SAW GREAT POTENTIAL. WHILE FOND OF PROGRAMMING, MCINTOSH VIEWED HIS SKILLSET IN A ONE-DIMENSIONAL FRAME OF MIND UNTIL HIS EXPOSURE TO THE WORLD OF DATA SCIENCE AND ANALYSIS AS A FELLOW IN THE **FIRST COHORT** OF THE MAGIC CITY DATA COLLECTIVE.

### // **CREATING A DATA TALENT PIPELINE**

A pilot project of UAB, the Birmingham Business Alliance and Birmingham Education Foundation and supported through a one-year grant from the Association of Public & Land-grant Universities, MCDC provides UAB students paid internship opportunities to grow their data analysis skillsets by working with local private-sector employers in education, philanthropy, technology and beyond. This public-private partnership aims to build a diverse pipeline that connects uniquely qualified students to companies with data-specific needs.

to making sure our students have the ability to develop skills that help them look at large amounts of data, find patterns and trends, and ask questions to better understand the world around them,” said UAB President Ray L. Watts. “It’s critical that we provide opportunities to take classroom learning one step further, and the Magic City Data Collective is doing just that by partnering with our local business community to shape the next generation of talent that will move Birmingham and our world forward.”

“The Magic City Data Collective reinforces UAB’s commitment





Broken out in project teams, undergraduate and graduate UAB MCDC fellows with academic backgrounds in areas like computer science and physics collected and analyzed data, developed and tested hypotheses, and learned about what it means to use data in a team setting — all while better understanding and solving community problems.

“The fast pace of technological innovation and the rise of AI techniques such as machine learning makes it critical that tomorrow’s leaders in data develop skills such as critical thinking, creativ-

ity, teamwork, ethics, and communication,” said Lauren Rast, Ph.D., assistant professor in UAB’s College of Arts and Sciences and learning manager of MCDC. “By growing our partnerships with the local business community and expanding the program to reach larger student populations, we plan to continue to develop a curriculum and offer experiential learning opportunities that are tailored to the needs of employers and beneficial for students over the course of their lives and careers.”

Through such data analysis-focused curriculum offerings noted by Rast, UAB fellows provided tangible, real-world solutions and support for partner companies and their stakeholders.

#### // FELLOWS PARTICIPATED IN DATA COLLECTION PROJECTS INCLUDING

Building a tech talent dashboard that identified tech workforce trends in Birmingham as compared to peer metro areas

Creating a Birmingham City Schools report card that combined quantitative data from the state, along with qualitative data from parents, families and students, to better understand school success

Analyzing historical philanthropic giving trends of the Protective Foundation, and making recommendations about future giving priorities

Using machine learning to identify trends and make predictions about why Alabama college students stay in Alabama to work or leave the state after graduation.



McIntosh explains that his experience supporting the Birmingham Education Foundation on its school report cards project transcended what traditional classroom knowledge he was accustomed to; it taught him about how businesses forecast problems, to see projects through start to finish and how to work within tangible deadlines, while the end-of-semester project presentations at “Demo Day” taught him how to communicate with community stakeholders.

“The experience I gained in data science has opened up a new world of career options for me and the way that I view the role of coding,” McIntosh said. “Through my fellowship, I was able to see that, while a company may have a loose conclusion in mind about something impacting their organization, we have the ability to determine a concrete answer for them through data collec-

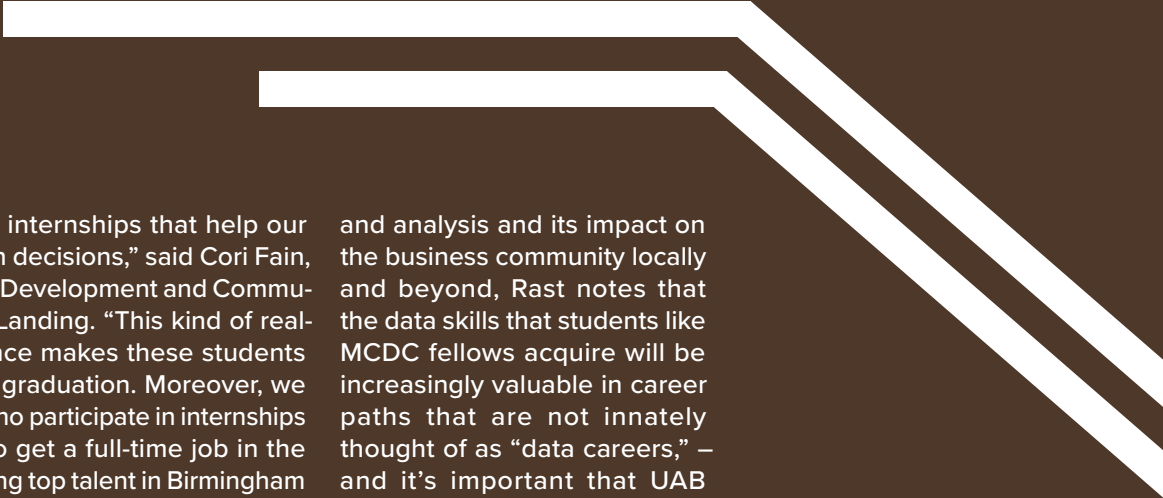
tion. Quantifying information is really satisfying and has taught me how to look at things from an objective point of view to provide solutions that will help leaders make good decisions.”

Furthermore, his involvement in MCDC gave McIntosh a broader view of where his data collection skillset could make a difference. In understanding how vital data collection analysis is to nearly every business, nonprofit, organization and municipality looking to solve problems, he is confident that his skillset will translate and be valuable to a wide array of employers.

#### // INVESTING IN THE NEXT GENERATION

For partners like Birmingham Business Alliance, Protective, Landing, Economic Development Partnership of Alabama and Birmingham Education Foundation, they are able to invest in community development projects, and are critical in helping to widen the data talent channel for underrepresented Birmingham students and connect them to future employment opportunities.

“Magic City Data Collective gives Birmingham students the opportunity to practice their existing data skills and build new ones — all while



participating in paid internships that help our city make data-driven decisions,” said Cori Fain, director of Economic Development and Community Engagement at Landing. “This kind of real-world work experience makes these students attractive hires after graduation. Moreover, we know that students who participate in internships are far more likely to get a full-time job in the same city, and retaining top talent in Birmingham should be a priority for all of our businesses and universities.”

Fain adds that paying students for their talented work and critical contributions to these projects is an important part of ensuring that this opportunity is accessible to students of all backgrounds. “When we create paid internship opportunities for students, our community, economy and businesses also win,” Fain said. “The beauty of an initiative like Magic City Data Collective is that it will continue to grow and connect a diverse group of students with community partners who will, in turn, hopefully invest back in the next generation. This will only strengthen the field of data science and will make an impact in our city, state and beyond.”

In looking towards the future of data collection

and analysis and its impact on the business community locally and beyond, Rast notes that the data skills that students like MCDC fellows acquire will be increasingly valuable in career paths that are not innately thought of as “data careers,” – and it’s important that UAB be a part of this trajectory and conversation.

“As an R1 research university, a world-renowned hospital, and Alabama’s largest employer, UAB is uniquely positioned to impact our local community by connecting a diverse local population with the high-quality education necessary to connect with growing local demand for data – literate talent. UAB’s emphasis on lifelong learning has the potential to create a local workforce with high levels of data fluency, enabling the local tech sector to continue to thrive,” said Rast.



## Painting a Movement: Live HealthSmart Alabama murals in Kingston and Titusville re-energize public spaces

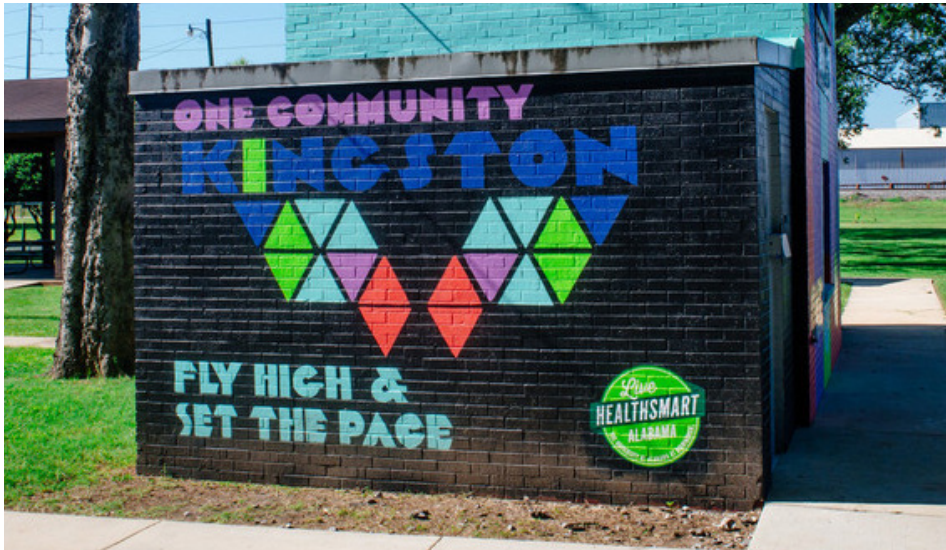
WRITTEN BY RICK LEWIS

“WELCOME TO THE BBQ,” SAYS THE **COLORFUL INVITATION** EMBLAZONED ON THE RECENTLY REPAINTED GRILL IN KINGSTON’S STOCKHAM PARK. IT IS ONE OF SEVERAL NEW TAGLINES AND MURALS PAINTED THROUGHOUT THE PARK **INVITING** COMMUNITY MEMBERS TO COME TOGETHER AND ENJOY THE SPACE.

The newly painted additions are part of Live HealthSmart Alabama — a University of Alabama at Birmingham initiative that works with local businesses and organizations to improve the built environments and access to healthy food choices, exercise and health care in underserved neighborhoods of Birmingham and the state. The initiative is led by the UAB Minority Health and Health Disparities Research Center, which partnered with Blank Space Birmingham, the Kingston Coalition and the Kingston Neighborhood Association to help revitalize Stockham Park. Jessica Snyder, a program manager in the UAB Marnix E. Heersink School of Medicine, led the Kingston design process in the fall of 2020. The goals included the creation of a logo representing the union of

Kingston’s northern and southern neighborhoods and a refurbishing of the park focused on elevating community voices to create open and beautiful areas that bring people together.

“Everything Live HealthSmart Alabama does is done in partnership with the community,” Snyder said. “One of the ways we got feedback was by organizing a text message campaign where community members could tell us what values were important to the people of Kingston and what they wanted for the future of their community, and we would incorporate their ideas into our designs.”



The Live HealthSmart Alabama team found that Kingston residents wanted to evoke a sense of unity within their neighborhood through their previous high school mascot, the pacesetter eagle. Therefore, the One Kingston wing mural was born, using abstract imagery of the eagle that is represented by a set of wings. Community members, local artists and UAB students painted the park's concession stand, grill and basketball courts and added a hopscotch outline. Snyder says the bold fonts and color choices evoke the natural environment in a reenergized way, while also matching the bold, diverse personalities of Kingston's residents.

"The bright colors bring to mind emotions of happiness and positivity — two things we want associated with this space," Snyder said. "People love to seek out

beautiful things, and we think more people will be drawn to interact with the park and playground."

The work in Kingston is emblematic of Live HealthSmart Alabama's impact goals on built environments, improving community safety, encouraging the usage of outdoor spaces, and bringing vibrancy to collective areas like parks to attract engagement and inspire people to think more naturally about physical activity.

Mona N. Fouad, M.D., MPH, principal investigator of Live HealthSmart Alabama and director of the UAB Minority Health and Health Disparities Research Center, explained the initiative's early focus on art: "These murals are a good representation of how neighborhoods can work with our UAB teams to solve problems together. If there is an issue in the community — such as access to safe places for physical activity and healthy food options — we believe the solution is also in the community."

Lovie Crawford, outgoing president of the Kingston Neighborhood Association, says the response from local residents has been encouraging.



“The overall response has been great in terms of unifying the community,” she said. “People are coming out to the park more, and that has been good to see.”

#### // TITUSVILLE

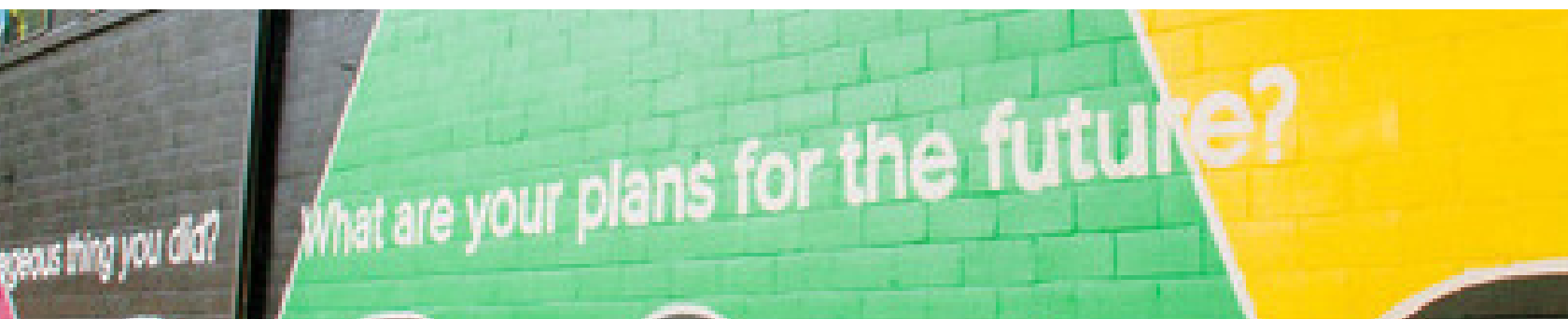
Live HealthSmart Alabama also partnered with the Birmingham community of Titusville, the Titusville Development Corporation and the Titusville Coalition for a similar project to revitalize the neighborhood’s Memorial Park Recreation Center and develop a logo and tagline for the community. A ribbon-cutting at the center was held in September.

Snyder also worked on the Titusville project with extensive input from residents and people who use the space. “During every

step of the process, they were providing context and feedback to ensure it was perfect,” she said. “It was truly a group effort, one that everyone poured their heart into. I’m excited to see the future unfold for Titusville.”

The back wall of the recreation center now pops with vivid colors and interactive thought bubbles, encouraging visitors to think about their future and their contributions to the present, nodding at the community’s involved legacy in the Civil Rights Movement. A new town logo, featuring the outlines of north and south Titusville and Woodland Park, provides a visual sense of cohesion. And the tagline, “courage of our past, forging our future,” echoes the important contributions of previous residents while setting current ones up for success.

This idea of forward-looking progress was echoed by Ronald Bayles, Ed.D., executive director of the Titusville Development Corporation, a nonprofit dedicated to revitalizing the Titusville community, in his commentary about the impact of the mural work. “The art has done two things,” he





## What is Live HealthSmart Alabama?

said. “It has sparked an interest in people who knew that, after many years of planning, work in the community has begun. And it creates a sense of anticipation, [...] suggesting that community work like this is not a finale but a beginning.”

Meghan McCollum, founder of Blank Space Birmingham, an organization dedicated to reclaiming public spaces through art projects, was involved in the mural work at both the Titusville and Kingston locations and was pleased to see community members’ reactions to the work.


“Art is done with people, not just for them,” she said. “And so, when we had residents who lived near where we were working bring us food and thank us for bringing art to their communities, it was such a powerful thing.”

“Murals are a very visual element of the larger work that is being done in these communities,” she added. The bright visuals and creation of a unified community brand work to create a big project for many opportunities to create moments that impact people.

McCollum remembers one of these moments fondly. One day, when she was working with volunteers to paint part of a mural, a group of local kids stopped by to lend a hand. “And after a little while, this kid named Curtis turned to me and said, ‘I think I want to be an artist when I grow up,’” McCollum said. “And whether or not he does, it was heartening to see him view that as an option. I like to think that we’re providing a vision of what could be — like brushstrokes of possibility.”

Live HealthSmart Alabama is a University of Alabama at Birmingham-sponsored initiative to help bring Alabama out of the bottom 10 in national health rankings. Led by Mona Fouad, M.D., MPH, and her team at the UAB Minority Health and Health Disparities Research Center, the initiative features a comprehensive plan to work with businesses, schools, faith-based organizations and nonprofits to make changes to policies, systems and built environments impacting the health of Alabamians.

To test the effectiveness of the plan, Live HealthSmart Alabama is focusing on several Birmingham communities — Kingston, Titusville, Bush Hills and East Lake — before rolling it out across the state. Live HealthSmart was the winning proposal of the inaugural UAB Grand Challenge Program, which aims to leverage UAB talent and support to identify and solve complex societal problems.



## \$1.4 million grant to grow underrepresented minorities in medicine and expand care in rural areas

WRITTEN BY KEVIN STORR

THE HEALTH RESOURCES AND SERVICES ADMINISTRATION HAS **AWARDED** A \$1,492,465 GRANT TO THE UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA AT BIRMINGHAM PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT STUDIES PROGRAM TO **EXPAND MENTAL HEALTH TRAINING** FOR STUDENTS, INCREASE THE NUMBER OF UNDERREPRESENTED MINORITIES IN MEDICINE AND EXTEND CLINICAL CARE TO MORE UNDERSERVED PATIENT POPULATIONS.

In Alabama, 62 of the 67 counties fall under the federal definition of Health Professional Shortage Areas. More than one-third of recent UAB physician assistant graduates work in medically underserved areas, but everyone recognizes that number needs to rise even more.

“I grew up in a rural county in Alabama, and I have seen firsthand the devastating impact on a community when health care options continue to disappear,” said Kathy Nugent, Ph.D., chair of Department of Clinical and Diagnostic Sciences and director of the UAB Harbert Institute of Innovation and Entrepreneurship. “I am excited that our PA students are being given more opportunities to reverse this disturbing trend and deliver more care to those in the most need.”

The HRSA grant is part of the program’s “PA Training Enhancement Initiative” and goes through

2026. It will enhance student training in opioid and other substance use disorders by delivering a specialized addiction medicine elective rotation that will be offered to five UAB PA students. In addition, this new elective rotation will also be offered to five physician assistant students from other PA programs across the nation, on an annual basis for the next five years.

“The substance use disorder — especially opioid addiction — is a pandemic in the United States,” said Wei Li, Ph.D., the grant’s principal investigator and an associate professor in the UAB



PHOTOGRAPHY BY ANDREA MABRY & LEXI COON

*// An award from the Health Resources and Services Administration will increase underrepresented minorities in medicine and support student work in areas of mental health, opioid addiction and primary care in rural areas.*

PA program. “This grant will help us prepare PA students from our program, as well as other programs, in fighting this pandemic. Physician assistant students from other PA programs are welcome to apply for an opportunity to complete an elective in our newly developed addiction medicine rotation, with corresponding expenses being covered by this grant as a scholarship.”

As part of the new initiatives, the HRSA grant will provide the UAB PA program an opportunity

to enhance their behavioral medicine didactic curriculum. New curriculum — including training in the courses Mental Health First Aid, Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training, and Screening, Brief Intervention and Referral to Treatment — will be added to further develop student skills in recognizing and treating patients in the area of mental health.

The National Alliance on Mental Health reports one in five U.S. adults experiences mental illness. Considering the average primary care facility sees 20 patients per day, the physician assistant could encounter around four people experiencing mental illness daily.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a profound impact on the lives of many Americans across

the country, especially regarding their mental and emotional health.

“Unfortunately, there are not enough psychiatrists or psychologists to screen, evaluate, treat and manage this growing population of patients,” said M. Tosi Gilford, M.D., PA-C, the grant’s co-investigator and director of the UAB Physician Assistant Studies program. “Ultimately, the burden of care will lie heavily on clinicians practicing in primary care and in the setting of urgent care and emergency medicine.

“To ensure our students are prepared to meet the needs of these patients in a competent and compassionate manner, we are proud to be given an opportunity to expand our didactic and clinical training to equip students with the tools needed to assist in identifying, treating and counseling patients with mental illness; and decrease the stigma of mental illness, in an effort to improve the cognitive, behav-

ioral and emotional well-being of the patient population in which they will ultimately serve,” Gilford said.

Recent diversity efforts from the Physician Assistant Studies program have resulted in a double-digit increase over the past two years in the number of students underrepresented in medicine accepted to their incoming cohorts.

The HRSA grant will support an expansion of the recruiting and retention efforts of these students, to surpass the national average for physician assistant programs. Furthermore, the UAB PA program will intensify their efforts to facilitate the education of U.S. military veterans to honor their service and the history of the program. UAB PA is the second-oldest program in the nation and was founded by military veterans in 1968.

This is the second HRSA grant for the UAB Physician Assistant Studies program, which is housed in the School of Health Professions. In 2004, the program was awarded a grant to conduct risk assessments for sexually transmitted diseases and HIV. That grant resulted in the development of curriculum on recognizing risk behaviors in patients, and the training was also offered to visiting PA students from other programs across the country.





# COMMUNICATION



ODEI reached a record number of people in 2021 through webinars, symposiums, targeted emails, videos, and more.

## 2021 Social Media Favorites

UAB partners with PBC Guru to launch Social Justice Movie Club

@uabodei  
Celebrating #Pride at @exploreuab!

Engaged with over 91,000 constituents through targeted email campaigns for the Office of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion; UAB Commission on the Status of Women; the ADVANCE Grant and ALAHEDO.



@uabodei  
Happy #Juneteenth

Over 26,700 impressions on YouTube.  
A 374% increase over 2020.  
*"An Evening with Alice Walker"* was the most-watched video.

@uabodei  
ODEI introduces the Inclusive Language Guide





# Helping Teachers See the Beauty in Black Language

WRITTEN BY MATT WINDSOR

THERE IS A MOMENT, ONE MINUTE AND 42 SECONDS INTO HER DYNAMIC TED TALK, WHEN JAMILA LYISCOTT **PERFECTLY** CAPTURES THE **ESSENCE** OF BLACK LANGUAGE.

“I’m here to tell you that even our language has rules,” Lyiscott says. “So when Mommy mocks me and says ‘Y’all be madd going to the store.’ I say, ‘Mommy, no, that sentence is not following the law. Never does the word ‘madd’ go before a present participle. That’s simply the principle of this English.”

What English? Which English? The same English that Teaira McMurtry, Ph.D., heard for six years as she taught literature in high schools in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and the English that McMurtry spoke in her own home and with friends: Black English, also known as Black language, African American English and African American Vernacular English.

## // RICH, VIBRANT FORM OF EXPRESSION

McMurtry, an assistant professor in the UAB School of Education’s Department of Curriculum and Instruction, has known she wanted to be a teacher since she was a little girl. But it wasn’t until she was a senior in college that she learned there was such a thing as Black language — a rich, vibrant form of expression with a long history and a complex linguistic form.

A tiny section in a class on linguistics for teachers led McMurtry to a deep exploration of the language used by playwright



August Wilson, novelists Zora Neale Hurston, Alice Walker and James Baldwin, and more recently, bestselling young adult author Jason Reynolds. “I said, ‘What is this?’” McMurtry recalled of discovering Black language. “This is how I speak. This is how my community speaks!”

Black language developed as “the creation of the Black diaspora,” as Baldwin said in a 1979 essay in the *New York Times*. “Blacks came to the United States chained to each other, but from different tribes. Neither could speak the other’s language.” So they developed a new language, combining the syntactic structure of standard American English with distinct patterns that have been traced to parallel West African languages. Habitual be, double/multiple negation, and optional third-person singular/possessive marker (-s), all part of Black language, are also features of Niger-Congo

languages such as Wolof, Mandingo and Yoruba.

“Despite popular beliefs, decades of linguistic research affirm that AAE (African American English) is not ungrammatical, unsystemic and illogical,” McMurtry wrote in her doctoral dissertation. “AAE is just as grammatically and functionally complex as any other variety of American English.”

#### // A ‘COMMUNICATIVE DISCONNECTION’

In her dissertation, McMurtry quotes this typical exchange between a teacher and student:

TEACHER: Where is Mary?

STUDENT: She not here.

TEACHER (*exasperatedly*): She is never here[?]

STUDENT: Yeah, she be here.

TEACHER: Where? You just said she wasn’t here.

“There is a bi-directional communicative disconnection that is occurring here,” McMurtry writes. The student’s first response above demonstrates the third-person singular “s” deletion; the second demonstrates the habitual be (Mary is

usually here, just not now). The teacher's instinct, meanwhile, is to correct. But "the worst form of humiliation for students is public scrutiny or embarrassment in front of their peers," McMurtry said. "It makes students shut down."

This communicative disconnection could play a major role in the persistent achievement gap between Black and white students in K-12 schools, McMurtry argues. "Because pre- and in-service teachers may deem African American English to be sloppy speech, slang and broken standard English, they make comments to students like, 'We don't talk that way in here' (Meier, 2009, p. 99), which consequently denigrates students' home language," McMurtry writes in her dissertation.

**This results in millions of conversations like the following:**

TEACHER: Bobby, what does your mother do every day? (*the teacher wants to find the best time to call Bobby's mother*)

BOBBY: She be at home.

TEACHER: You mean, "She is at home."

BOBBY: No, she ain't, 'cause she took my grandmother to the hospital this morning.

TEACHER: You know what I meant. You are not supposed to say, "She be at home." You are to say, "She is at home."

BOBBY: Why you trying to make me lie? She ain't at home.

#### // TOWARD RESPONSIVE LITERACY INSTRUCTION

"As teachers, we come to the classroom with the idea that we can make students the best they can be," McMurtry said. "But some of the practices we see in the classroom go against what the research and theory show to be best for our students."

As Toni Morrison once said in a 1981 interview, "It's terrible to think that a child with five different present tenses comes to school to be faced with those books that are less than his

own language. And then to be told things about his language, which is him, that are sometimes permanently damaging.”

So what can be done? Most teachers are not ill-intentioned, McMurry notes in her dissertation. “Rather, they may simply be unaware of the legitimate, rule-governed linguistic system enacted by most African American students, and these well-intentioned teachers are unaware of culturally and linguistically responsive literacy instruction.”

As part of her dissertation, McMurry developed and piloted a nine-week professional development series for high school teachers. She used tools such as Lyiscott’s TED Talk and sample dialogues to help high school teachers realize the power of Black language and the frustration that their own practices may be causing.

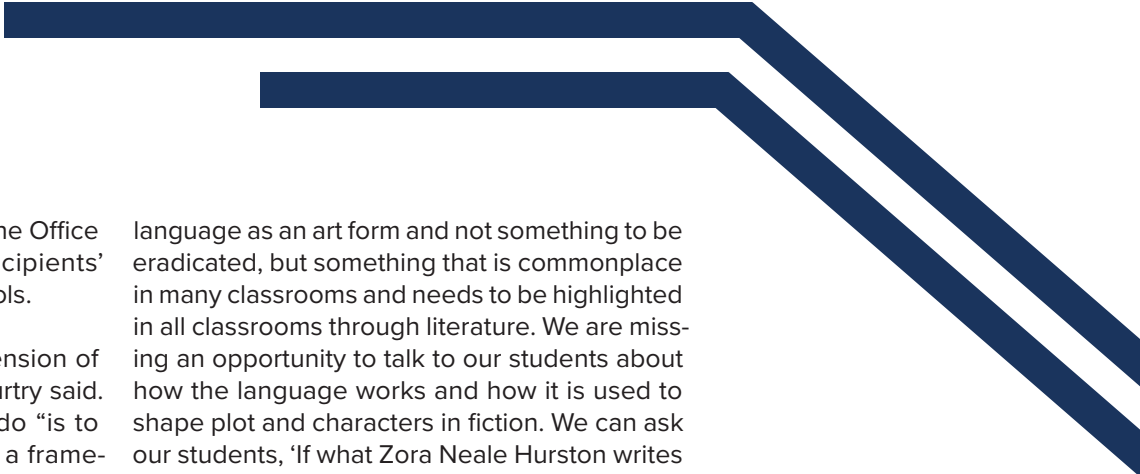
One exercise that McMurry used in her dissertation project is “The Missing A,” in which a teacher playing the role of a student must answer questions put to him or her by another teacher. At the last minute, the “students” are told that their answers cannot contain the letter “a.” Any time an answer does have an “a,” they are corrected immediately. The activity forces participants “to hyper-monitor their language, leaving them flustered” and with a new appreciation of what it

means to experience “linguistic insecurity,” McMurry writes.

#### // **FOREGROUNDING BLACK LANGUAGE**

After she earned her doctorate, McMurry went on to become a fellow in the National Council of Teachers of English Cultivating New Voices among Scholars of Color program, where she met UAB Professor Tonya Perry, Ph.D. (Perry now directs the Cultivating New Voices program.) Perry encouraged her to apply for an opening at UAB, and McMurry joined the faculty in the School of Education in fall 2020.

Now, thanks to an award from the UAB Faculty Development Grant Program, McMurry will continue her work on Black language with teachers in Alabama schools. Her project — Foregrounding Black language as a justice-oriented strategy in secondary classrooms across rural, suburban and urban contexts: A formative research study — is one of



21 projects funded by the Office of the Provost and recipients' departments and schools.

The project "is an extension of my dissertation," McMurtry said. What she is trying to do "is to provide teachers with a framework: tools, strategies, lesson plans. We need to spend more time thinking about our teaching and engaging in healthy experimentation." In Milwaukee, McMurtry worked in urban schools. But "I'm interested in the suburban and the rural as well, and the consistencies in how to really make this Black language relevant in classrooms," she said.

"Teacher education programs don't typically focus on Black language, and if they touch on it, they do just that — relegate it to a 'special issue,' along with differentiation or special education," McMurtry said. "It reinscribes this idea that there is a deficit about this vibrant language. Instead, I want to talk about Black

language as an art form and not something to be eradicated, but something that is commonplace in many classrooms and needs to be highlighted in all classrooms through literature. We are missing an opportunity to talk to our students about how the language works and how it is used to shape plot and characters in fiction. We can ask our students, 'If what Zora Neale Hurston writes was said in a standardized English form, what would that take from the meaning, from the identity of the character, from their experience, how they exist in and experience the world?' It's not just what the language is but what it does."

In addition to providing McMurtry time for scholarship, the Faculty Development Grant funds will be used to compensate teachers for their participation in her research, she says. This includes giving them gift cards they can use in their classrooms and giving them copies of the texts that she will be discussing, including the 2020 book "Linguistic Justice," by April Baker-Bell, Ph.D., of Michigan State University, who is a leader in the reemerging field of Black language scholarship.

**"I want to talk about Black language as an art form and not something to be eradicated, but something that is commonplace in many classrooms and needs to be highlighted in all classrooms through literature."**

**Teaira McMurtry**  
ASSISTANT PROFESSOR  
UAB SCHOOL OF EDUCATION'S  
DEPARTMENT OF CURRICULUM AND  
INSTRUCTION





#### // AN EMERGING FIELD

McMurtry recently worked with Baker-Bell and four other Black language scholars on a position statement for the National Council for Teachers of English: This Ain't Another Statement! This is a DEMAND for Black Linguistic Justice!

McMurtry has written a paper, due out this fall in the *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy*, focused on Black linguistic consciousness. That is a term coined by Baker-Bell to describe “what happens when a Black language speaker learns that Black language has a history, a whole scholarship and research and names the patterns that describe what the language does,” McMurtry said.

“The field of Black language, led by Black language scholars, is reemerging from the work done by pioneers Geneva Smitherman, Elaine Richardson, Arnetha Ball and Marcyliena Morgan, just to name a few,” McMurtry said. “This is a reemerging field; there is a lot of work that needs to be done. I want to get at the heart of language bias and language-based racism, to get people to recognize the significance and beauty of Black language. I want to help them recognize that there are so many myths surrounding Black language and to understand how these language biases manifest themselves in the classroom. That’s where I’m seeing the trajectory — a lot of learning and unlearning. How do we respect Black language while teaching students how to maintain their native tongue while employing standard or disciplinary forms of literacy? I encourage teachers to think about having to learn Black English like they have to learn a new language or literacy curriculum that comes out.”

# How an Epidemiologist Uses Social Media to Build Trust and Communicate

WRITTEN BY MATT WINDSOR

IN HIS 1989 BESTSELLER, "THE 7 HABITS OF HIGHLY EFFECTIVE PEOPLE," MANAGEMENT GURU STEPHEN R. COVEY CAPTURED A **KEY LESSON** OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC. "WHEN THE TRUST ACCOUNT IS HIGH, COMMUNICATION IS **EASY, INSTANT AND EFFECTIVE**," COVEY WROTE. AND WHEN THE TRUST ACCOUNT IS LOW, CONFUSION AND MISTRUST RUN **WILD**.

Social media has been widely criticized for its role in spreading viral misinformation during the pandemic. But it can be a force for good as well, says Bertha Hidalgo, Ph.D., associate professor in the Department of Epidemiology. "Social media can provide new and innovative ways to move the public health needle," Hidalgo said. She is leading studies of COVID-19 and heart disease that use social media for recruitment and education and is a prolific social media user in her personal life.


"My own personal experience has inspired a lot of the work I'm doing in social media," Hidalgo said. "In public health we often see engagement with communities as needing to be face-to-face, and that is still really important. But there are also communities we can reach digitally that can also benefit from what we say. It's just another way to be able to have an impact."

There are great examples of social accounts that shined during the COVID-19 pandemic, Hidalgo says. "One that comes to mind is Dear Pandemic," which is run by a team of interdisciplinary researchers with backgrounds in nursing, health policy, economics, mental health and epidemiology, she said. "They started on

Facebook and amassed a huge following because of their focus on putting out evidence-based information. They would write posts that would break down science and tell people what they needed to know in lay language. In some ways people needed that, because some people lost confidence in the information the CDC and other government agencies were putting out."



**Bertha Hidalgo**  
PH.D., ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR  
DEPARTMENT OF EPIDEMIOLOGY



HERE ARE **THREE** WAYS THAT HIDALGO SEES **SOCIAL MEDIA** CONTRIBUTING TO PUBLIC HEALTH RESEARCH AND PRACTICE — AND THREE POINTS RESEARCHERS SHOULD KEEP IN MIND IF THEY PLAN TO USE SOCIAL MEDIA IN THEIR STUDIES.

// **USING SOCIAL TO TELL THE WHOLE STORY**

"On social media, you have the opportunity to have a conversation that continues over time," Hidalgo said. "You can share videos with Instagram Stories or write long, detailed posts on a blog where you can explain, 'Yes, these guidelines or recommendations are changing, but this is why. This is the science behind why these changes are happening. Here are the research studies that got us where we are today.' You can tell the story. Social media really lends itself to being able to engage with people in that way and provide the background they may not have otherwise."

// **MAKING THE PANDEMIC PERSONAL**

"Messages that were coming out at the national level were too ambiguous at times," Hidalgo said. "People had a lot of questions about what they themselves needed to do in their specific situations. Offering an interpretation of the guidance that was coming out was a big reason for my engaging with individuals on social media over the past year and more. Some of it was reassurance and some of it was leading by example, sharing what I was personally doing in the pandemic."

// **REACHING NEW COMMUNITIES**

As the pandemic swept across Alabama this past spring, Hidalgo wanted to learn more about the experience of Latinx people in the state: if they had had symptoms, had been tested for COVID-19, had experienced job loss, had access to child care. But what was the best way to reach people and the right way to ask the questions she wanted to answer?

To find out, Hidalgo applied for a Back of the Envelope Award from the School of Public Health. The annual program provides pilot funds to enable faculty to explore new ideas. "At the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic there was very little accurate information — even any information — that was disseminated to the Latinx population here in Alabama," Hidalgo said. "Websites with information on testing and prevention were all centered on the English language. We were seeing such high rates of



COVID-19 in this population, and I wanted to know, was it a lack of understanding, a lack of communication a lack of perceived risk or something else?"

"In order to launch a successful social media messaging campaign or intervention or survey, you have to have established trust with the community you are trying to reach.... It's the same thing we say about engaging with people in community-based participatory research: You have to have trust before you can ask people to do things."

Instead of posting flyers or sending emails, typical recruitment strategies, Hidalgo wanted to "demonstrate the feasibility of recruitment using social media," she said. Facebook was one option, but preliminary research showed that this would target a relatively homogenous population. Working with data from marketing research firms, "what we found is that WhatsApp is the most popular platform, with a 52% usage rate in the Latinx population compared with 34% for Instagram and 21% for Twitter," Hidalgo said. "If we



**dr.berthahidalgo**  
36.4K followers [View profile](#)

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328 likes  
**dr.berthahidalgo**

Kids and the COVID-19 pandemic. There's a lot of talk in the Twitter-sphere this week about kids and school re-openings. Re-openings have been an intensely debated topic, largely because it has been highly politicized. I want you to know, that there is still a lot we still don't know about covid and kids and a lot we don't understand about what's actually happening in schools that have re-opened, but I will tell you this: It is 100% true that kids (& teachers/staff) have been absolute champs in all of this. Today, we will focus on kids.

One day in March 2020, many of us picked our kids up from school and told them they would not be returning to school. We then proceeded to tell them they couldn't see grandma/grandpa, fam, or their bff's for an undetermined amount of time.

We've learned a lot since March and have been able to regain some normalcy in our lives. However, kids remain in the middle of many hotly debated topics, school re-openings being among them.

I want you to know that there are no easy answers, the science related to covid-19 isn't straightforward, and that as much as we can, we should commend our kids for all they have been through so far and all that awaits this fall/winter.

#sciencesaysunday 📚 In terms of what we absolutely know about kids so far, it is this: Kids get and transmit COVID-19. How efficient they are spreading, we don't fully know. We know kids of all ages have viral loads as high as adults, likely indicating they can transmit as efficiently, but we don't know with certainty. We know they are capable of wearing masks (better than some adults), and know they are super resilient and adapt well to new things.

This upcoming week, I am going to share the latest about what we know in kids. For now, I'm going to take the opportunity to share that I am particularly proud of my boys. Both have been absolute champs in all of this and my husband and I could honestly not have asked for more from them the past 7 months. Hang in there, we will all get through this and we will be better humans beings, I hope, for all that we have learned about making sacrifices, thinking of others, and truly embracing collective action against COVID-19.

[view all 20 comments](#)

Add a comment... 

wanted to reach this community in Alabama, WhatsApp seemed the most reasonable platform. And it has proven to be a great social media platform to use, as opposed to having to come up with email lists or post flyers in stores and wait for people to engage."

The average response time for messages sent to participants through WhatsApp is about 90 seconds, Hidalgo said. "If you are able to disseminate a message or a call to recruitment using established networks, like HICA [the Hispanic Interest Coalition of Alabama], and established individuals that have large networks that already communicate on WhatsApp, people know these aren't messages that are being randomly sent to them — they are a more engaged audience and people tend to respond.

"In some segments in the Latinx population there is a lot of mobility," Hidalgo said. "Expecting people to come in to a university setting or go to a clinic and fill out survey is not always realistic. I felt this was a way to be able to reach and also engage people."

The right social media channel to target depends on the audience a researcher wants to reach, Hidalgo points out. In November 2020, she received a two-year, \$300,000 grant from the American Heart Association's Institute for Precision Cardiovascular Medicine to increase education and awareness in multiethnic millennial women about cardiovascular disease and stroke. "Because of the ages we are targeting, Facebook and Instagram proved to be the best platforms," Hidalgo said.

Engaging with a community on social media also is a great way for a researcher to establish visibility in their area of interest. "Through the Back of the Envelope award I could find and reach the populations that needed to be recruited," Hidalgo said. "Compare this with setting up to do a survey at a community center; by using social media, many more people have the awareness that Dr. Hidalgo at UAB is working on this issue of COVID-19's effects on the Latinx population in Alabama."

While she was developing her study of the Latinx population in Alabama, Hidalgo was selected as site principal investigator for a major study by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, known as RESOURCE, which will survey multiethnic populations nationwide about their experiences during the pandemic. "I deliberately timed the questions and contacts from the Back of the Envelope study so that we will be able to compare them with the results from RESOURCE," Hidalgo said.

# Getting Started

RESEARCHERS SHOULD KEEP A FEW POINTS IN **MIND** WHEN **ENGAGING** WITH SOCIAL MEDIA, HIDALGO SAYS.

## // **CREDIBILITY MUST BE CULTIVATED**

"In order to launch a successful social media messaging campaign or intervention or survey, you have to have established trust with the community you are trying to reach," Hidalgo said. "If you as an individual researcher suddenly open an account and try to launch something with no network, no history, you will have no trust. It's the same thing we say about engaging with people in community-based participatory research: You have to have trust before you can ask people to do things."

## // **LANGUAGE MATTERS**

"One of the points of understanding that has emerged from the pandemic is that we need to pay close attention to the words we are using when we are communicating," Hidalgo said. As a part of her Back of the Envelope award, Hidalgo worked carefully to make sure that the words she chose for her survey questions would be clear to all members of the diverse Latinx population in Alabama.

"The other really important thing that came out of my preliminary research was that it was important to understand the backgrounds of the Latinx population of Alabama," Hidalgo said. "While it is predominantly Mexican, there are also a large number of Guatemalans, Puerto Ricans, Colombians, Brazilians, Salvadorians and Panamanians. And anyone who speaks Spanish knows that the connotations of words and the types of words that are used to describe certain things can vary depending on where people come from."

As just one example, there are several common

words for face covering or mask in Spanish — máscara, mascarilla and tapabocas. "Those are three words that all say the same thing but understanding which was most common across all background groups is important," Hidalgo said. Hidalgo and colleagues would watch news segments from across the country to see which words were most commonly used. "Then we tested those words in local social media groups," Hidalgo said. "We would ask, 'Do you prefer this word over that word? Do you understand what that word means?' We did this informal pilot testing to make sure that they made sense."

## // **IT TAKES A TEAM TO SUCCEED**

Studies using social media are "really the embodiment of team science and multidisciplinary research," Hidalgo said. One of the collaborators on her American Heart Association study is Alex Krallman, Ph.D., formerly a faculty member in the Department of Marketing, Industrial Distribution and Economics in the Collat School of Business who now is at the University of North Carolina-Wilmington. "She helped us better understand how to leverage social media for a public health intervention and campaign," Hidalgo said.

**"There are already great examples of using social media in research, but this is still a nascent field, and we have a lot to learn Working with people who have done this in business and marketing for a decade now is a great way to build bridges and better understand how to leverage fast-paced social media for good."**

**Bertha Hidalgo**

PH.D., ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR  
DEPARTMENT OF EPIDEMIOLOGY

# Public relations capstone class concludes with a campaign competition, making a mark on Birmingham community

WRITTEN BY: YVONNE TAUNTON

STUDENTS IN THE PUBLIC RELATIONS **CAPSTONE** CLASS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA AT BIRMINGHAM HELPED SIX LOCAL NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS **DEVELOP CAMPAIGNS** AND CONCLUDED WITH A COMPETITION.

Students in the capstone class presented their client campaigns and competed for “2021 Best Campaign,” judged by practicing public relations professionals. Six student-led public relations firms represented community-based nonprofit organizations, which included Cornerstone Ranch, The Fellowship House, Magic City Poetry Festival, Quest Kids Club, South City Theatre and Vinegar.

“The public relations program is a sequenced curriculum,” said Jacquelyn S. Shaia, J.D., Ph.D., assistant professor of public relations in the College of Arts and Sciences. “Each class in the public relations program, including ethics and leadership as well as an internship, builds on the objective of preparing these students to practice in this field.”

By the end of the UAB public relations program,

students have worked with an actual client to develop and deliver a real-world public relations campaign.

“This experiential opportunity provides these students with valuable experience in all aspects of the practice of public relations, enabling them to be successful when they graduate,” Shaia said.

This year, the student-led firm led by Eric Lamar Burts, Kati-ana Banks, Tehreem Khan and Jay Shropshire won the 2021 Best Campaign for their work with Vinegar, an artist-run and women-led nonprofit organiza-



PHOTOGRAPHY BY ANDREA MABRY

LEFT TO RIGHT // *Jay Shropshire, Tehreem Khan, Jacquelyn Shaia, Ph.D., Katiana Banks and Eric-Lamar Burts*

tion that supports the arts and artists in the Birmingham area and throughout the state of Alabama. Vinegar champions diversity and specifically works to support artists from underrepresented groups.

“The work these students did for us has enabled Vinegar to enlarge its footprint and support in order to accomplish our mission,” said Melissa Yes, Vinegar’s co-director and founder. “They designed a campaign that tremendously increased our digital outreach, community outreach and engagement. The students developed a crisis management plan as well as a

best practices guide for future grant applications and media contacts, which we very much needed. Their work will allow Vinegar to successfully meet and expand our mission.”

As part of the capstone class, students work on projects that they can add to their portfolios and compete both in the state and nationally.

“I am beyond proud of these students,” Shaia said. “The hard work by each team truly prepares them for success and provides valuable contributions to our community and state.”

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