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President Leo's First Week at UAH

President Donald J. Leo wrapped up his first week as UAH's 11th president last week, sharing his appreciation for the warm welcome and early impressions of a university defined by excellence, innovation and impact.

[WATCH: Greetings from Dr. Don Leo](#)

[WATCH: First Week Recap](#)

**FIVE RESEARCH
PROGRAMS RANKED
IN THE TOP 25
NATIONALLY, AND SIX
CATEGORIES RANKED
#1 IN THE STATE.**



UAH sustains top-tier research rankings for 13th year in a row

Five programs at UAH rank among the top 25 federally funded programs in the United States, according to the National Science Foundation (NSF) Higher Education Research and Development (HERD) Survey. The rankings underscore the university's sustained excellence in federally sponsored research and its continued strength across key national priority areas.

"These results speak to the strength and resilience of our research enterprise," says Dr. Robert Lindquist, UAH vice president for research and economic development. "For more than a decade, UAH has sustained a presence among the nation's top programs — a reflection of both our consistency and our ability to evolve in priority areas."

[SEE THE RESEARCH RANKINGS](#)



Dr. Eric Smith, new dean of the UAH Honors College, aims to inspire more students to seek higher goals

Dr. Eric Smith believes in the transformative power of education. It's taken him from student in a small North Alabama high school all the way to full professor in the Department of English at UAH. Now, as the new dean of the UAH Honors College, Smith is eager to offer more students what so many of his teachers gave him over the years: encouragement to dig deeper, take risks and seek higher goals.

"I'm a product of North Alabama. I'm a first-generation college student, a transfer student and, in that way, something of the living embodiment of the kind of transformative potential of higher education," he says. "I'm eager to help create those opportunities for other students from North Alabama and elsewhere. I think it's meaningful to have an example in front of you of what's possible."

LEARN MORE ABOUT DR. SMITH



NASA, UAH partnership pushes nuclear thermal propulsion toward making deep space exploration a reality

Through partnerships with NASA and aerospace industry leaders, UAH researchers are helping develop next-generation nuclear propulsion technologies that could dramatically reduce travel times to destinations such as Mars and beyond. Building on decades of research and innovation, UAH's work is helping shape a future where deep space exploration becomes faster, safer and more achievable.

"NASA is still defining exactly what the next phase of nuclear propulsion will look like, but UAH's role is growing," says Dr. Dale Thomas, an eminent scholar of systems engineering at UAH and deputy director of the UAH Propulsion Research Center. "We're continuing advanced research while also moving back into more first-generation nuclear propulsion work tied directly to near-term missions."

LEARN MORE ABOUT THE PARTNERSHIP



National nursing leader named dean of UAH College of Nursing

Dr. Hyochol Brian Ahn has been appointed dean of the UAH College of Nursing following a national search. A nationally recognized academic leader, Ahn joins UAH from the University of Arizona, where he also served as dean. He will begin his role on July 1, 2026, and will additionally serve as executive director of the UAH–Huntsville Hospital Health System Nursing Leadership Collaborative.

LEARN MORE ABOUT DR. AHN



Dr. John Christy to retire after nearly four decades at UAH

Dr. John Christy, Distinguished Professor of Atmospheric Science and director of the Earth System Science Center (ESSC) at UAH, is retiring after a career spanning nearly four decades at the university.

Known internationally for helping develop one of the first global satellite-based temperature records, Christy also spent 25 years serving as Alabama State Climatologist while helping grow the ESSC into a nationally recognized research enterprise.

[READ ABOUT DR. CHRISTY'S LEGACY](#)



Softball shines with Super Regional appearance

The UAH softball team closed out an impressive 2026 campaign with a 39-24 record and its deepest NCAA postseason run in eight years. The Chargers advanced to the NCAA South Super Regional for the first time since 2018, highlighting a season defined by resilience, competitive excellence and continued success on the national stage.

[READ ABOUT THE SOFTBALL SEASON](#)

UAH CHARGER TRAVEL PROGRAM



Alumni Association Travel Program offers new way to travel and connect

The UAH Alumni Association's new Alumni Travel Program offers graduates and friends a unique way to travel, connect and explore alongside fellow Chargers. The first adventure, Montreal & Quebec City Christmas (Dec. 7-12, 2026), will showcase holiday traditions, culture and winter scenery through a partnership with Premier World Discovery.

You can [watch a recording of the recent information session](#), or stay tuned for additional information about this exciting opportunity!

VISIT THE ALUMNI ASSOCIATION PAGE

SAVE THE DATE

Family & Friends
WEEKEND

September 24-27, 2026

Save the Date: Family & Friends Weekend 2026

Mark your calendars for Sept. 24-27, 2026, and join us at UAH for Family & Friends Weekend. Alumni, students, families, supporters and friends are invited to experience campus life, connect with the Charger community and enjoy a weekend of activities both on campus and throughout Huntsville.

Click the link below to check out a list of other upcoming events across campus!

[See All Events](#)

Contact Us

The University of Alabama in Huntsville
301 Sparkman Drive
Huntsville, AL 35899

contactus@uah.edu

256.824.1000



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