

## ACADEMICS

UAH STUDENTS DEVELOP AND LAUNCH PAYLOAD FOR NASA ROCKSAT-X PROGRAM RESEARCH

RESEARCHER PROBES FOR CLUES TO SOLVE THE BIGGEST MYSTERY IN HELIOPHYSICS

#### CAMPUS

ROTC PROGRAMS ENABLE STUDENTS TO PURSUE BOTH A MILITARY AND COLLEGE CAREER

# THINKING ABOUT LIFE AS A CHARGER?

See for yourself what UAH has to offer!

#### UAH AT A GLANCE SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 9!

Designed for high school juniors, seniors, and transfer students, UAH at a Glance is a great way for you to gain insight into the Charger experience.

At this event, you'll have the opportunity to:

- Learn more about UAH academic programs
- Speak with representatives from Housing, Career Services, Financial Aid, and more at the Student Services Browse Fair
- Discover what life is like as a Charger and learn more about student organizations
- Take a student-led campus and residence hall tour

Registration is required. THE DEADLINE IS MONDAY, NOVEMBER 4, 2024.

#### **INDIVIDUAL CAMPUS TOURS**

Individual campus tours can be scheduled on most weekdays at certain times. Visit **uah.edu/visit** for more information.

#### **VIRTUAL CAMPUS TOURS**

You can explore UAH through our virtual campus tour at **uah.edu/admissions/undergraduate/discover-uah/**visit-campus.

#### **SOCIAL MEDIA**

Engage and connect with us daily by following our Admissions Office on social media:







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and Dr. David Allen

# **UAH**Magazine

UAH Magazine brings together our academic accomplishments, innovative research projects, extracurricular organizations and alumni into one engaging source for all things UAH.

If you would like to receive a hard copy of this issue of UAH Magazine or be added to our mailing list to receive future issues, please contact **omc@uah.edu**. UAH Magazine is published by the Office of Marketing and Communications at The University of Alabama in Huntsville.

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# UNIVERSITY ANNOUNCEMENTS









#### **Recent Rankings**

Fall 2024 enrollment numbers showcase UAH's academic excellence and value. With an average high school GPA of 3.9 and average ACT score of 26.4, the 2024 incoming class remains exceptionally academically talented. The 1,212 freshmen join an overall undergraduate enrollment of 6,800, while the Graduate School boasts 1,764 students. In addition, 2024 brings greater enrollment percentages across multiple Alabama counties, including those in the Birmingham and Mobile areas, and freshman enrollment from Tennessee has increased by roughly 8.5% over last year. Due to its comparatively low cost and high return on investment, UAH has repeatedly been named a "best value" university. In 2024, the Wall Street Journal ranked UAH in the top 35% of universities nationally, with the awarded schools representing the top 10% of all U.S. colleges and universities. Niche.com recently listed UAH as the fourth best public university in Alabama.

#### Dr. Agnieszka Truszkowska - 2024 ORAU Powe Award

Dr. Agnieszka Truszkowska, an assistant professor in the College of Engineering, has won the 2024 Oak Ridge Associated Universities (ORAU) Ralph E. Powe Junior Faculty Award. The national honor is a one-year \$5,000 commitment aimed at enriching the research skills and professional growth of young faculty members at ORAU member institutions. Truszkowska's research focuses on multiscale modeling in microtechnology-based devices and porous materials to develop new models that advance these systems with applications in chemical, petroleum and biomedical engineering, as well as biotechnology.

#### Ashok Silwal - FINESST scholarship

Ashok Silwal, a doctoral candidate and graduate research assistant in the Department of Space Science, has been chosen to receive a NASA Future Investigators in NASA Earth and Space Science and Technology (FINESST) scholarship to study stream interaction regions in the heliosphere. Silwal is working to understand how energetic particles are generated in the solar wind – a fundamental question in heliophysics. FINESST awards are research grants for up to three years and \$50,000 per year.

#### **UAH Facilities and Operations wins 2024 Beautification Award**

UAH won the Award of Excellence as Most Outstanding Property in District 4 through the City of Huntsville Beautification Board. The university has been a proud honor roll winner of the Huntsville Beautification Awards for over 10 years. Tory Tollefson and Thomas Carroll accepted the award on behalf of the entire UAH Grounds and Landscape Management team during an award ceremony in August.

# A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Charles E. Kan

elcome to the Fall 2024 edition of UAH Magazine. The semester is well underway, and as you will see inside this issue, our students, faculty and staff have been hard at work pursuing new discoveries, innovating to bring new opportunities to our students, connecting with one another and giving back to our communities. It is an exciting time to be a Charger.

This year's incoming class makes clear that UAH continues to attract the brightest minds. Our 2024 freshman class had a high school GPA of 3.9 - the highest within the state of Alabama and average ACT score of 26.4. I am exceptionally proud of the caliber of students we are bringing to our campus, and I am also excited to see an upward trend in attracting students from outside North Alabama. We experienced greater enrollment percentages across multiple Alabama counties, including those outside Birmingham and Mobile, and freshman enrollment from Tennessee has increased by roughly 8.5% over last year. UAH continues to rank as a best value university, and those outside of North Alabama are taking notice.

UAH remains committed to academic excellence for all students. As announced in July, recent shifts in the higher education landscape provided the opportunity to review our programming and initiatives and assess how we can effectively serve the entire campus community while adhering to applicable state and federal law. With the closure of the Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, a new office has been created to provide enhanced support to all students.

AWARD

The Office of Access, Connections and Engagement seeks to increase access to higher education, equip all students for success and propel us to reach our goals. From working to promote UAH in high schools throughout Alabama, to engaging with current students to help them navigate and create connections across campus, the office is committed to helping all students access options after graduation that will lead them to a rewarding future.

UAH attracts students and faculty from all over the world, bringing together diverse talents to embrace challenges and pursue academic and professional goals, and we recognize that our different backgrounds enrich our campus community every day. We remain focused on recruiting and retaining outstanding students, faculty and staff from all backgrounds; providing open and equal access to resources and opportunities, and equipping all campus community members for success.

PRESIDENT

Lastly, if you have visited campus recently, you will have seen that construction of the Jones Engineering Building is well underway. Named in memory of Raymond B. Jones, longtime business and community leader and past chairman of the UAH Foundation, the new 76,000-squarefoot facility will feature modernized, world-class research and collaborative teaching facilities to support the College of Engineering, the largest college at UAH. As the fastest growing region in the state, Huntsville and North Alabama continue to be a high-tech hub with an ongoing demand for skilled STEM workers. This project is but one example of how we are rising to the challenge to ensure that UAH continues to equip our students to meet Alabama's workforce needs. We hope that you will drive onto our campus and see our latest enhancement.

#### COVER STORY









# Alumni and Family weekends bring Chargers back to campus for celebrations, food and fellowship

EEKEND

AH held Alumni Weekend 2024 Sept. 19-22 on the UAH campus. Sponsored by the Alumni Association at UAH, these four days of celebrations, food and fellowship brought alumni of all ages back to UAH. This year, Alumni Weekend coincided with Fall Family Weekend, hosted by Parent and Family Programs at UAH.

"We're lucky to have a rich history and be able to enjoy our alumni coming back to campus," says Kelly Myers, UAH director of Alumni Relations and Special Events. "We have amazing alumni and friends of the university. People want to support UAH, and it's really the relationships and people that make it wonderful."

Alumni, current students and their families, faculty and staff gathered on the UAH campus for Family Fun Day, part of both Alumni and Family weekends. Sponsored by the Office of Student Life and the Association for Campus Entertainment (ACE) at UAH, the event was free and open to the public, Family Fun Day featured food and fun for Chargers of all ages, including live music by First Lady, a variety of food trucks, family photos, miniature golf, axe throwing, corn hole, sand volleyball, face painting, balloon artists, an obstacle course, basketball shoot, football toss.

# **CELEBRATING OUR OWN**

#### Alumni of Achievement Awards Dinner honors 7 outstanding graduates

The Alumni Weekend festivities kicked off with the Alumni of Achievement Awards Dinner on Thursday, Sept. 19, on campus. A signature component of Alumni Weekend, this event honors distinguished graduates who exemplify the high standards of UAH, recognizing honorees from each academic college and one Outstanding Young Alumnus. These are the highest honors bestowed by the UAH Alumni Association.

Congratulations to the 2024 winners of the Alumni of Achievement and Outstanding Young Alumni of Achievement awards:

- Dixiana Berrios, College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences (B.A., political science, 1994)
- Walter Woltosz, College of Business (M.A., administrative science, 1977)
- Steven Norwood, College of Engineering (B.S., chemical engineering, 1998)
- Angelear Warren, College of Education (B.A., elementary education, 2013)
- Alice Lessmann, College of Nursing (B.S., nursing, 1998; M.S., nursing, 2001)
- Amanda Clark, College of Science (B.S., computer science, 2005; M.S., electrical engineering, 2014)
- De'Onah Norfleet, 2024 Outstanding Young Alumna of Achievement, College of Business (BSBA, accounting, 2014; MBA, management, 2016)

Award recipients shared memories of fun times and vital lessons learned at UAH as well as career highlights and tips for today's students with the Alumni Association.

This year, the UAH Alumni Association also celebrated 50 years of the UAH Lancers student ambassadors, an exceptional group of students who provide outstanding service to guests at various events while promoting UAH's positive vision within the community. Several Lancer alumni joined the Alumni of Achievement Awards dinner.



 Left to right, Walter Woltosz, Amanda Clark, Dixiana Berrios, Alice Lessmann, Steven Norwood, De'Onah Norfleet and Angelear Warren.

## **SERVICE WITH A SMILE**

#### Celebrating 50 years of the UAH Lancers

The Lancers, sporting bright smiles and blue jackets, have served as official UAH student ambassadors for 50 years. They've welcomed guests to scholarship banquets, donor receptions, award ceremonies, commencements and other special events.

The group began in 1973 as the "Hosts and Hostesses" under UAH's first president, Dr. Ben Graves. The next year, the university changed the name to Lancers, a nod to UAH's then-mascot, a knight holding a lance and charging forward on a horse. The mascot evolved to a Charger in the half century since, but the Lancers are still known for their enthusiasm and eagerness to help – and the sharp jackets.

That desire to serve – as well as the opportunity to develop leadership skills – continues to draw ambitious Chargers to the competitive Lancer selection process, open to rising juniors and seniors. That process focuses on students' "academic standing (3.0 minimum GPA is required), their ability to communicate, their willingness to learn about the university and their enthusiasm for UAH," says Emily Burnett, Lancers sponsor and special events manager.

For UAH Lancers alumni Mital Modi and Yanjie Horton, the Lancers program helped them grow personally and professionally and gave them treasured friendships and memories.

#### COVER STORY

Mital Modi graduated from UAH in May 2007 with a bachelor's degree in mechanical and aerospace engineering and a minor in mathematics. Modi currently works as a target test director for the Missile Defense Agency and also serves as an intelligence officer in the U.S. Navy Reserve.

"The biggest thing I learned is time management," says Modi. "Being a Lancer is not just a résumé booster; we're giving back to a cause. It's about how you represent your organization. I took that philosophy into my Navy career, my civilian career, even other community organizations. You have to give your 100%."



UAH Lancer alumna Yanjie Horton

Modi still talks to many of her Lancer friends and remains connected to UAH. She served on the UAH



Alumni Association board for about six years.

Yanjie Horton graduated from UAH in May 2024 with a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration with a concentration in finance.

"One of the things that I learned being a Lancer was the ability to do lots of different things that were asked of you," Horton says. "The various Lancer events all are unique and have different needs. The versatility and adaptability that you have to have, and learning how to make sure everything is going smoothly – these are so important. You have to meet the needs of the guests and even anticipate a need before it's there."

## **LEVELING UP**

Inaugural Esports Challenge opens a new chapter in gaming at UAH

Students and alumni faced off during the first-ever Esports Challenge, sponsored by the new Esports Alumni Chapter at UAH. Open to the public, the event incorporated games including Minecraft, Mario Kart and Super Smash Bros. Ultimate, plus Rocket League and Call of Duty team events.

#### About the Esports Chapter at UAH

Shorthand for "electronic sports," esports has emerged over the last several decades as its own genre of competitive play – one that requires thoughtful planning, precise timing and skilled execution. For Nick Hanson, a 2013 computer science graduate, the tournament-style event during Alumni Weekend was the next step in sharing the enthusiasm for esports across campus and beyond.



► UAH students and alumni at the Esports Challenge.

Since graduating from UAH, Hanson has remained passionate about videogaming and has frequently volunteered to help with gaming events on campus. Earlier this year, he decided to take his support a step further and formally organize the Esports Alumni Chapter. While the chapter is still in the early stages of formation, Hanson is optimistic about its potential for growth. "There is a rich history of esports on the UAH campus, and I have high hopes for the alumni chapter," he says. "We are just at the beginning."

#### COVER STORY



Men's basketball, Auston Leslie, during Charger Tipoff

## **FRIENDLY RIVALRY**

Charger Tipoff provides exciting preview of UAH basketball

Saturday's activities culminated in the Charger Tipoff, a fun-filled event that brought alumni, family, friends and community members to Spragins Hall on the UAH campus to get charged up for the upcoming season of UAH basketball.

The event served as an introduction to UAH's new coaches: men's basketball coach Mick Hedgepeth and women's basketball coach Allen Sharpe. Following team introductions, the men's and women's basketball teams went head-to-head in a match of friendly competition.

## **CHARGER CHAMPIONS**

7 former Chargers honored during **Athletics Hall of Fame Induction** Ceremony

During the Athletics Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony, the Department of Athletics recognized seven alumni and Charger Champions for their extraordinary accomplishments and contributions as a Charger.

Stephanie Berry | Softball | 1998-2001 Josh Magette | Men's Basketball | 2008-2012 Emily Miller | Volleyball | 2002-2005 Kyle Nichols | Baseball | 1998-1999 Tracy Porter Valenzuela | Softball | 1996-1999 Jared Ross | Hockey | 2001-2005 Ostap Stromecky | Men's Soccer | 1973-1989

## INTERESTED IN JOINING OR STARTING A HAPTFR?

Open to all UAH alumni, the UAH Alumni Association is free for members. Alumni chapters are a great way to stay connected to fellow Charger alumni who share the same interests and goals.

A list of current chapters is available on the UAH Alumni Association page. You can join an existing chapter or start your own!



Attendees at Athletics Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony

# COUNTDOWN TO LIMITLESS

Innovation | Impact | Opportunity

## SUPPORT THE Raymond B. Jones Engineering Building

# The countdown has begun to launch limitless innovation, impact and opportunities for UAH engineering.

Named in memory of Raymond B. Jones, longtime business and community leader and past chairman of the UAH Foundation, this 76,000-square-foot engineering facility will shape the future of engineering excellence through cutting-edge research, exceptional education and industry collaboration.

#### Now is your chance to be a part of the story. Reserve your space today.

- **INNOVATION:** Enable a beacon of innovation, designed to foster creativity, interdisciplinary collaboration and hands-on practical learning.
- **IMPACT:** Enhance and amplify educational capabilities, research output, economic growth, reputation and societal change.
- **OPPORTUNITY:** Invest in a partnership that yields brand visibility and recognition, nurtures a talent pipeline, invites synergistic R&D collaboration and demonstrates corporate social responsibility.

Mound and the

Renderings are conceptual and subject to change. All projects are subject to the approval of The University of Alabama System Board of Trustees.

PART III University of Alabama System

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New faculty members who joined the UAH community in 2024 include, front row, left to right, Deanna Womble, Jackson Lawrence, Will Waldron, Hannah Nolte, Melissa Miasek, Preston Miller and Summer Atkins and, back row, left to right, Charles O'Brien, Daniel Walsh, Natalie Click, Henrick Haule, Jeffery Williams, Evan Miller and Cheng Chen.

# WELCOME TO THE UAH CHARGER COMMUNITY!

AH added 25 new faculty members to the Charger community in 2024. "Their decision to join an esteemed group of colleagues underscores their commitment to excellence, and we are eager to support their success," says Dr. David A. Puleo, UAH provost and executive vice president for academic affairs.

#### **College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences**

- · Michael Emett, history, lecturer
- Jack Hontz, music, assistant professor, director of bands
- Charles O'Brien; art, art history and design; lecturer; game design

#### **College of Education**

- Yoonki Chun, kinesiology, assistant professor
- Daniel Walsh, curriculum and instruction, clinical assistant
   professor

#### **College of Engineering**

- Cheng Chen, industrial and systems engineering and engineering management, assistant professor
- Natalie Click, mechanical and aerospace engineering, assistant professor
- Henrick Haule, civil and environmental engineering, assistant professor
- Jackson Lawrence, electrical and computer engineering, lecturer
- Paresh Samantaray, chemical and materials engineering, assistant professor

• Jeffery Williams, industrial and systems engineering and engineering management, lecturer

#### Military - Air Force ROTC

- Brett Collins, captain, U.S. Air Force
- Matthew Spinks, major, U.S. Air Force

#### **College of Nursing**

- · Melissa Miasek, clinical instructor
- Preston Miller, assistant professor
- Hannah Nolte, clinical assistant professor
- · Deanna Womble, clinical assistant professor

#### **College of Science**

- · Laxman Adhikari, space science, assistant professor
- Summer Atkins, mathematical sciences, assistant
  professor
- · Keka Biswas, biological sciences, lecturer
- Jingshu Chen, computer science, assistant professor
- Carrie Deans, biological sciences, assistant professor
- Moumita Ghosh, mathematical sciences, lecturer
- Evan Miller, mathematical sciences, assistant professor
- Will Waldron, physics, lecturer

# Team **TERMINUS** successfully launches NASA RockSat-X payload into space

eam TERMINUS successfully launched a student-developed payload aboard a Terrier-Improved Malemute sounding rocket that featured two experiments designed by the UAH Space Hardware Club (SHC). The student packages were launched in August as part of the NASA RockSat-X program, a flight that soared to an altitude of 100 miles from the NASA Wallops Flight Facility in Wallops Island, Va., before descending by parachute into the Atlantic Ocean for recovery.

According to Ben Campbell, a UAH doctoral student in aerospace systems engineering who founded the TERMINUS Spaceflight Research Group, the launch could not have gone any better. The UAH payload included a pair of experiments: JUPITER, a custom reusable spacecraft bus-like system that



Terrier-Improved Malemute sounding rocket carrying RockSat-X student-developed experiments launched from the launch rail on Wallops Island.

handles all core spacecraft functions and connects experiment hardware with existing launch vehicle electronics, and SwingSat, the smallest satellite tether release ever attempted in space, a project that aims to advance small satellite deployment technologies.

The TERMINUS Spaceflight Research Group is a subset of the UAH Space Hardware Club, the university's largest on-campus student group. The SHC provides students access to hands-on hardware and software engineering projects, along with opportunities to conduct scientific research for any enrolled UAH student from their first weeks on campus through graduation and beyond.

# HERC rover team makes STEM outreach trip to Dominican Republic

fter winning the 2024 Human Rover Explorer Challenge (HERC), several UAH engineering students had the opportunity to perform STEM outreach in the Dominican Republic this summer. Members of the UAH rover team THESEUS traveled to the Instituto Tecnológico de Santo Domingo, or INTEC University, at the invitation of Dominican rover team Apolo27, the second-place finisher. The two squads bonded during the NASA competition, when UAH hosted visits to its team's rover design and construction facilities.

The Dominican HERC students faced many challenges in getting their team up and running, especially with regards to obtaining sponsorships. Many of the young people on the DR team are from low-income families in very poor areas, explains advisor José Ezequiel Díaz, noting the incredible



obstacles facing their team. But since those early days, INTEC teams have gone on to shine, capturing numerous awards at different HERC competitions. "We have impacted several thousand young people through direct engagement activities and over 15,000 more through conferences, motivating children in schools to embrace STEM and dream big," says Díaz.

"It was a very productive visit, and I look forward to working with the INTEC team from the Dominican Republic in the future," says David Fikes, a UAH senior lecturer in the College of Engineering who is the HERC senior design instructor and team advisor. "[We have] planted seeds of friendship and potential future collaboration between individuals, universities and countries that will bear much fruit in the coming years."



A light bridge, a lane of bright material that often divides the umbra, or central dark region, of a sunspot, was a focus of this study.

Courtesy NASA

# RESEARCHER WINS \$608K SHINE GRANT TO PROBE FOR CLUES TO BIGGEST MYSTERY IN HELIOPHYSICS

r. Mehmet Sarp Yalim, a research scientist in the Center for Space Plasma and Aeronomic Research (CSPAR), won a \$608.000 National Science Foundation Solar, Heliospheric and INterplanetary Environment (SHINE) grant to study a process known as Joule, or Cowling, heating. The project seeks to demonstrate that this special form of resistivity - similar to the everyday mechanism of passing a current through an electrical conductor, producing thermal energy can help solve the most long-standing mystery in heliophysics: why the solar atmosphere or corona of the sun is many times hotter than the surface, or photosphere, itself.

"The atmosphere of our sun consists of a hot gas that is ionized at different levels called plasma," Yalim notes. "The plasma temperature from the photosphere to corona increases from 5,000 to 1 million degrees Kelvin over a distance of only 10,000 kilometers in the chromosphere. A number of different mechanisms have been introduced over many decades to explain this. Today, it is largely accepted that this heating is strongly related to the magnetic field structure of the sun."

In heliophysics, dissipation is a process where energy lost – usually through friction or turbulence – is converted into heat through two different types of magnetic resistivities: the better-known Coulomb resistivity, which dissipates electric currents that are parallel to magnetic field lines, and Cowling resistivity, the focus of Yalim's work, where resistivity arises in the weakly ionized plasma found in the chromosphere that dissipates electric currents that are perpendicular to the direction of the magnetic field.

"The idea is the same as traditional Joule heating that we encounter in our daily lives governed by Ohm's law: An electric current passing through a resistor under a voltage causes heating of the resistor," the researcher explains. "To be able to talk about this mechanism in terms of the sun, we need electric currents in a plasma environment, and we have strong electric currents in the chromosphere. Together with magnetic resistivity, which is also relatively strong in this layer, Joule heating becomes a significant heating mechanism."

"Cowling heating" is short for Joule heating caused by Cowling resistivity. "Cowling resistivity enhances the overall resistivity in this solar plasma region significantly, several orders of magnitude larger than the usual Coulomb resistivity found throughout the solar atmosphere," Yalim says. "This results in significant Joule heating rates at levels that can provide the additional heating necessary to obtain the observed temperature distributions."

Looking to the future, Yalim believes the path forward for this research is clear. "With the advent of the groundbased and space-borne solar observational capabilities, we can develop data-constrained/data-driven models more confidently to pursue results with unprecedented accuracy. Our next step is to investigate Cowling heating more broadly within the solar chromosphere and possibly in the lower corona in regions where the necessary conditions for this mechanism are favorable." CAMPUS

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or students trying to choose between a military or college career, the Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) enables them to do both. ROTC cadets undergo military training alongside their standard college courses, and upon graduation, they serve as enlisted officers. At UAH, students now have the opportunity to participate in either the Army or Air Force ROTC programs.

In August, UAH announced the activation of its Air Force ROTC operating location. UAH's program is the first Air Force or Space Force ROTC program of its kind in the U.S.

# MAKING EVERY SECOND COUNT RDTG AT UJAH

#### JUST LANDED: AIR FORCE ROTC OPERATING LOCATION

Commencing in the fall 2024 semester, the Air Force ROTC program is available to freshmen and sophomores, and will allow scholarship and non-scholarship cadets to live as regular college students while pursuing their degrees. Once they graduate, they will be commissioned in the U.S. Air Force or U.S. Space Force.

"This program is unique and will transform how the Air Force ROTC program is implemented nationwide," says Nicholas Anderson, associate director, Office of Military and Veteran Programs (MVP) at UAH. "This program will enable the Air Force to train more officers for both the Air Force and Space Force, helping to address recruitment concerns across all branches of the military."

#### ARMY ROTC: CELEBRATING NEARLY 50 YEARS AT UAH

While the AFROTC program is a brand-new offering at UAH, Army ROTC has a longstanding history in Huntsville. UAH students can participate in Army ROTC through an agreement with nearby Alabama A&M University (AAMU), known as the "Bulldog Battalion," which commissioned its first cohort of officers in 1973. UAH students have served in the program since 1975. Army ROTC cadets receive intense, hands-on leadership training and mentorship from U.S. Army professionals, all while pursuing their college curriculum. The program provides cadets the opportunity to pay for college,



CAMPUS

 UAH celebrated the activation of its Air Force ROTC operating location, the first of its kind in the U.S., in August 2024.

gain valuable leadership skills, and ultimately earn a commission as a U.S. Army officer. The program recently hit a remarkable milestone: commissioning its 1,000th cadet. Some UAH alumni have even achieved the rank of brigadier general and major general.

"Army ROTC at UAH increases students' basic foundation of fitness while embedding leadership skills. This enables students' success in all areas of their lives – from communication skills to time management to planning training events for over 200 cadets," says 1st Lt. Keith Elden, who serves as an infantry officer. "As one of the military science instructors, one of my goals is to mentor students to be successful in their academics and for the select few with the potential to lead – to prepare them to lead the soldiers who will win the wars of tomorrow."



Army ROTC cadets from Huntsville completed cadet summer training in Fort Knox, KY, in summer 2024.

#### **A SMART CHOICE**

With the current need for officers across all branches of the military, ROTC can play a crucial role in strengthening and expanding the ranks. "Huntsville was our first choice to become a pilot program for this new concept: worldclass education, a strong focus on STEM and a desire to host a military presence on the campus," says Brig. Gen. Joseph Sheffield at the Air Force ROTC activation ceremony in August. "Two of UAH's largest programs are engineering and nursing, and these are critical needs for the Air Force and Space Force." They are critical areas for the Army, too.

Regardless of course of study, ROTC teaches valuable life skills. "The mentorship, the development and the leadership skills that they gain, both in our program and after they commission, they can take that anywhere," says Maj. Matthew Spinks, Air Force ROTC cadre officer. "We're here to teach them and give them all those tools to be successful, capable leaders, both in the military and once they choose to depart service, whether that be retirement or separation."

And that gives UAH another strong career path to offer its students.

#### RESEARCH



▲ Former UAH student and model maker Blake Parker, right, presents models of the Voyager and IBEX spacecraft to Dr. Gary Zank, left, director of CSPAR.

# MODEL ALUMNI

# ALUMS SHARE LIFELONG PASSIONS WITH UAH STUDENTS

 From left: UAH President Charles L. Karr; Dr. Robert Frederick, director, UAH Propulsion Research Center; UAH alumna Lynn Troy, president, Troy7, Inc.; UAH alumnus John Troy, co-founder, Troy7, Inc.



hen it comes to learning advanced science and engineering concepts, the importance of visual displays cannot be overstated. From inert missile displays to scale models of spacecraft, UAH alumni have made a point to give back and share their passions with current students.

Blake Parker, a 2013 mechanical and aerospace engineering graduate, recently donated two realistic-looking paper models of the Voyager and the Interstellar Boundary Explorer (IBEX) to the UAH Center for Space Plasma and Aeronomic Research (CSPAR). They join a Parker Solar Probe model he donated in 2020. Parker, who works for NASA as an International Space Station (ISS) payload

operations and integration specialist through Teledyne Brown, Inc., painstakingly created the models from scratch.

"We are very grateful to Blake for the untold hours that he spends creating these marvels, and we look forward to displaying these in the display case that is the first thing that one sees when entering CSPAR," says Dr. Gary Zank, CSPAR director.

John and Lynn Troy, both alumni of UAH, recently donated a Lance missile display to the UAH Propulsion Research Center (PRC). The husband-and-wife team founded Troy7, Inc., an aerospace engineering and analytical services company located in Huntsville. They share a special connection with the Lance, a mobile field artillery tactical missile system that played an especially prominent role during the Cold War.

"Students and visitors to our laboratory have been intrigued and interested by the Lance missile display," says Dr. Robert Frederick, PRC director. "We stand around this cut-out rocket, and I can point to and

> touch all of the inner parts and connect what students will learn about in college, such as fluid mechanics, structures, dynamics and chemistry, to how the system operates. I am also planning to have one of my rocket propulsion classes do a reverse engineering of the system to engage students in applying the propulsion skills they learn in the classroom to a historic propulsion system."

Finding a new home at UAH at the end of the Lance's long and vital deployment parallels the journey of the Troys themselves, bringing everything full-circle back to where it all began. "I feel like I'm living the dream," Lynn Troy says. "It thrills me and John to see the Lance here, that it landed in our alma mater."

For more information on these donations and other news, visit **www.uah.edu/news**.

# WHEN STARS ALIGN

CONSTELLATION CONCERT SERIES, TWO NEW PROGRAMS EXPAND MUSICAL OFFERINGS



Pianist Joseph Fleetwood



Organist Jillian Gardner



SAVE THE DATE

The UAH Department of Music, Theatre and Film will kick off the holiday season with Holiday Jazz, a festive evening featuring food, drinks and a variety of performances by students and faculty. The event will take place on **Tuesday, Dec. 10**, on the UAH campus.

Ticket information will be available soon. Watch for details! he Constellation Concert Series has drawn music lovers to UAH for a decade. Now the UAH Department of Music, Theatre and Film has launched Constellation's 11th season along with two new musical satellites featuring faculty and students in fall 2024.

Constellation presents touring artists and other professionals from Huntsville and across Alabama, and each year it usually features one or two UAH faculty artists, too. Charger Friends and Charger Sounds, the new offerings, will expand the focus to more faculty members plus student musicians, says Ron Guthrie, UAH performing arts operations coordinator.

"Constellation has a regular following with our community patrons. People are always asking us, 'What's Constellation going to be this year?' There's always an anticipation of the season to come that's exciting."

This season, he says, holds even more surprises for audiences.

"Charger Friends will spotlight our other full-time faculty and part-time instructors as well as their colleagues from across Alabama. Charger Sounds features our large student ensembles such as our Wind Ensemble, which is our concert band, and our two university choirs and our Jazz Ensemble."

The Constellation season opened with pianist Joseph Fleetwood on Thursday, Oct. 10. "We're so lucky to have him here in Huntsville," says Guthrie, a pianist himself. "All of the local pianists, we know each other, and we share the work in town. We're a small town with big-town talent."

Charger Sounds will offer more opportunities for high school students to interact with the UAH music community, including the Wind Ensemble performing in side-by-side concerts with Huntsville High School and Randolph High School, as well as performances by UAH Choirs and UAH Jazz Bands.

The inaugural Charger Friends program will feature organist Jillian Gardner on Friday, Nov. 1. This post-Halloween recital is a free-admission treat, including some scary favorites – J.S. Bach's Toccata and Fugue in D minor, Camille Saint-Saëns' "Danse macabre" and Gustav Holst's "Mars" from "The Planets," Op. 32 – among lighter fare.

To learn more about the Constellation Concert Series, Charger Friends and Charger Sounds and view season schedules, visit **uah.edu/music/events**.



# UAH PRESIDENT EMERITUS ALTENKIRCH, WIFE HONOR COACH STUEDEMAN WITH \$50K SOFTBALL ENDOWMENT

oach Lorraine "Les" Stuedeman and her UAH softball teams consistently deliver wins and thrills to their fans. Since their first season in 1996, they've earned impressive stats:

- One thousand, two hundred, sixty-eight wins – and no losing seasons.
- Thirteen Gulf South Conference (GSC) championships.
- Four NCAA Tournament South Region championships out of 26 tournament appearances, including a record 21 consecutive berths. (They aim to extend it to 22 in 2025.)

A couple of longtime fans – UAH President Emeritus Dr. Robert Altenkirch and his wife, Beth – have created an endowment in Stuedeman's honor to help keep those softball victories coming to UAH. Along with their initial lead gift, their continuing contributions and those of other donors, the endowment stands at \$50,000. "Beth and I always enjoyed attending the UAH softball games at home and some on the road," Altenkirch says. "I was impressed by Coach Stuedeman's work ethic, something she instills in the players that will serve them well in their professional lives. Coach Stuedeman will eventually leave a legacy of success, and we wanted her to leave a financial legacy as well."

Stuedeman, UAH's first and only softball head coach, has garnered accolades that demonstrate her devotion to the sport, her players and the university:

- Seven-time NCAA South Region Coach of the Year.
- Ten-time GSC Coach of the Year.
- Two-time GSC Coach of the Decade 2001-10 and 2011-20.
- National Fastpitch Coaches Association (NFCA) Hall of Fame, 2014.

"Les *is* UAH softball," says UAH Director of Athletics Dr. Cade Smith. "She has poured her heart and soul into making this program special."

Stuedeman has long been grateful for the Altenkirchs' support of the softball program.

"Bob and Beth were always present in person and present in philosophy," she says of their time at UAH, fall 2011 to spring 2019. "Bob was around Athletics so much that we all really got to know him. The Karrs (current UAH President Dr. Charles L. Karr and his wife, Jodie) do the same thing now. They're everywhere, and they're huge cheerleaders for everything UAH."

That type of leadership, Stuedeman says, inspires outstanding efforts.

"When you have a leader who is engaged in the community, engaged on campus and especially engaged with the students, that's powerful, and you don't want to drop the ball, literally or figuratively. You do not want to let them down."

# RISING TO THE CHALLENGE

JAH'S JENNIFER BAIL, LAU ONG HIKE MARATHON MAKE-A-WISH KIDS

efore Laurel Long and Dr. Jennifer Bail experienced a marathon Make-A-Wish Alabama Trailblaze Challenge, they stood miles apart on the subject of hiking.

"Hiking was one of my top 10 things I was never going to do in life because I hated the outdoors," says Long, associate vice president, Human Resources at UAH. "I thought those people were crazy."

"Hiking is one of my favorite activities," says Bail, associate professor in the UAH College of Nursing. "It's a great way to de-stress and exercise."

The Trailblaze Challenge shows how a great cause – making wishes come true for children with critical illnesses – can overcome doubts, inspire commitment and bring people together.

About two years after Long went crazy for hiking, she served as a finish-line volunteer when Bail completed her first 26.3-mile Trailblaze hike on May 4, 2024, in Talladega National Forest. Long, a second-year Trailblaze veteran, had been part of the April 20 hike group.

Attending an information session in January is the first step on the Trailblaze path. Details on session sign-ups for 2025 will be available at AlabamaTrailblaze.org. The free sessions are required for all hikers, but attending a session is not a commitment to hike.

Wishes take various forms – vacation trips, meeting favorite celebrities, special presents like a bike or a puppy, even a day as a princess or a firefighter. But what wishes really deliver is hope, and hope can bring concrete health benefits. Bail cites research showing that children who were granted wishes can have better outcomes

CAMPUS

"Sometimes when a child is going through treatment, it's really hard. If they know that their wish is under review or they're going to be granted a wish, it gives them something to fight for."

Wish kids are referred to the program by physicians. For children to be eligible, they must be between 2 ½ to 18 years old and diagnosed with a progressive, degenerative or malignant condition that is placing the child's life in jeopardy.

The wishes, Bail notes, benefit the child's family, too.

"It takes a toll on the entire family, not only emotionally and physically but financially. You may be staying in the hospital for months at a time. You might have to quit your job. A lot of children ask to go on a family trip because they want to spend time with their family doing something other than being in the hospital."

Bail and Long agree that the marathon hike is physically challenging, but you don't have to be a marathon athlete to participate.

"If you can walk two to three miles," Bail says, "we can get you to where you need to be."

"You have nothing to lose other than going on a few hikes and meeting some great people," Long adds, "with the added bonus to make a wish come true for the kids. Now I divide my life into before Trailblaze Challenge and after because it really has been so profoundly impactful for me."

 From left: Torri Walker, Leslie Gonzalez, Julia McCullars

# GOING GRAZK

#### PANHELLENIC CONNECTIONS AT UAH START WITH RECRUITMENT WEEK, BID DAY

oining a National Panhellenic Conference (NPC) sorority at UAH helped commuter Torri Walker engage with the Charger community. Julia McCullars found a support system that encouraged her to break out of her shell. Leslie Gonzalez formed connections that enrich her life – and may boost her job outlook after graduation.

Best of all, they've made good friends.

UAH students had the chance to explore a slice of campus Greek life during Panhellenic Primary Recruitment Week, Aug. 25-31, when UAH's NPC sororities – Alpha Omicron Pi (AOPi), Delta Zeta (DZ) and Kappa Delta (KD) – held events for prospective members. New members joined on Bid Day, Sept. 1.

NPC is one of three national Greek councils at UAH and the only one that holds a Bid Day. The other two – the Interfraternity Council (IFC) with five chapters and the National Pan-Hellenic Council (NPHC) with seven – conduct recruitments later in the academic year.

Greek life at UAH takes a more laid-back approach than typically found at larger schools, says DZ member McCullars.

"When I first came into college as a freshman, I didn't think it was for me because of the stereotypes. But once I started meeting the people involved in Greek life on this campus, it opened my eyes. It feels like a regular student organization that gives you philanthropic opportunities and a support system."

And, she says, it's a great opportunity to make friends and move out of your comfort zone.

"My first semester, I was very quiet and wasn't good at making friends and starting conversations," says McCullars, a senior double major in sociology and political science on the pre-law track. "Now I'm the Panhellenic president!"

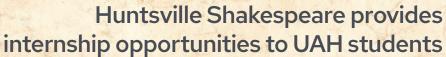
Walker, a KD and the NPC director of operations, is a junior majoring in biology with a concentration in ecology and evolution with a minor in Earth ecosystems. Along with enjoying Greek life's social aspects, she credits the chapter's study sessions with improving her grades.

"I'm surrounded by people who want to see me succeed and push me to succeed," she says.

Gonzalez, an AOPi and the NPC treasurer, says she appreciates friends she can count on.

"I think the Greek life here is more of a community because we're not a big Greek campus," says the senior marketing major. "It's a small-town feel, a community that helps you not only advance in social skills but also gives you a lot of potential in job opportunities."

# On with the show!



Cassidy Sillman







Jace Nixon

n stage, tales of love, loss, betrayal and reconciliation engaged audiences during Huntsville Shakespeare's summer 2024 productions of "Romeo and Juliet" and "The Winter's Tale."

Behind the scenes, UAH students made it all run smoothly. They put classroom lessons to practical use, learned new tips from the pros and earned paychecks - while building frameworks for their futures.

"We make great art, and we provide this job opportunity for our students," says Amy Guerin, associate professor of theater at UAH.

Guerin and Dr. Chad Thomas, chair of the UAH Department of English and associate professor of English, are co-founders and co-artistic directors of Huntsville Shakespeare, a professional company designed to give Shakespeare-in-the-park experiences to the community as well as in-house internships to UAH students.

Jace Nixon, assistant director to Guerin in "The Winter's Tale," sees the experience as a boost to his graduation plans in spring 2025. He's a double major in engineering technology and theater.

"For theater it adds another part to my résumé, having a rapport with a director who can vouch for my work. And the directing skills and working with people in a production process translate to any type of project management."

LeAnne Bradford, a senior pursuing a Bachelor of Arts in theater, took a step up to stage manager this summer after working as assistant stage manager for previous shows.

"The biggest thing I learned this summer was how to lead and delegate tasks with authority. This has given me the confidence that I need as I go into my senior year with my Capstone project this semester."

Bradford plans to graduate in spring 2025. With job searches on her not-too-distant horizon, she's glad for this addition to her résumé.

Erin Brizic is grateful for this opportunity to "understand what I was good at as well as the parts I can still work on."

On track to graduate in spring 2026, Brizic is a third-year music major with an emphasis in music technology. They served as sound designer and worked on the sound crew for both productions.

"I learned a lot about the technical side of the equipment and running the sound and about the stress of figuring out problems as they showed up as quickly as possible," Brizic says. "That's the fun thing with live performances - there are no re-dos."

As an assistant stage manager, Cassidy Silliman worked outside their lighting design and electrical specialization. They appreciated the chance to further grow toward a goal of "being an assistant stage manager or a stage manager at a community theater company."

Silliman is a mechanical engineering and theater dual degree student with a technical design concentration who plans to graduate in 2027.

\*I think working with Huntsville Shakespeare will help me showcase to recruiters that I have an array of experience with different types of theater productions, shows, venues and roles within production and company."

When it's your job to keep the show going on, the more skills the better.



# Herbert E. Francis Jr.

**Herbert E. Francis Jr.**, award-winning author, beloved teacher and one of the people responsible for establishing the humanities program at UAH, died on Feb. 2, 2024, at age 100.

He was a World War II veteran of the U.S. Army Air Corps and a graduate of the University of Wisconsin and Brown University. He taught at Penn State, the University of Tennessee, Northern Illinois State and Emory University before joining the UAH faculty.

While teaching at UAH, Francis began his fiction-writing career in earnest, and after 20 years at UAH, he retired to write full time. His awards include an Iowa School of Letters Award for short fiction, an O. Henry Prize, a Pushcart Prize and the G.S. Sharat Chandra Prize. His short stories were published in every literary journal of note in the nation as well as in his collections "The Itinerary of Beggars," "Naming Things," "A Disturbance of Gulls" and "The Sudden Trees." His novel "The Invisible Country" received critical acclaim. He was also known for his English translations of Argentinean authors such as Juan Carlos Onetti, Antonio Di Benedetto, Norberto Luis Romero and Daniel Monyano.

The year after Francis retired from UAH, the university awarded him a Doctor of Humane Letters in recognition of his inspirational influence on hundreds of students. This honor was preceded by three Fulbright Fellowships – one to Pembroke College of Oxford University in 1953 and two to teach at the Universidad National de Cuyo in Mendoza, Argentina. There he befriended a street kid who sold newspapers. Ultimately he adopted Carlos Roberto Francis as his son.



## **Dr. David Allen**

**Dr. David Allen**, a professor of economics and computation analysis at UAH, died unexpectedly on Aug. 22, 2024. He had recently celebrated his 30-year anniversary as a UAH faculty member.

An accomplished researcher, Allen was highly esteemed by students for his teaching and passion for the subject matter. Throughout his tenure, he was nominated numerous times for the College of Business outstanding teaching award, and was recognized with multiple faculty fellowships and research grants, best paper awards, teaching awards and outstanding research awards.

Allen had a profound impact on the field of economics, with expertise in crime and victimization, labor and demographic economics, sports economics and time allocation. He authored and co-authored more than 40 publications, many of which appeared in leading academic journals.

He also organized and led the college's Friday Afternoon Research Group, which allowed business faculty members to present in-progress research and gain constructive feedback from their peers.

Outside of UAH, Allen enjoyed traveling the world to visit friends and colleagues. He was a passionate sports fan, closely following the San Francisco 49ers and Vancouver Canucks. He was a loyal supporter and constant figure in the stands to watch the UAH hockey team. Allen had a love for music, building an extensive collection of his favorite artists' works, and he was a longtime supporter of the Special Olympics.

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# GOLDEN Inniversari

Since its inaugural graduating class in 1974, the UAH College of Nursing has grown to more than 8,000 alumni, each contributing to a talented and compassionate health care workforce in North Alabama and beyond.

Throughout Fall 2024 and Spring 2025, the UAH College of Nursing is celebrating its 50th anniversary with the Golden Anniversary event series, culminating in the Golden Gala on April 5, 2025, at the Jackson Center! **Scan the QR code for details.** 



HONORING OUR PAST INNOVATING FOR THE FUTURE

**SAVE THE DATE:** 

Golden Gala Saturday, April 5, 2025 The Jackson Center

