The University of Alabama at Birmingham has been ranked the top young university in the United States for the second year in a row and secured a spot as the No. 12 young university worldwide in the Times Higher Education 2019 Young University Rankings.

Times Higher Education’s university rankings are among the world’s most comprehensive, balanced, and trusted. They are considered a vital resource trusted by academics, students, their families, industry, and governments globally. “The dedication and hard work of our faculty, staff, students, alumni, and community supporters have once again enabled this prestigious recognition for our great institution,” said Ray L. Watts, president of UAB. “All of these groups continue to contribute to our growing momentum. Together, we continue to make tremendous strides in education, research, service, and outreach.”

Beth Williams has been named Executive Director of Hospital Maintenance. Beth has served as Interim Director since February 2018. In her interim capacity, she successfully led the department’s Joint Commission accreditation process.

Additionally, Lotoya Beard, who has served as Interim Assistant Director since February 2018, has been named Assistant Director of the department. They are both respected by their co-workers and will continue to bring great leadership to the team.

Let’s congratulate Beth and Lotoya on their promotions!
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and every pillar of our mission, in keeping with UAB’s shared values of collaboration, excellence, and achievement. I celebrate and share this tremendous honor with our UAB community, and I express our sincere thanks to all of those who came before us and formed the strong foundation we work tirelessly every day to honor and build upon.”

Times Higher Education rankings are based on complex metrics. The group ranked more than 300 institutions from 60 different countries in this year’s Young University Rankings, which employ the same rigorous indicators as the Times Higher Education World University Rankings — with young universities measured across their teaching, research, citations, international outlooks, and industry outcomes.

Universities 50 years of age and under are eligible to be included in the Young Universities ranking. The methodology for those considered young universities has been carefully recalibrated, with less emphasis on reputation since younger universities are still building their reputations.

UAB, which spans more than 100 city blocks — roughly a quarter of downtown Birmingham — is celebrating its 50th anniversary this year. With almost 22,000 students and more than 23,000 faculty and staff, UAB has grown into the largest single employer in Alabama, with an annual economic impact exceeding $7.15 billion. It boasts many nationally ranked programs, with 16 graduate and professional programs in the schools of Health Professions, Nursing, Medicine, Engineering, Education, Business, Public Health, and the College of Arts and Sciences all ranked in the 2020 U.S. News Best Graduate School Rankings.

“We expect our growth to continue, and our strategic plan, Forging the Future, will continue to enhance our ability to meet the opportunities and the challenges we will face,” said Pam Benoit, UAB provost.

With annual research expenditures exceeding a record $572 million, UAB continues to create new knowledge and solve critical worldwide issues. UAB is a leader in federal research funding, ranking 21st in the nation in National Institutes of Health funding to climb 10 places on the NIH rankings in the past five years. During that time period, UAB’s total NIH funding rose more than $100 million, topping the $234 million mark in 2018. Only seven other academic medical centers in the United States increased their NIH funding by more than $100 million during that same timeframe, placing UAB among an elite group of eight academic medical centers.

Facilities 2019 Engagement Survey Results

The 2019 institution-level results from the UAB Campus Engagement Survey have been delivered. According to ModernThink, the third-party administrator, the overall response rate to the online survey conducted Jan. 29- Feb. 12 was 55 percent with nearly 5,000 faculty and staff responding. That exceeds the goal of 50 percent for 2019 and is well beyond the 44 percent response rate in 2017.

Two townhalls were held April 18 to present the universitywide survey results. That presentation can be found at uab.edu/engage/results/results-2019.

The initial review of the data offers much to celebrate, as well as opportunities for improvement. The high-level results show employees have great pride in UAB and its contributions to the community. However, the survey did show there were areas to improve including parking, facilities, and staffing.

The Facilities Division had a 36 percent response rate, with 268 of 744 employees fully responding. All surveyors are confidential, and no individual answers were provided. If you have questions about the confidentiality of your survey responses, please visit the UAB Engagement Survey website at uab.edu/engage.

We look forward to continuing the conversation about how to make the Facilities Division and this institution even better. As we review our results, we should keep our Core Values and 10 Expectations in mind as we hold ourselves accountable to making improvements:

- Accountability
- Communication
- Think of the Entire Team
- Treat People Fairly
- Develop Relationships
- Look at the Big Picture

If you have questions or would like to see the Facilities Division results from the 2019 UAB Engagement Survey, please contact your supervisor to discuss this information. All supervisors should meet with their groups by Aug. 9. Our next step will be to conduct follow up, focus group meetings. About 15 percent of employees will be asked to participate in the focus groups. This will help determine new goals and actionable items for improvement.

Once this process is complete, the goals will be communicated and implemented throughout Facilities Division.
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The Environmental Health and Safety’s Laboratory Health & Safety Department is an extremely knowledgeable group with great work ethic and a big heart. The team takes pride in what they do and are always willing to help others.

“Our customers are generally researchers,” said Rani Jacob, Assistant Director of Research Safety. “They look to us when they need something or when they are in trouble. Most of the time, they are appreciative of our services. The feeling that you can help someone is priceless.”

Lab Safety provides inspection services to the UAB campus and clinical labs to be compliant with federal, state, local guidelines and regulations, as well as UAB guidelines and regulations.

“The most important thing for people to know is that we are here to help them stay safe,” said Julie Gray, Research Safety Manager. “If they have questions, we are here to answer them or find someone who can. While there are times we have to issue citations, we would rather not.”

Gray said the team wants researchers to request lab surveys to help with issues that could warrant citations during future visits. She also said researchers should notify them of concerns about anyone that may put them, their labs, or others at risk.

The group also provides training on Research Health & Safety issues for UAB labs and provides assistance to new labs with start-up procedures and training requirements. Additionally, the team assists with relocating labs by providing information on close-out procedures and how to setup in new lab locations.

“We keep the UAB community safe and in compliance with regulations,” said Jacob. “We also educate the future generation to be the great stewards of our resources.”

Judy McBride, Director of Laboratory Healthy & Safety, said the team recently received a grant for their safety efforts. The grant was awarded by the Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) program at UAB. The program was designed to improve student learning and enhance the quality of education at UAB.

In order to receive the grant, the team had to design a course proposal and evaluation that supported learning in a team environment.

“We chose our hands-on group learning safety course that is presented to the teaching assistants and graduate students who assist with the undergraduate basic science labs and art studio courses,” said McBride. “We felt that the students in these labs needed hands on experience learning how to respond to emergencies that may arise in the labs.”

The team proposed buying a fire extinguisher training simulator, in coordination with Campus Safety, that could provide a valuable learning experience for the students and employees that EH&S trains throughout the campus.

“We plan to purchase a virtual fire extinguisher training system that provides a realistic simulation of fighting a fire without actually burning things up or requiring messy discharging of extinguishers,” said McBride.

Fire safety is a major concern to the entire campus community. The grant will enhance the ability to promote fire safety competence throughout campus, as well as improve specific safety training courses for UAB labs.

Hospital Maintenance team completes Medical Gas training

In March, 10 Hospital Maintenance Plumbers completed the American Society of Safety Professionals (ASSE 6040) Medical Gas Maintenance Personnel Training Course and passed the exam to receive the certification.

The course consisted of 32 hours of extensive training, covering all facets of ASSE standards and requirements. The course was designed to teach the attendees all of the requirements for properly maintaining medical gas systems. The course was broken into four eight-hour days with each of the first three days consisting of eight hours of classroom instruction and the last day for practical exercises and a 100 question, closed book examination.

The certification will help the team perform accurate and efficient maintenance on medical gas systems for the UAB Hospital. Congratulations to the Hospital Maintenance team for this great achievement!
What’s new in construction?

COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES BUILDING (UNIVERSITY HALL)
- State Substantial Completion June 28.
- Faculty has begun moving in.
- Grand Opening: August 22.

HONORS COLLEGE BUILDING (OLD SNOOZY’S)
- Notice to proceed to be issued August 1.
- Projected completion: June 2020.

NEW RESIDENCE HALL 2020
- Elevated slabs and site utilities in progress.
- Projected completion: June 2020.

TECHNOLOGY INNOVATION CENTER
- Abatement complete.
- Building demolition has started.

HUGH KAUL RENOVATION
- Phase 1 complete.
- Phase 2 renovations 90% complete.
- Project to be completed before Fall semester.