2.10 Student Support Services

2.10 Student Support Services The institution provides student support programs, services, and activities consistent with its mission that promote student learning and enhance the development of its students.

Judgment of Compliance

In Compliance

Narrative of Compliance

I. Overview

The University of Alabama has a noteworthy tradition of providing student support programs, services, and activities consistent with its mission of advancing the intellectual and social condition of the citizens of the State of Alabama through quality programs of teaching, research, and service. The Divisions of Student Affairs, Community Affairs, Financial Affairs, University Advancement, Research, and Academic Affairs work in concert to provide coordinated student support services.

Many of the University's programs and services satisfy the needs of the general student population, while others specifically benefit sub-groups of students such as first generation, transfer, special needs, honors, distance education, graduate, international, and student athletes. All activities are grounded in the institution's core values outlined in the Capstone Creed adopted by students in 2000 which includes the pursuit of knowledge; acting with fairness, honesty, and respect; fostering individual and civic responsibility; and striving for excellence.

Programs and services to students undergo assessment on a regular basis to ensure their alignment with the University's mission and goals, as well as their effectiveness in meeting the needs of students. Because the University's student support programming is designed to address the needs of all types of students, it is an integral part of all divisions of the University.

This compliance narrative specifies the organizational structure of programs and services and includes descriptions of major student support programs, services, and activities. These descriptions identify program linkages across the institution and their effectiveness in contributing to student learning and development, as evidenced by their most recent assessment report.

II. Organizational Structure and Institutional Context

Consistent with its mission, The University of Alabama provides appropriate support services established for the specific purpose of enhancing the overall success of students. The underlying premise of support service is based on the belief that learning is not linear, and that learning is enhanced by providing students with formally structured support services that broaden dimensions of learning. During the 2005-2006 academic year, UA made the intentional decision to align the institution's Student Affairs functions and services under the purview of Academic Affairs. This new organizational structure was designed to ensure that programs and services are supportive of the academic mission of the institution and recognize the value of co-curricular and student services in enriching the student experience. The organizational structure assists in providing a supportive learning environment to all students that encourages them to maximize their learning through the development of the skills necessary to reach their educational and personal goals.
The University of Alabama embraces a collaborative approach to student learning and student success. This collaboration includes students, parents/guardians, and members of all sectors of the University community. Appropriate support services at The University of Alabama transcend divisional lines where all University divisions work to provide support services that accentuate student intellectual and social experiences and work collaboratively to ensure that students make a successful transition into the University and progress to graduation satisfactorily.

III. Advisement and Enrollment Management

A. Orientation

Undergraduate orientation programs at The University of Alabama are primarily designed to meet the needs of entering freshmen. Orientation programs are also tailored to meet unique needs of other students including transfer students, graduate students, international students, online and off-campus students, and students at the UA's School Of Law. All orientation sessions are structured to help students navigate their new learning environment by assisting them in the acquisition and integration of knowledge about programs, services, and resources.

UA's collaborative approach to student learning and student success extends to the families of our students in the transition to college. Parent Orientation Programs provide parents and guardians an overview of the campus resources and support services available to themselves and their sons and daughters. A Sibling Orientation program was designed to allow high school aged family members of students an opportunity to get to know UA, the place where their brother or sister will be living and learning during the next few years.

The most recent assessment reports for the Office of Orientation, Office of Parent Programs, and Office of Graduate Support Services provide information related to the quality of the orientation experiences. Results from the Bama Bound New Student Orientation Report indicate that 93% of students reported their questions were answered regarding academic advising, and 70% indicated they knew which office to go to in the future for academic advising. Over 98% of students responded positively to the general helpfulness of Orientation staff and 90%+ of parents indicated their questions and concerns about their student attending UA were addressed during Parent Orientation. Over 90% of the parents also indicated they knew how to reach the Office of Parent Programs should they have questions or concerns. As reported in the 2009 Parent Orientation Report, 97% of parents indicated they learned about the challenges their student may experience at UA and resources to assist them and 95% indicated they learned strategies to support their student's success and transition to UA as a result of attending Parent Orientation. Over 84% of students attending Graduate Student Orientation indicated in the 2009 Graduate Student Orientation Report, that after attending the New Graduate Student Orientation, they were better prepared to start their graduate program at The University of Alabama, and 96% indicated they were more aware of resources available to them as graduate students.

B. Advising

Academic advising is provided to all students by professional advisors and faculty members within academic departments or colleges. Each academic division employs professional advising staff. Most colleges assign a faculty advisor to students to provide program-specific advising and career mentoring. In the 2008 Advising Survey, 61% of students reported seeing a faculty advisor, 15% a professional advisor, and 14% indicated seeing both types of advisors. Students also reported a high level satisfaction (over 80% very satisfied or satisfied); 70% reported preparing for their advising appointment by drafting a course schedule. The level of student satisfaction with advising has remained constant from 2004 to 2008.

Each academic division has a representative who meets with a central group to coordinate advising efforts throughout the campus. The UA Academic Advising Association encourages all advisors to engage in
ongoing professional development and networking. Through participation in National Academic Advising Association (NACADA) regional and national meetings, UA academic advisors are informed and make use of best practices from across the nation.

*Degree Works*, a web-based academic planning tool, was implemented for all undergraduate programs in May 2009, and is currently being implemented for graduate programs. *Degree Works* includes a degree planner, degree audit, GPA calculator, and a "what if" option for students to determine courses that would be required if they changed majors. The University launched a "Finish in Four" campaign along with *Degree Works* to encourage students to utilize planning to complete their undergraduate degree in four years. *Degree Works* is intended to augment personalized academic advising and mentoring—not replace it. A recent *Degree Works Survey*, completed by 2,476 students, indicated that undergraduate students are using the web-based application. The majority of undergraduates who responded used *Degree Works* to prepare for advising and registration (86% of freshmen, 91% of sophomores, 87% of juniors, and 81% of seniors), while student educational plans had been created by over 30% of undergraduates. The "what if" option had been used by over 50% of respondents, and the GPA calculator had been used by over 50% of sophomores, juniors, and seniors.

Students in programs delivered online and at off-campus sites have access to *Degree Works* and online surveys. The College of Continuing Studies (CCS) works with each academic unit with online programs to assure that new students are assigned an academic advisor. Approximately four weeks prior to registration opening each semester, CCS staff email all students enrolled in off-campus and online programs to remind them to contact their advisors. Advisors provide assistance to online students through telephone discussions and emails. Some advisors use web conferencing software to facilitate advising.

Each degree program at the off-campus Gadsden Center designates an academic advisor for students. Information sessions and academic advising sessions are held regularly so that students get face-to-face advising. Students are able to access videoconferencing systems to arrange "virtual meetings." Gadsden staff members facilitate conference calls and other appointments for students to talk with advisors and faculty on campus. Faculty members who teach at Gadsden provide face-to-face academic advising during office hours scheduled prior to their classes. Students in other off-campus locations are advised by faculty members who travel to the location to teach and by email and phone calls to on-campus advisors.

C. Registration

The Office of the University Registrar consistently works behind the scenes to provide student record information (degree audits, transcripts, etc.), enrollment and degree verification, up-to-date catalog and timetable information (including classroom scheduling), enrollment services (including web enrollment), determination of residency for tuition purposes, and academic eligibility determination for UA student athletes. It ensures that student records are maintained in compliance with the *Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)* and that electronic access to record information is secure and efficient.

The Office of the University Registrar also provides academic and administrative infrastructure necessary for continued service to students and the campus community with the emphasis on emerging technologies, collaborative efforts, integrated services, and efficient communication processes. Policies, programs, and services are designed to allow students the opportunity to develop independence; conduct a realistic self-appraisal; clarify how their personal, work, and lifestyle values affect their decision making for academic success and progress; and provide assistance in helping students meet their personal and educational goals.

Results from the most recent *University Registrar Satisfaction Survey Report* indicate that student satisfaction was positive, with 63% of students indicating that information provided to them was reliable, 64% indicating staff were knowledgeable, and 65% of students indicating staff were professional, while 50% of respondents indicated that they were satisfied with the Transcript and Verification ordering and delivery process.
D. Financial Aid

As a state university, UA strives to maintain affordable tuition rates. The Office of Student Financial Aid provides comprehensive information and services to students regarding opportunities to finance the cost of education at UA. Responsible for administering student aid from federal, state, institutional, and private funding sources, the Office plays a critical role in making sure that students, whether on-campus, off-campus, or online, have access to the financial assistance they need to help them enter and complete their college studies. Two examples of programs designed to assist students include Veterans Services and Student Employment Services.

(1) Veterans Services: Financial Aid staff assist veterans with the process of obtaining educational funding through the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). The University of Alabama has 732 students receiving VA funding through seven chapter benefit programs. While UA does not determine eligibility for assistance, staff members do ensure that eligibility criteria is completed, certified, and filed with the VA. VA federal benefits represent $2.2 million in student funding and the University matches eligible programs with $187,000 annually through the Yellow Ribbon Program.

(2) Student Employment Services: Financial Aid staff members assist students in pursuing student employment opportunities through the Federal Work Study and the Job Location and Development (JLD) program. The Federal Work Study program provides on-campus or community-based part-time employment for currently enrolled students. Community-based positions are paid positions with community service agencies (predominately the United Way), and tutoring opportunities for children in the city and county school systems. The JLD program employed 978 students in the previous academic year constituting $8,421,764.00 in earnings as reported on the 2009-2010 Fiscal Operations Report and Application to Participate (FISAP).

The Office of Student Financial Aid staff members participate in a variety of outreach activities with partners in various units, organizations, and institutions, both on and off campus, by providing information to students about funding their education. For example, coordinated efforts with the UA Capstone International Center to adjust the cost of attendance allow international students participating in programs to maximize their funding for the term. Or, current students benefit from Financial Aid Awareness Month where events on campus are designed to increase student awareness and knowledge of information and financial aid availability. Policies, procedures, and services offered through The Office of Student Financial Aid are designed to provide students with practical competencies in pursuing their academic and career goals, require students to communicate effectively, and assist them in developing skills to manage their personal affairs.

IV. Academic Support and Enhancement

The University community is united in its focus on ensuring students have a successful academic career from entrance to degree completion.

A. The Center for Teaching and Learning

The Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL), an academic support unit within the Division of Academic Affairs, provides comprehensive services online and on campus. The CTL provides individualized tutoring, supplemental instruction, study skills workshops, and review and help sessions in a variety of courses. The CTL extends its reach through several web-based resources and services to serve students online.

The CTL makes exam review resources such as the LSAT, MCAT, GRE, and MAT available to students to assist them in pursuing their personal and educational goals. It offers the Learning and Study Strategies
Inventory (LASSI), a self-assessment designed to help students understand their motivation, time management skills, and attitudes toward learning, which helps the student determine appropriate educational goals.

The CTL provides academic support programs (e.g., TRIO programs) to first-generation college students with limited incomes and/or disabilities. The Office of Student Financial Aid works collaboratively with the program in determining a student's eligibility and offers continued support providing financial aid updates. Students who are admitted into UA's Crimson EDGE program participate in a study skills course (NEW 222) and transition course (BCE101) designed to help them make a successful transition to the university.

The mission of the Center for Teaching and Learning is to have a positive effect on the teaching and learning process through the design and delivery of academic support services. Central to that mission, CTL staff members have fostered collaborative relationships among faculty, academic departments, and numerous Student Affairs units. These collaborations extend tutoring service and help session support to the Gorgas Library, the Chemistry department and the College of Arts and Sciences Mathematics Technology Learning Center.

Academic support services help students succeed in courses, improve study techniques, improve reading proficiencies, and prepare for professional and graduate school entrance examinations. Taken together, programs and services provided by the CTL play an integral role in the University's plan for academic excellence by advancing students' ability to engage in realistic self-appraisal, enhancing self-esteem as a student, and building self-concept and confidence as they manage their academic environment and develop practical competence.

The most recent CTL Annual Report provides information about services, program use, outreach, the Crimson EDGE pilot program, and the Student Support Services program. Supplemental instruction and tutorial service demands have continued to increase, and retention and graduation rates for participants in the Trio programs have exceeded previous years' rates. Additional assessment reports provide information on the use of tutorials (Tutorial Usage Analysis), characteristics of support service users (Tutorial User Characteristics Report), and the academic performance of students who used tutorial services (Tutorial User Academic Performance Report).

**B. University Libraries**

University Libraries maintain an ongoing effort to assist the academic success of students, as one of the primary purposes of a research library is to support the intellectual and cultural life of the institution. The UA University Libraries accomplishes this by providing strong research collections in digital and print formats, a robust instructional program that is both in-person and virtual, and technology that allows students access to resources in formats that enhance accessibility, as well as academic software and digital media production tools. Through the use of online orientations and in-person instruction for diverse groups, the Libraries are increasingly responsive to its clientele.

The University of Alabama maintains five state-of-the-art libraries. The University Libraries provide space for collaborative and independent study in its five branches as well as structured tutoring sessions staffed by the Center for Teaching and Learning in The Gorgas Library. Late night hours in two branches, and 24/5 access in one branch, allow students ample opportunity to access resources. Each library serves a unique purpose. The Amelia Gayle Gorgas Library, located on the central campus quadrangle, has holdings for humanities, social sciences, and government information. The Gorgas Library also houses offices for central library administrative functions. Additional UA libraries are the Angelo Bruno Business Library, the McLure Education Library, the Sara and Eric Rodgers Library for Science and Engineering, and the William Stanley Hoole Special Collections Library. The Bounds Law Library is housed in the School of Law and maintains virtual links with other UA libraries. Most of UA's digital collections can be accessed from any computer.
Virtual links exist with the Alabama Virtual Library and research libraries at other colleges and universities. The Libraries provide online access to large parts of our rare and unique special collections through our digital library program. Rare and unique special collections can be searched and browsed through Acumen (software, developed locally expressly for this purpose). The collections are also indexed in Google, while Interlibrary Loan programs including RapidILL provide a seamless delivery of journal articles not owned by the libraries within 24 hours of the request being placed. Notification that an article is available is delivered by e-mail and the article is immediately available online via the ILLiad system. Delivery of articles frequently takes place within hours of the request being submitted. Of the nearly 3,300 ILL requests submitted through RapidILL in 2010, 95% were filled within an average of 14.1 hours. Regional and statewide agreements provide quick and easy access to other formats of materials which the library may not own.

Outreach initiatives support collaboration among UA schools, colleges, and many student support service units including support and resources for distance learning students who have the ability to access resources at the UA Library and have access to a UA Library staff member who serves as a primary contact for distance learners and is available for presentations and "virtual" demonstrations for specific course or program needs. The Library Instruction Program offers instructional programs to support student learning through face-to-face instruction, individual reference appointments, and a variety of online formats. Online formats include 163 Subject Guides, which were accessed a total of 9,691 times from August to December 2009 and 83,023 times during the 2010 calendar year. Ask-a-Librarian provides means to submit questions online 24/7 and to search an FAQ for commonly asked questions. Texting, e-mail, and Twitter are also available for updates and questions.

A total of 501 personal and Macintosh computers are available in the libraries for student use. These computers can be used for locating materials within the libraries, using databases and other electronic resources, or for the productivity/academic software available. The libraries provide desktop and laptop computers for student use. During 2010, laptops circulated 44,210 times. The Sanford Media Center, located on the 2nd floor of Gorgas Library, provides UA students with a leading-edge facility for digital media production. It provides a collaborative and interdisciplinary learning environment for all students. Video cameras; digital SLR cameras and lens; audio kits; scanners; design, creation, and production software tools are all available to students to encourage and support a high level of creative and productive output, with service demands increasing over the last five fiscal years from 9,174 students in 2006 to 14,905 students in 2010.

C. Office of Information Technology

The Office of Information Technology facilitates research, enhances instruction, and supports administrative operations by providing quality services and resources to students, faculty, and staff with the goal of enriching educational experiences that promote student success and faculty excellence through technology. Programs and services are designed to be user centered and include the IT Service Desk, which provides a single point of contact for all IT issues and resources. Services for students include virus removal, operating system repairs, general software troubleshooting, and internet services, which include access to wireless networks and ResNet. ResNet is a service available to students living in most of the residence halls. It provides high-speed Internet access through the campus network. This allows each person in the room to have his or her own Internet connection.

All University of Alabama students have access to eLearning (Black Board Vista), a course management system, which is used extensively to provide on-line courses as well as to provide web-enhanced materials for on-campus and off-campus courses, contains built-in tools designed to share files, assist students in submitting class work (assignments, discussions, and exams), and provides a platform to increase student interaction and collaboration and fosters the development of interpersonal communication skills with students and faculty. The most recent assessment report for The Office of Information Technology indicates that 62% of respondents are self-taught users of the eLearning; access to course materials, the
convenience of 24-hour, 7-day-a-week access, and communication tools were selected as the features students liked most about the system.

The Office of Information Technology provides support for the University's 224 media-enabled classrooms (up from 21 classrooms in 2004), which includes consultation, design, installation, operation, and maintenance of these learning spaces. The classrooms are designed to provide faculty with the support and technology to assist with classroom instruction. In addition to services provided on the Tuscaloosa campus, the Office of Information Technology, IT Service Desk provides technical support for distance education faculty, staff, and students and is available to distance students via telephone or email. Issues such as access to myBama, email, computing security, and software assistance are managed for students by the IT Service Desk.

D. Office of Disability Services

The University of Alabama is committed to making its academic programs and other services accessible to qualified students with disabilities. It is a goal of The University of Alabama to provide students who have disabilities equal opportunities to develop and demonstrate their academic skills, while maintaining the academic integrity of University programs. The Office of Disability Services (ODS) serves as the central contact point for students with disabilities. The goal of ODS is to provide a physically and educationally accessible University environment that ensures that an individual is viewed on the basis of ability, not disability. ODS works individually with students, and collaboratively with the University community, to determine appropriate and reasonable academic accommodations and ensure that students' academic performance is evaluated apart from the limiting effects of disability.

Adaptive technology labs are located at the ODS office, Bruno Business Library, Gorgas Library, Graves Hall, Rodgers Library for Science and Engineering, Morgan Hall, Nott Hall, and the Seebeck Computer Center. These labs are wheelchair accessible and contain adaptive equipment such as screen readers, magnifiers, voice synthesizers, voice-to-text software, and text-to-voice software. A variety of double and single rooms provided in residence halls and on-campus apartments are equipped for students with hearing, vision, or mobility impairments.

Based on a review of each student's needs, certain accommodations may be recommended by ODS for students, depending on the individual class requirements. These may include reduced-distraction testing environments, orally administered tests, use of tape recorders, use of note-takers, and use of books on tape. The Office of Disability Services provides support to distance students who require accommodation. Students can arrange appointments through telephone and send necessary documentation electronically or through the mail. Services provided to distance students include sign language interpreter at an off-campus location and captioned video content for a hearing impaired student; extended time for proctored exams; and textbooks in electronic format for students with certain learning disorders.

Giving students the opportunity to demonstrate whether they know and can apply course content fosters the development of intellectual growth, provides a greater independence through the accommodations that enhance appropriate self-reliant behaviors, and allows students with disabilities the chance to provide an accurate picture of their knowledge with realistic self-appraisal without concern to how a disability may interfere with the evaluation process.

The most recent ODS assessment report (ODS Services 2003-2011) provides information about services and program use. The results indicate that the staff in the office have seen a 133% increase in fully registered students since 2003, a 60% increase in provisional students since 2006, and a 36% increase in total registered students since 2006.
E. The Graduate School

The Graduate School provides leadership, coordination, and administrative structure to support all graduate programs at the University. It is responsible for implementation of Graduate School policy to assure compliance with standards, quality, and integrity among all of the graduate programs. The Graduate School also provides a variety of innovative support services designed for graduate student success.

The Office of Graduate Student Services is housed in the Dean of Students Office and works closely with the Graduate School to assist graduate students with orientation and to provide complementary and collaborative support services and programs to enhance the experience of graduate students during their time on campus.

The Graduate School's Workshop for New Graduate Teaching Assistants has provided specialized training for Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs) in a two-day, required format since 1987. More than 225 new GTAs each year participate in sessions on various aspects of college teaching, are videotaped while teaching, and receive written and verbal analyses of their teaching strengths and weaknesses—all before entering a classroom at the University for the first time. Results from the most recent assessment of the Workshop for New Graduate Teaching Assistants indicate that of the 121 survey respondents, 59% of the students who participated rated the overall experience "Excellent," and another 38% rated it "Satisfactory."

There is Web-based assistance in course registration and numerous online resources for graduate students, including detailed information on financial aid, assistantships, and fellowships. Also online are a number of publications, including a Student Guide to Preparing Theses and Dissertations. The Electronic Theses & Dissertations website provides detailed information and demonstration videos to help students reduce the time spent preparing their manuscripts and then having the Graduate School complete its review. The time taken to record, review, and approve a thesis or dissertation at the University has improved from an average of 3-6 weeks with paper manuscripts to an average of 7-14 days with electronically submitted manuscripts, which became required in fall 2009. The Graduate Assistant Guide and each form that graduate students need to complete from first matriculation to commencement can also be found on the Graduate School website.

During the 2008-2009 academic year, the Graduate School began discussions to improve the experience and support for graduate students who have children. These discussions led to the Graduate School's creating the Graduate Parent Support Program (GPS) in 2009. The GPS is the only such program in the United States, and the UA Graduate School was the one graduate school selected to receive a support grant from the Council of Graduate Schools. From the same grant the Graduate School received support for the Tide Together mentoring program, which pairs each graduate student in the program with both a faculty and peer mentor. The Graduate School actively partners with academic departments to help graduate students develop their research careers and create strong, marketable Curriculum Vitae. Adequate funding to support thesis, dissertation, and related research and additional funding to present research results at national and international professional conferences are requisite cornerstones in this effort. In fall 2006, the Graduate School examined and revised the existing Research and Travel Grant Program to collaborate more actively with individual departments in jointly funding thesis, dissertation, and creative activity research projects. Using a combination of funding from Graduate School application fees and a one-to-one matching of funds from departments, the operative paradigm was changed from supporting a handful of students each year to funding every student that departments were also willing to support, without any limits on the number of meetings per year. Requests for funding proposals (RFPs) are now circulated three times per year, and all applications received are reviewed and funded as well. As a result, both total funding and the number of students served have grown each year. Funding in the last four years has grown nearly five-fold. This growth is shown in the table entitled, UA Graduate School Research and Travel Grants Program. Approximately 50 students of the grant recipients each year receive additional International Enrichment funding of $600 above the normal research and meeting support to take advantage of an international paper presentation to broaden their intellectual experience while abroad.
F. The Honors College

The University Honors College exemplifies the student-centered atmosphere of The University of Alabama and provides a small-college feel within the context of a larger university setting. The Honors College exists to empower its students to achieve to their greatest potential and to receive recognition and reward for their achievements. The four pillars of the Honors College—innovative scholarship, civic engagement and leadership development, cultural interaction, and advanced research—provide a comprehensive and holistic experience for our students.

In addition to the honors courses available from the University's 13 colleges and schools, students can choose from more than 50 small seminars offered from the Honors College. These courses are designed to provide opportunities for students and teachers to interact frequently, to engage students in meaningful discourse, and to reflect the high level of student ability.

Freshman and current University of Alabama undergraduates have the option to enter the University Honors College. Admission to the Honors College requires a 28 ACT or 1250 SAT. Current UA students with a 3.3 GPA or transfer students will be accepted into the University Honors Program. Current UA students with a 3.3 GPA or transfer students with a 3.3 GPA will be accepted into the International Honors Program (IHP), which is designed to help students gain an understanding of the international dimensions of their chosen field of study. Students participating in the International Honors Program take more foreign language courses and have multiple opportunities to interact with international students and faculty at UA.

Taken together, the programs and services of the Honors College promote students' intellectual growth, effective communication skills, independence, ability to clarify values, ability to collaborate successfully with others, appreciation of diversity, leadership development, social responsibility, and development of satisfying and productive lifestyles.

G. Housing and Residential Communities

The living-learning experience at The University of Alabama capitalizes on the residential character of the campus and serves as an important part of the University's academic support system. A hallmark of the student's experience, Housing and Residential Communities, affords each resident with a supportive and learning-centered environment.

Housing and Residential Communities is dedicated to providing a comfortable, secure, and supportive community designed to contribute to the personal and academic success of each residential student. In partnership with UA's colleges and schools, living and learning communities have been designed to foster an environment in which students can succeed, explore ideas, and pursue academic inquiry. Designed to meet the unique needs of a diverse student population, living-learning opportunities are available through the Colleges of Arts & Sciences, Communication & Information Sciences, Human Environmental Sciences, Nursing, Commerce & Business Administration, Engineering, and Honors. There are also living options designed to help students gain an understanding of civic engagement, self governance, leadership, and global perspectives in the Mallet Assembly, Rotary House, and The International Living-Learning Community.

Program offerings through the Residence Hall Association, National Residence Hall Honorary, and Housing and Residential Communities, are designed to develop students' abilities to effectively communicate, realistically appraise themselves, become independent, assume social responsibility, enjoy a satisfying and productive lifestyle, and appreciate and respect the depth of diversity on campus.

In 2007, Housing and Residential Communities added a staff member to provide support, information and resources for Off-Campus Housing. Resources available to students include a monthly newsletter to assist
students with staying connected and informing them of programs and services, links to search engines to help students locate housing, information about the landlord/tenant relationship, and safe living.

The most recent assessment reports for Housing and Residential Communities provide information about program effectiveness (Housing and Residential Communities 2010 Overall Program Effectiveness). Longitudinal data indicate that the overall program effectiveness is at its highest level ever and is significantly better than in 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, and 2009. Data indicate that the factors Facilities and Room/Floor Environment continue to be significantly better than in 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, and 2009, while data related to students' overall learning experience shows statistically significant improvement over 2009. Recent reports also provide information on student retention (Freshman Cohort Report) and added services such as room selection (Room Selection 2009 Report) and move-in (Move-in 2009 Project Report).

H. UA Capstone International Center

Each of the three units which comprise the UA Capstone International Center (the English Language Institute (ELI), Capstone International Services (CIS), and Capstone International Academic Programs (CIAP)) provides a variety of programs and services that promote the internationalization of the campus and contribute to promoting international learning and the development of global perspectives for students at UA. Interaction between domestic and international students, whether it takes place in formal classroom settings or in informal activities on campus, encourages the development of an appreciation for diversity and respect for all peoples. It develops in students regardless of their place of origin a deeper knowledge of the world, a better understanding across cultures, and the formation of lasting meaningful interpersonal relationships.

The UA Capstone International Center assists international students with admission and placement, arrival services and orientation, counseling, and intercultural, social, and educational activities as they make the transition to The University of Alabama. Equally important is the provision of study-abroad opportunities for UA students. The staff support and assist in the organization of intercultural activities and festivals to encourage social interaction among all students. International document processing and visa advisory services are offered for international students, researchers, staff, and faculty. Programs and services offered by the center are designed to promote the development of independence, personal growth, and effective communication skills; assist students in developing the ability to collaborate with a diverse group of people; and foster a sense of social responsibility as well as an awareness and respect for other students' spiritual paths.

I. Academic Support Services for Student Athletes

From the moment a student athlete first walks onto the campus to the moment they graduate with diploma in hand, there is an exceptional array of comprehensive academic services available to them. The Center of Athletic Student Services (CASS) provides services that range from tutoring, career counseling, and advising, to the use of facilities that include study rooms, a lecture room, and two computer labs. All of these services begin with the student athletes' first visit to campus. CASS advisors set up individual appointments within the department of the student's area of study and accompany the student to the meeting.

The CASS staff work as liaisons between the Athletic Department and The University's undergraduate divisions and administrative offices to ensure that all athletes are maintaining satisfactory progress toward a degree, and monitors academic eligibility. For their first year, new student athletes are required to attend nightly study halls. After that, the attendance is based on individual needs as determined by key academic indicators. Additional resources available to student athletes include laptop computers, which are also available for check-out at the Center of Athletic Student Services, and the Life Skills Program, which was designed by the NCAA, and was developed to help college athletes bridge the gap from college life to professional life and make meaningful contributions to their communities. Services and programs offered
to student athletes are designed to assist students in developing independence; assist them in clarifying their academic goals, personal values, and career goals; and foster a sense of social responsibility through participation in community service opportunities.

J. Career Center

The University of Alabama Career Center is dedicated to maximizing career development and career opportunities for both students and alumni. It provides career education programming, individual counseling, personality assessments and access to library resources on occupations, career planning, and graduate and professional schools through the Sylvester Jones Leadership and Career Resource Center. Career Center staff assist students with self-assessment, major exploration, interview techniques, and the development of job search strategies as they pursue a successful transition to the world of work.

Understanding that career development is a lifelong process that includes self-assessment, reflecting on interests, skills, personality traits, values, the development of effective communication skills, the ability to appraise one's own skills and abilities, and work collaboratively with others who may be different from themselves, staff in the University Career Center offer students the opportunity to explore the career development and planning process through formal instruction, informal presentations, and a series of assessments and interest inventories (CareerBeam, StrengthsQuest) designed to help students clarify personal and academic goals and values.

Full-service Career Center satellite offices located in the Colleges of Commerce and Business Administration and Engineering, and the availability of “walk-in hours” in the Colleges of Communication and Information Sciences, Human Environmental Sciences, Arts and Sciences, Nursing, the School of Social Work, and Office of Disability Services, ensure that services and staff are available to students in eight additional locations across UA’s campus.

The most recent assessment report (Career Center Retention Report 2008-2009 cohort) for the Career Center indicates that students who use Career Center services in their first year at the university are retained at a higher rate (10%), and have higher grade point averages than students who do not use Career Center services in their first year. University of Alabama students who participated in the 2010 NASPA Consortium Career Aspiration Study rated their academic advisor, alumni from the University of Alabama, Career Center staff, and faculty more helpful (Learning Outcomes Career Spring 2010 Consortium Help) than students rated the same staff and alumni at other institutions. Students also indicated that as a result of the career advice/counseling/information they received since enrolling at UA they are more aware of careers related to their major, feel more confident in their ability to create a resume, and indicated they feel better prepared to interview for jobs than students at other institutions. Of students who responded to the questions related to learning outcomes, 57% agreed that they are better able to articulate their life goals; 60% were better able to articulate their values, attitudes, and beliefs; 60% indicated that their critical thinking skills have improved; and 58% indicated that their understanding of diverse perspectives has changed.

V. Student Involvement and Engagement

The University Union Ferguson Center enhances the social, cultural, and educational opportunities for students and the University community through a variety of co-curricular programming, activities, and services that complement the academic curriculum. While many of the University Union functions are designed to provide environmental support for students, faculty, and staff, The Discovery Series seeks to promote the development of interpersonal and leadership skills, foster creativity, and promote satisfying and productive lifestyles through lifelong learning opportunities for the community. The Ferguson Center serves as the hub of student activities, programs, and events on the main campus. Here, students can visit the Office of Student Involvement and Leadership and the Source to explore the more than 300 registered campus student organizations, access resources and information regarding leadership opportunities, and attend training sessions to develop their leadership skills and abilities. Involvement is an
essential part of the UA experience. Getting involved in co-curricular activities allows students to learn about themselves and others while gaining valuable experience for the future. The Student Involvement Interest Inventory allows students to have one-on-one contact with staff members to explore ways for students to find their passion. In addition to advising the governance of student organizations, establishing social policies through the Source Board of Governors, and assisting in event planning for student organizations, the Office of Student Involvement and Leadership provides training and support to faculty and staff who serve students as advisors. Consistent with the University mission of service, The Community Service Center offers students the opportunity to engage in community service projects that educate, heighten students' awareness of social issues, and encourage lifelong social action. Alternative Break programs offered locally, nationally, and internationally immerse students in diverse environments and cultures, while Beat Auburn Beat Hunger, Hunger and Homelessness Week, and Ripple Effect are programs designed to involve students in issues that impact the local community and state of Alabama.

The most recent assessment reports for the University Union Ferguson Center, the Office of Student Involvement and Leadership, and the Community Service Center provide benchmarking data about involvement, learning outcomes, and information about the quality of services.

The Office of the Dean of Students is tasked with establishing and maintaining a supportive campus climate that advances the development of experiences that promote character development; personal, professional, and academic growth; and lifelong learning in a diverse global community. The staff members in the Dean of Students Office serve as the primary contact for students, parents, alumni, faculty, and staff in matters dealing with a student's general activities outside of the classroom. Specific student support programs and services include the following: serving as a liaison between students, parents, and faculty/administration/staff/Tuscaloosa community; supervising and administering a fair student judicial process; coordinating crisis response services for all students; and providing support, services and programming for students.

Central to maintaining a campus climate that is supportive of students is the Office of Student Judicial Affairs, which promotes student awareness and understanding of (student) rights and responsibilities as community members, engaging students in ethical decision-making. It upholds the academic integrity and behavioral standards of the University by adjudicating violations of the Student Code of Conduct in a fair and consistent manner, treating each student with dignity and respect. The office seeks to instill in students a sense of responsibility for their behavior both on campus and off campus.

Staff members in the Office of Greek Affairs, Office of Graduate Student Services, Office of Parent Programs, and Women's Resource Center work to ensure programs and services meet the personal, professional, and academic needs of these special populations. The Office of the Associate Dean of Students is responsible for The On-Call Dean Program, which has been developed to provide students and their families with support and assistance in times of trauma and distress. The On-Call Dean initiates professional and personal support for students in crisis by working with other University offices such as University Police, Public Relations, and the various colleges and schools within the University. In addition, the On-Call Dean interacts with community agencies such as local hospitals and the Tuscaloosa Police Department. This program is a visible illustration of the Division of Student Affairs and The University of Alabama's commitment to providing a nurturing environment for all students. This program enhances our efforts to maintain a warm and caring community.

With an increasing population of better-prepared students, UA recognized that retention of students begins with the first two weeks of campus life for all new students and, as the national literature suggests, it encompasses an engagement process. Several programs have been developed to ensure that students make a successful transition to the University and progress to graduation satisfactorily. The Office of New Student Programs works to impact the personal and social development of students by offering programming designed to help them gain practical and interpersonal competence negotiating campus, overcoming obstacles that hamper their achievement, and improving their ability to manage their personal affairs. The University of Alabama's Week of Welcome is a collaborative event with activities and programs designed
to introduce new students to services and resources as they transition to college or the UA campus for the first time.

Additional programs and services offered by The Office of New Student Programs include the following: The First-Year Call Center (FYCC), which is designed to create a welcoming environment for first-year students by providing information regarding important upcoming events, discussing satisfaction and challenges with students in their first year, as well as answering any questions or concerns for the student. FYCC calls all students new to UA. These students include freshmen, transfer students, change of campus students, and even students returning from semester-long absences. The Tide Early Alert Program helps students be successful during their time at the University. Faculty, staff, parents, and students can access the program if they feel a student is having difficulty on campus. Tide Early Alerts is designed to identify students who have received a D or F on an assignment, test, or paper; excessive absences; or who may be exhibiting behavior that is inconsistent with being a productive or successful student. The alert system allows staff to be contacted so the student can be linked to the appropriate resources to be successful on campus. Freshman Learning Communities bring together a small group of students and one or two faculty members to explore a topic of interest to all of them. These opportunities allow students to gain practical and interpersonal competence, and work collaboratively with others, while Freshman Seminars, offered collaboratively with UA’s Colleges and Schools Freshman Seminars at The University of Alabama, seek to engage first-year students in meaningful relationships with their peers, faculty, and/or the campus community. Seminars are designed to engage students in intellectual discourse in small classes taught by faculty who have a deep understanding of the subject matter and want to share their knowledge and passion for a topic. Freshman Seminars feature special topics that often take an interdisciplinary approach to subject material. Seminars are designed to fulfill a core curriculum requirement while enhancing students’ academic and social development in addition to fostering critical thinking skills, independent research, expository writing, and, in many cases, field experience.

Support for students extends beyond the first year with the Alabama First Generation Scholars Program or Alabama First program, which provides support and information for this unique demographic. The Office of New Student Programs also works with the School of Social Work and the Office of University Advancement to offer specific support to students who are wards of the state, in foster care, or have been emancipated from their parents. Programs and services available through Undergraduate Parent Support provide advocacy for undergraduate students who have children, and are linked to Graduate Parent Support in a strong collaborative relationship. Mentoring and educational programming to African American males at the University of Alabama is offered in association with the West Alabama Chapter of 100 Black Men through Collegiate 100.

The most recent assessment reports for the Office of Student Judicial Affairs, the Office of Greek Affairs, Office of Graduate Student Services, and Office of Parent Programs, provide information about programs and services to students about involvement, learning outcomes, and information about the quality of services.

VI. Wellness

A. Counseling Center

The Counseling Center provides a variety of emotional health services to enrolled University students and their eligible spouses. Additional services include substance abuse counseling, crisis counseling, and psychiatric consultation. With a staff of professional psychologists, social workers, counselors, and psychiatrists, the Counseling Center is able to work with students to help them address obstacles to their personal and academic success. The Counseling Center provides crisis intervention and individual and group counseling services for students on the Tuscaloosa campus. A counselor is on call 24 hours a day for emergency assistance.
Offering a variety of group programming options related to emotional health and student success, programming and outreach activities take the form of presentations, workshops, events, displays, and classroom instruction. Professional staff members cover topics such as stress management, time management, choosing a major, assertiveness training, conflict resolution, overcoming procrastination, and improving relationships. The Counseling Center also coordinates or participates in focused education or prevention campaigns with other offices, including college adjustment (September), suicide (October), alcohol and drugs (November), sexual responsibility (February), eating disorders (March), and stress management (December and April).

Counseling sessions, support groups and outreach activities are offered as a means of helping students gain greater self-awareness, interpersonal sensitivity to improve interpersonal relationships, help students clarify values, increase their independence, and manage their personal affairs to achieve personal and educational goals.

As one of only two International Association of Counseling Services Inc, (IACS) accredited college counseling centers in the state, and one of only 15 in all neighboring states, Counseling Center staff members provided 5,461 individual counseling sessions to students in 2009-2010; this represents a 6% increase over the previous year. Additional data from the most recent annual report indicate that crisis encounters increased by 8.2% during the 2009-2010 academic year and third-party consultation also rose by 8.2% in 2009-2010 to 4,412.

B. University Recreation

University Recreation encourages healthy interaction through active and safe lifestyle opportunities for students and the greater University community, which strengthens learning and personal growth. The University Recreation Center facility is the center of a department that offers services such as weight training, indoor and outdoor pools, fitness classes of all varieties, intramural sports, outdoor recreation, physical rehabilitation services, and sports clubs. For students seeking a more informal athletic experience, the University Recreation Center's intramural sports program provides men's, women's, and co-ed leagues, tournaments, and events in a wide variety of team sports and activities. With a range of competitive levels, all interested students can find activities that fit their abilities. Individual students may take advantage of programs and services on the main campus, which sponsors everything from outdoor adventure trips to club sports to personal training. Activities emphasize the development of the whole student, focusing on social interaction, enhanced self-esteem, the ability to set personal goals, the ability to collaborate, student leadership, competition, instruction, health, and fitness for the University community.

The most recent assessment reports for the University Recreation Center indicate that unique student visits to the Student Recreation Center (SRC) for 2009 totaled 23,425, representing over 80% of the student body. This is an increase of 7.5% from 2008. Total visits to the SRC in 2009 were 547,509, with 496,654 (91%) of these visits from students. This is an increase of 4.94% from 2008. Aquatic Center (AC) utilization was up over 30% vs. 2008. Annual group exercise participation equalled 46,461 participants (a 44% increase over 2008-2009; most popular classes were Zumba, Indoor Cycle, and Yoga with an average of 96 classes per week offered).

The most recent retention study for the 2008 and 2009 First-Year Cohorts completed by the University Recreation Center provides data on the user characteristics and indicates that students who used the Student Recreation Center at least once in their first term were roughly 3-4% more likely to return for the spring term or the following fall term, and there is a is a very strong positive linear relationship between Student Recreation Center use and first-term GPA. In the spring of 2010, students were asked to participate in the NASPA Consortium Campus Recreation Impact Study developed with the National Intramural-Recreational Sports Association (NIRSA). The study collected operational, leadership, and student data. Student participants were asked about their experiences with the University Recreation Center. Responses from UA students indicate positive experiences as compared to the national averages on items associated with self-confidence, quality of life, and skills and abilities students will use after college as a result of their
participation in University Recreation activities and programs. A snapshot of the results of the study was shared with the campus community in the Student Affairs Partner Newsletter.

C. The Student Health Center

The Student Health Center, under the leadership of the University of Alabama Medical School, is one of 175 in the United States with Accreditation by the American Association of Ambulatory Care Centers and provides evaluation, diagnosis, and treatment of acute medical conditions. Dedicated professionals provide quality healthcare to enrolled students, offering a comprehensive list of preventative and medical services. The Center's practitioners represent a multidisciplinary care team dedicated to the college-age patient made up of pediatricians, internists, obstetricians/gynecologists, psychiatrists, nurse practitioners, nurses, pharmacists, and registered dietitians, while clinics provide services beyond the usual urgent care, including allergy and immunization, treatment of ADHD, women's health, international travel medications, and dermatology services all in an effort to support the academic development of students by providing efficient access to services and care that assist in maintaining the overall health and wellbeing of the campus community.

The Student Health Center assesses service provision in various ways. Benchmarks with other student health centers in the Sunbelt Region have indicated that the University of Alabama Student Health Center is a leader in: the adoption of third-party billing to reduce out-of-pocket charges to students; the adoption of an electronic health record; access within the institution for specialty referrals; access to service through hours of operation (open 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. Monday through Thursday, 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. on Friday, and 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. on Saturday and Sunday); access to a full-service pharmacy, laboratory, and x-ray; provision of a full-service business office; and in health education and wellness outreach. The Student Health Center is among the top institutions nationally for success in immunization required for admission, with over 96% completion within the first semester of enrollment.

Patient satisfaction surveys show an overall satisfaction of 96%. The Student Health Center was awarded a Level 1 Award for Commitment to Excellence in 2007 and a Level 2 Award for Progress Toward Excellence in 2009. These Alabama Quality Awards are based upon performance criteria that include excellence in leadership, strategic planning, attention to customers and other stakeholders, market focus, process management, and analysis of organizational structure.

In 2005, the Health Promotion and Wellness Department within the Student Health Center convened the first campus-wide strategic planning workshop to address student health from the perspective of faculty, academic advisors, and student affairs professionals. From this workshop, seven Strategic Health Teams were formed, which have served as the backbone of efforts to provide education, prevention, intervention, peer education, and internship opportunities to students. Highlights of the team efforts are below:

Alcohol and Other Drugs Team: In the fall of 2006, completion of AlcoholEdu for College™ was required for all incoming freshmen. Completion rates during the first semester have exceeded 94% each year, and focus group interviews with students in 2008 indicate that students' knowledge and awareness of blood alcohol concentration has increased and that there is a perceived need for more alcohol-free social events on campus. In response, the "Rising Tide" Student Tailgate, an alcohol free event held during home football games, has attracted 250 to 400 students per event.

The Mental Health, Depression Suicide Team: Approximately 1,000 employees have participated in Mental Health Edu™, a program to provide faculty, staff, and student employees with information and knowledge to assist students in distress. Other initiatives include the Money Matters website for students developed by the Financial Health team; "Reflections," an evidence-based program designed for sorority women to address body image issues, is sponsored by the Eating Disorders Team; and "Take the Challenge: Eat for Your Health," is an annual event sponsored by the Nutrition Team.
Programs and services are not only designed to assist students with health related issues, they are also intended to provide them with the knowledge and skills to manage their personal affairs and take an active role in advancing the health of the university community by choosing behaviors, activities, and environments that promote health and wellbeing.

VII. Business and Financial Services

A. University Police

The University acknowledges that effective learning cannot occur if the environment and surroundings are not supportive of students’ academic pursuits. Located in the Division of Financial Affairs, the University of Alabama Police Department (UAPD) is committed to providing a safe and secure learning environment for students, faculty, and staff. Offering a comprehensive approach to student health and safety, the department incorporates patrol, investigation, crime prevention, security, and traffic support to provide police protection. Safety education and awareness programs and services are offered both on and off campus and focus on education, environment, and enforcement. Each year UAPD produces and distributes the Safer Living Guide as a safety resource to the campus community. The University of Alabama Police Department is accredited by the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies.

B. Bama Dining

There are currently 18 campus dining locations on the main campus to serve students, faculty, and staff. Offering a variety of choices in meal plans and dining options, students can find dining that fits their individual taste, schedule, and geographic needs. Free podcasts available through iTunes offer both residents and commuters a unique and portable source of important information about smart nutrition choices, menu options, and eco-friendly tips for dining on or off campus.

C. Transportation

Transportation Services offers free, safe, and dependable transportation readily available for all students via CrimsonRide, the on-campus transit system, and supplemented by 348-RIDE, which is a free service that will transport students between locations on campus or between nearby residences and campus. Service is available when Crimson Ride buses are not operating. Students with cars can acquire parking. Transportation Services offers the Motorist Assistance Program (M.A.P.) to faculty, staff, students, and visitors in the event a member of the UA community or a visitor runs out of gas, needs a battery jump, or even needs air in their tires.

VIII. Distance Education

Although distance education students are entitled to partake of the same programs and services that are available to all students, the uniqueness of their learning approach requires offering supplemental services to maximize their learning experience. The College of Continuing Studies (CCS) serves as a clearinghouse of information and as a bridge linking distance education students to appropriate faculty and staff in key University offices.

An online orientation site for distance learners offers a variety of support services for new students and is supported by the college. The site includes information on academic support services such as academic tutoring and library information, tips for success, campus contact information, links to the academic calendar, technical support services, using eLearning, and a general FAQ section. Distance students are not required to attend a campus orientation, but it is strongly recommended that they go through the orientation sessions to assure knowledge of campus resources.
Continuing Studies student services staff members are easily accessible to all students using electronic communication or via a toll-free telephone number. The office is staffed 5 days per week, from 8:00 am until 8:00 pm, and during University holiday breaks. Upon admission, the College of Continuing Studies sends each Distance Learning student an email that gives the student specific information regarding his or her academic advisor, directions on how to access the UA student portal, information on the student identification, and instructions on how to register for a course.

Each distance degree program designates an academic advisor assigned for distance learners. CCS provides tracking information to the academic departments regarding new admissions in order to be assured that new students are assigned advisors immediately upon admission. Additionally, CCS provides technical support to academic advisors who wish to utilize resources and tools for communicating with students.

Distance learners have access to test proctoring, tutoring services, the Center for Teaching and Learning, the UA Writing Center, UA Libraries, and a dedicated technical support staff available Monday through Friday, from 8:00 am until 8:00 pm. A link to the technical support team is included in every online course and the services can be reached using toll-free telephone or email. Specific assistance is provided regarding links in classes, resetting passwords, and other help within the course management system.

IX. Conclusion

The comprehensive student support programs and services provided at UA have been described. Embedded within the narrative has been evidence for the effectiveness of those services and the impact they have had on student learning and student development. It is evident that UA has been successful in its collaborative, interdivisional approach to ensure a successful educational experience for students of all types.