On June 15, 2004, President Robert E. Witt announced the formation of the Division of Community Affairs and named Dr. Samory T. Pruitt as Vice President. During the past 10 years, the Division has organized and deployed the resources of a major research university to help solve critical problems in the state, nation, and world in collaboration with faculty, staff, students, and community organizations. Following are some of the major achievements and developments within the division and its initiatives since 2004:

2005 In partnership with the College of Engineering, the Division established a chapter of Engineers without Borders (since renamed Student Engineers in Action) with Drs. Pauline and Philip Johnson serving as chapter advisors. This internationally active group has made three trips to Peru to conduct projects ranging from the installation of light systems to eco-tourism to water purification. Nearby, Student Engineers in Action conducted safe water projects and upgraded baseball fields in West Alabama, among other projects that take classroom learning to the field.

- The Division of Community Affairs assumed leadership of the annual UA United Way campaign and implemented a structure that created opportunities for UA colleges and administrative units to provide leadership of the campaign each year. As a result of the change in structure, UA has seen a steady increase in both the number of employees participating in the campaign and overall contributions. In fact, The University of Alabama leads the SEC in the percent of employees participating in the United Way campaign and is consistently the largest contributor to the annual United Way of West Alabama’s campaign.

2006 The Division established Crossroads Community Center to address cultural competency on campus and in the community. The University of Alabama joined such prestigious universities as Harvard, Northwestern, Princeton, and Virginia in establishing a chapter of Sustained Dialogue on its campus. Crossroads continues to provide programming in support of ethnic heritage months and conducts programs to improve cultural competency on campus and in the community.

2007 Community Affairs established the Center for Community-Based Partnerships (CCBP) to provide campus leadership in community-engaged scholarship that supports UA’s outreach mission. The Division also created the Council on Community-Based Partnerships to provide leadership and to support faculty, student, and community partner engagement efforts campus-wide. CCBP also initiated an Annual Awards Program and Seed Grant Program to further support these efforts. To date, the Awards Program has recognized scores of deserving projects and individuals, as the program itself has received national recognition by leading engagement institutions. In the Seed Funds program more than 250 small grants have been proposed yielding some 50 funded projects totaling $225,000 and leading to almost $3,000,000 in additional funded research.

- Community Affairs led the University’s effort to secure Carnegie Classification for Community and Curricular Engagement and led the effort to renew this status in 2014 as well.

- As a result of its community engagement efforts, UA was invited to become only
the sixth institution to join the National Outreach Scholarship Conference (since renamed the Engagement Scholarship Consortium), joining Penn State, Ohio State, the University of Georgia, Michigan State, and the University of Wisconsin–Extension. The organization has now grown to 28 institutions in the United States, Canada, and Africa. Dr. Pruitt will assume the role of president of the ESC Board of Directors in 2015.

2008 In partnership with the Tuscaloosa city and county school Systems and UA’s Colleges of Education and Human Environmental Sciences, the Division created the Parent Leadership Academy, (today the Parent Teacher Leadership Academy) in an effort to build stronger school-community partnerships intended to improve student achievement and encourage parental participation in their children’s schools. The National School Board Association recognized the PTLA as a premier program in the United States in 2012. School systems in several additional counties have since been brought into the program.

• The Division launched the Journal of Community Engagement and Scholarship in 2008. Today the journal is considered one of the leading journals in the field of engaged scholarship and is one of two research journals sponsored by the Engagement Scholarship Consortium. It is published twice a year in hard copy and online (see jces.ua.edu). Dr. Cassandra Simon, associate professor of Social Work, is the founding and current editor.

2009 In recognition of the 20th anniversary of the Realizing the Dream banquet, special recognition was given to members of the Founders Committee as well as to those who had helped to sustain the vision and mission of the Realizing of Dream initiative. Additionally, the Realizing the Dream Committee partnered with the Tuscaloosa Southern Christian Leadership Conference to host a Legacy Banquet during the weekend of the MLK celebration events that would recognize individuals for their efforts to continue to make Dr. King’s dream a reality for all. Following are the speakers and honorees since 2009:


• Honorees: 2009, Kendra Key, Horizon Award; Mayor Walt Maddox, Call to Conscience Award; Rev. Thomas W. Linton, Mountaintop Award; 2010, Jerria Martin, Horizon Award; Dorothy McDade, Call to Conscience Award; Odessa Warrick, Mountaintop Award; 2011, Sean Hudson, Horizon Award; Harrison Taylor, Call to Conscience Award; William H. Lanford, Mountaintop Award; 2012 – Gwendolyn Ferreti, Horizon Award; Bryan Fair, Call to Conscience Award; Dr. Nimrod Reynolds, Mountaintop Award; 2013 – Lubna Alansari, Horizon Award; Michael Culver, Call to Conscience Award; Dr. Paula-Sue Bumum-Hayes, Mountaintop Award; 2014 – Melanie Gotz, Horizon Award; Cleophus Thomas Jr., Call to Conscience Award; Dr. Roger Sayers, Mountaintop Award.

2010 Black Belt 100 Lenses, in conjunction with the
Black Belt Community Foundation, hosted its first photograph exhibit on the UA campus. Plans were announced to conduct the project in every Black Belt county. The award-winning program was led by CCBP graduate student Elliott Knight in conjunction with the leadership of the Black Belt Community Foundation. An annual summer camp helped young students develop greater understanding and appreciation of the history and culture of their region through photography, writing, performance, discussion, and other activities.

2011  SCOPE (Scholars for Community Outreach, Partnership, and Engagement) was founded with the support of Dr. David Francko, associate provost and dean of the UA Graduate School. With the participation of many campus disciplines, the organization has grown to become a national model of young engaged scholars at work. Some 25 members have made numerous presentations at international conferences, published in major research journals, and recorded more than 550 hours of engaged scholarship research activities. SCOPE connects undergraduate and graduate students from all disciplines interested in and committed to community-engaged scholarship with resources to advance their scholarship. Its purpose is to enhance and support the research capacity of UA students and to collaborate with faculty and community partners in achieving mutually beneficial outcomes to address challenges facing communities. To accomplish its goals, SCOPE utilizes an integrated developmental conceptual framework.

- Dr. Pruitt was invited to serve as a founding member to create the Academy of Community Engaged Scholarship. Now established, the organization will induct its first class of honorees during the ESC Conference in Alberta, Canada in October 2014. Dr. Carolyn Dahl, former dean of the College of Continuing Studies and Dr. Jim McLean, former dean of the College of Education have been nominated for induction into the inaugural class of ACES.

2012  Saving Lives is a faith-based health literacy and wellness program developed for congregations in rural and urban areas in the South. Now in its third year, researchers and community partners have joined to develop and execute a health literacy model in several churches throughout Tuscaloosa County, with plans to expand to other areas. New churches join the movement each year as they learn of the successes from previous years. University researchers join with church members to measure results at regular intervals.

- The University of Alabama hosted the 13th annual National Outreach Scholarship Conference (now the Engagement Scholarship Consortium) on the UA campus September 30–October 3, attracting the largest academic, community partner, and student attendance in the organization’s history and becoming the first non-land-grant institution to host the conference. A special issue of the Journal of Community Engagement and Scholarship was based on the research presentations and other activities of the conference.

- The Fulbright Advising Initiative, under Community Affairs for the past two years, has raised the number of University Fulbright representatives from two in the year prior to Community Affairs involvement to four in 2012 and eight in 2013. Some 11,000 students compete annually for 1,700 Fulbright awards, making it the nation’s premier academic international exchange program. The Capstone International Center is a partner in this effort.

2013  The STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) Entrepreneurship Academy (SEA) was established to present these disciplines in the context of entrepreneurship to encourage STEM majors and careers. SEA is both a summer enrichment program for high school students and a professional development program for teachers. Two SEA summer camps, in 2013 and 2014, have been held. The first professional development training for teachers will occur in the fall of 2014. Using an inquiry and evidence-based approach, SEA helps students and teachers master and apply scientific processes and skills; seeks ways to market the results of this mastery and application; improves teamwork and communication skills; and teaches

Students, faculty, staff and community partners all play major roles in many Community Affairs projects. Here a student assists with a blood test as part of the Saving Lives project.
students how to write a professional business plan, prepare a budget, network with STEM professionals, and prepare teachers for STEM teaching.

• Global Café, created by campus and community partners, connects students and faculty with community, sponsoring programs and activities that enable people to share traditions and cultures, learn languages together, access local resources and opportunities, and meet new friends. This initiative was begun by a number of community partners, including Tuscaloosa city and county schools and school leaders. Evenings at Global Café brings diverse groups of students together to relax, meet new people, and enjoy an evening of games and family activities. Other partners include the Capstone International Center, Graduate Parent Support, Tuscaloosa’s One Place, Shelton State Community College, and numerous community leaders. Throughout the year, planning and implementation of programs offer students exciting new paths toward campus leadership.

2014 In conjunction with the Tuscaloosa Chapter of the SCLC, the Tuscaloosa Interdenominational Ministerial Alliance, Shelton State Community College, and Stillman College marked the 25th anniversary of the Realizing the Dream Concert in January with a banquet at Foster Auditorium featuring broadcast journalist John Cochran and a concert by John Legend, Grammy award-winning artist and humanitarian.

• The Division of Community Affairs led the application process for The University of Alabama to retain its Carnegie designation for Community and Curricular Engagement. Since 2008, rather than segregating or otherwise setting aside engagement as a specific area of teaching and scholarship, UA has chosen instead to mainstream engagement scholarship and teaching as a part of a successful candidate’s overall promotion and tenure portfolio.

• Numerous empirical data on promotion and tenure outcomes in recent years underscore the efficacy of this approach in fundamentally changing the culture for community engagement across the entire UA campus since our 2008 Carnegie Engagement Classification. Based on data collected by CCBP, UA faculty participants in community engagement scholarship, teaching, and grant activities between 2007 and 2014 include:

  – 58 tenured/tenure-track faculty, or roughly 6% of the total UA tenured/tenure-track faculty, recorded at least one engagement peer-reviewed paper, presentation, or grant. These faculty represent 11 of UA’s 13 academic colleges and schools.
  – 6 of the 13 deans of academic colleges or schools were authors/co-authors or principal investigator (PI) or co-PIs on engagement scholarship, teaching, or grants.
  – Between 2007 and 2009, a total of 142 faculty were evaluated for tenure/promotion or promotion. Of these, six faculty or 4.2% of the total, included engaged scholarship, teaching, or grants activities in their portfolios.
  – From 2010 to 2014, 19 faculty out of a total of 292 (6.5%) considered for promotion and/or tenure included engaged scholarship, teaching, or grants activities within their portfolios – an increase of 60% over the previous period.
  – 100% of the 2007–2014 faculty promotion and/or tenure cohort who listed engagement activities within their portfolios were successful in their bid for tenure and/or promotion, compared with about 90-95% success among all candidates.

2014 marked the 25th anniversary of the Realizing the Dream Concert with a banquet at Foster Auditorium featuring alumnus John Cochran and a concert by John Legend, Grammy award-winning artist and humanitarian.