



UA student Edwin Randall teaches chess at Alberta Performing Arts School as part of the Every Move Counts initiative (page 14).

ON THE COVER, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: The UA Astrobotics Team's outreach efforts (page 4); Schoolyard Roots (page 10); FocusFirst (page 28); Clínica Alabama-Granada (page 30)

Reaching Across Alabama and the Globe

Service learning at The University of Alabama is reverberating across the state and planet, improving health, education, the environment, economics and more.

Service learning combines organized service activities with academic study and thoughtful reflection to enhance students' understanding of course content while providing them with real-world experience. It also encourages students to move beyond acts of charity and temporary solutions to a deeper analysis of systemic challenges in the world around them.

During the past decade, several service-learning initiatives have changed the face of Alabama.

Thanks to FocusFirst (page 28), college students conduct vision screenings at daycare centers and preschools in all 67 counties, and Alabama has become the nation's leader in diagnosing and addressing eye-sight problems in young children.

Alabama also leads the nation for growth in qualifying scores on Advanced Placement math, science and English exams, due largely to A+ College Ready. High school students who pass AP exams receive college credit and are three times more likely to earn a college degree than those who don't pass, according to the College Board. Because many high schoolers are not prepared for AP coursework, University of Alabama students partner with A+ College Ready to offer CollegeFirst (page 16), a summer program with rigorous pre-AP curricula.

Through SaveFirst (page 72), The University of Alabama leads the largest campus-based, free-tax-preparation initiative in the nation. In collaboration with college students across the state, UA students provide free income-tax-preparation services to low-income individuals and families. In 2017, they prepared 9,081 returns, helping clients save more than \$3.6 million in commercial tax-preparation fees.

UA students' work is not limited to Alabama. They distribute water filters in developing countries (page 24), help run a medical clinic in Nicaragua (page 30), take part in conservation efforts in Belize (page 76) and more.

During the 2016-17 academic year, 157 UA service-learning courses – representing almost every academic

discipline – collaborated with 93 community agencies. Nearly 8,700 students worked on 381 service-learning projects and 542 volunteer projects.

Building a culture of service learning takes organized effort and support from an institution's administration. Since 2007, UA's Faculty Fellows in Service Learning Program (page 82) – operated by the Center for Ethics & Social Responsibility – has been giving faculty members the knowledge, tools and resources needed to bring their service-learning ideas to fruition.

In the long term, widespread service learning in higher education could prompt a dramatic cultural shift. Com-

munity service activities, carried out in conjunction with course work, encourage students to develop a sense of civic responsibility. They gain the desire and ability to continue making positive contributions long after college. We believe institutions of higher learning should play this critical role in preparing the next generation to serve as effective, engaged and ethical citizens.

This publication highlights just some of the many outstanding initiatives arising from service learning at The University of Alabama. From engineering students designing devices to help children with disabilities be more independent (page 4) to rhetoric students creating an archive for a historically black town in danger of losing its history (page 38), service-learning experiences move students beyond the classroom as they apply their knowledge to solving real problems and begin to shape the future of our state, country and world.



College students throughout Alabama prepare income-tax returns for low-income individuals and families, helping them save more than \$3.6 million in commercial tax-preparation fees in 2017 (page 72).

Stephen F. Black, Director
Center for Ethics & Social Responsibility
A Division of Academic Affairs



THE UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA®