

| FEATURE |

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YEARS OF
WOMEN
AT THE CAPSTONE

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A New Beginning

THE EARLY YEARS OF WOMEN AT UA

BY DAVID MILLER

For almost two centuries, The University of Alabama has stood on sacred ground set aside by the government for the education of "youth of the state." For the first 60 years of the Capstone's existence, however, that didn't include women.

One woman in particular had a problem with that—Julia Tutwiler.

Tutwiler, president of Livingston Normal College for Girls, fought for equal education for women as she petitioned the Alabama Education Association, state legislators and university trustees of the state's universities to allow coeducation. "[Tutwiler] insisted that half the youth of the state had been deprived of their just share of the benefits of the grant quite long enough," wrote James B. Sellers in his book, "History of the University of Alabama."

Not everyone agreed, however. Male students at UA routinely panned the idea of coeducation in student publications, sometimes under aliases or without any attribution at all.

In the May 1880 edition of UA's *Monthly*, an anonymous author wrote that women should learn "fancy needlework ... music, dancing, fancy-work, and similar arts." In the March 1896 edition of *Monthly*, an anonymous student said a model of coeducation would "result in the total demolition of all of the highest and purest virtues that man admires in a woman."

However strong the resistance was in the late 1800s, higher education's evolution into coed learning was taking hold at universities in the South, like the University of Mississippi, which began admitting women in 1882. In 1892, Auburn University—then Agricultural and Mechanical College of Alabama—was the first in the state to enroll women. The

University of Alabama followed the next year, admitting Bessie Parker and Anna Adams in fall 1893.

According to *The Crimson White*, the admission of women at the Capstone was conditional: They could only enroll as sophomores, and only at age 18 or older. Female students were not allowed to fraternize with male students, and at first could not occupy the same educational room. The first women to enroll at UA earned "special degrees, rather than the standard," a practice that was similar to other schools like the University of Mississippi and the University of Virginia, wrote David Battles, author of "Yea, Alabama! A Rare Glimpse into the Personal Diary of the University of Alabama."

By the 1896–97 academic year, five of the 167 students at UA were women. The female students, Mary Carter Hill, Alice Searcy Wyman, Alice Ross Searcy, Alice Wildman and Lucy Grace Marin, were told by professors that female students were on trial, and that, "if they proved themselves worthy of the trust, co-education would be established," according to *The Crimson White*.

Indeed, the earliest students, including Adams and Parker, were "among the honor stu-



dents with average grades of 95 percent or better," Sellers wrote.

Eventually, women were allowed to obtain bachelor's and graduate degrees. Rosa Lawhorn enrolled at UA in 1898 and in June 1900 became the first woman to earn a Bachelor of Arts. Two other women, Lida McMahon and Anna Hunter, graduated with master's degrees in 1902.



ABOVE: UA's earliest female students were required to wear uniforms and were largely segregated from male students.



Julia Tutwiler

ABOVE: Julia Tutwiler, president of the Livingston Normal College for Girls, was instrumental in the state's universities enrolling women.

1892

Julia Tutwiler petitions The University of Alabama Board of Trustees to admit women to the University. Faculty agree, so long as "suitable homes and protection" be provided.



The first female students, Anna Adams and Bessie Parker, enroll for the fall semester at the University.

1900

Rosa Lawhorn of Livingston, Alabama, becomes the first woman to receive a bachelor's degree from UA.

1902

Lida McMahon, left, becomes the first woman to graduate with an MA, while Anna Hunter, right, is the first woman to graduate with an MS. Hunter later becomes the first female teacher on the University faculty.



1904

The Zeta Chapter of Kappa Delta at The University of Alabama is founded as the first women's sorority on the UA campus and the first women's sorority in Alabama.



A Cultural Transformation

UA WOMEN OF THE 20TH CENTURY

BY JAMON SMITH

Unlike many other colleges and universities, The University of Alabama was actually on the early side of history when it admitted women in 1893.

"In the 19th century, higher education for women was enormously controversial," said Dr. Lisa Lindquist-Dorr, associate dean of the College of Arts and Sciences and an associate professor of history. "It was thought that it would so debilitate them physically that they would not be able to become mothers."

When the University of Virginia considered enrolling women in the 1920s, it reached out to other schools that had already had female students, including Alabama. "UVA produced a document about how successful UA had been at enrolling women," Lindquist-Dorr said.

In the early 20th century, course of study for female college students at UA was limited to majors that were considered "appropriate" for women, such as home economics and education. These majors were met with less blowback from those opposed to women in college because they would essentially help them become better homemakers. Former UA President George Denny, who saw women enrollment rise to 12 percent by 1912, said to a female student, "There can be no question that the opportunities available to young women at The University of Alabama are far superior to the opportunities available

to them at any other institution in this section."

"This idea of higher education for women eventually came to mean that they would become better mothers, better able to raise their children as intelligent citizens than they would being not as educated," Lindquist-Dorr said. "Women also wanted to go to college so they could meet the right type of guy, but the focus nationally was that it was women's jobs to be wives and mothers."

In the 1920s and 1930s that idea sort of eroded, and women had a lot more opportunities. "But in the 1950s, there is an unusually heavy focus on that for women. So the 1950s, in some ways, is an aberration," Lindquist-Dorr said. "And then in the 1960s women started to say, 'No, there needs to be more to this in life.'"

In the 1910s, the idea of being limited to a homemaker didn't settle well with all female college graduates. Some of the initial classes of higher-educated women found themselves out of place once they earned their degrees. "They had been involved in this exciting world of studying higher ideas and seeing this whole big world out there, and all they're told afterwards is to go home and go get married," Lindquist-Dorr said.

Though the intent of some who allowed women to enroll in college may have been to help them become more intelligent homemakers, the college experience for



ABOVE: Women at the Capstone have been instrumental in campus life, from the early 1900s (top left) to the 1920s (top right) and the 1940s (above). **PREVIOUS PAGE:** An illustration of a woman waving an Alabama flag first appeared in the 1907 Corolla.



1907

Maud McLure Kelly graduates from the UA Law School and, after a change in wording in the Code of Alabama, becomes the first woman to practice law in Alabama.

1913

President George Denny appoints **Mrs. Frederick Losey** as the first dean of women. Losey was also state secretary of the Suffrage Association and leader of a campus suffrage group.



1916

Women's Student Government is created to represent the voice of female students.

1918

Alumna **Martha Warren Parham** becomes the first female university registrar. She later serves as director of women's housing. In 1964, a dormitory is dedicated in her honor and still stands today.

1931

In the centennial year of the university, **women's enrollment** is

877



1941

Eleanor Dudley wins the women's individual intercollegiate golf championship, which later evolved into the NCAA women's golf championship.

BELOW: ROTC was especially popular with UA women during WWII. Two ROTC members pose in their uniforms in 1945.

RIGHT: Female students sell homecoming corsages in 1952.



RIGHT: Women celebrate during a Mortar Board tapping on the mound in 1959.



women in the 1900s, even at UA, wasn't as pretty and orderly as many administrators and parents hoped for, to their great dismay.

The college life of Daphne Cunningham, who graduated with a degree in English in 1916 when the campus had just under 800 total students—10 percent of whom were women—was a social adventure. According to "Daphne Cunningham's World: Student Life at Alabama in the 1910s," written by Lindquist-Dorr, who drew from Cunningham's diary, her life on campus included attending athletic events and going to plays, concerts and dances, but it was primarily marked by a robust dating life. Being one of only a few women on campus, she was highly sought after and went on an average of three or four dates a day with a total of 55 different men during her three years at the Capstone. In the 1910s, and particularly in the 1920s, frequent dating was considered the norm and did not imply commitment.

On Jan. 9, 1914, Cunningham wrote in her diary that she walked home with a young suitor and football player named Hargrove Vander Graaf. She then went to a picture show with Frank Greenhill and went to the Alpha Tau Omega dance that evening with Richard Foster. In 1930, Cunningham eventually married one of her male suitors from her college days, Merrill Smith. They settled in her hometown, Tuscaloosa.

In the 1920s, the wild reputation of college life for women on campus continued. Like the rest of the nation's youth culture during the "roaring twenties," UA was a place where students liked to party. By the 1920s, UA's students viewed themselves as part of a national college scene where dating, kissing and drinking were the norm. "A lot of the things you'd see in the Northeast universities you'd see at UA," Lindquist-Dorr said.

During that decade, the way dating was conducted challenged UA's limitations on female students, which



Female enrollment at UA continued to increase throughout the 1960s. Women were active in sororities, intramural sports and other organizations.

reflected the struggles of women's power of the time. Most universities in the 1920s had rules controlling students' social interactions, and UA was no exception. As a preventive measure to keep female students civil and respectable, freshmen at the University weren't allowed to date until they passed their first set of exams.

The Women's Council on campus also established regulations on women students' activities outside of class, such as having to get special permission from the dean of students if they wanted to leave Tuscaloosa, spend the night off campus, visit a fraternity house, attend an evening dance, concert, or theater performance, eat at a restaurant, or stay at a hotel or a boarding house. Those things would only be permitted if a student had an approved chaperone. Female students were given "date cards," which allowed them male visitors only twice a week, or three times a week if they were a senior.

Parents played a significant role in the restrictions. Concerned that their daughters may become disreputable, fathers wrote Denny expressing their desire to keep their daughters' reputations unblemished. This influenced campus policy. Women who were caught violating the rules were given social probation—not allowed to go on dates—ranging from a month to an entire academic year, according to Lindquist-Dorr's article.

All female students during the 1920s stayed at Julia Tutwiler Hall, which was referred to as "the Ranch" and its residents as "chickens," a nickname

1944

Libby Anderson Cater is elected SGA vice president, but upon the resignation of the acting president, becomes the first female SGA president at the Capstone.

During World War II, female enrollment at The University of Alabama is

70.8%

1956

UA's first African-American student, **Autherine Lucy Foster**, is admitted. She was expelled three days later "for her own safety" in response to threats. In 1992, Foster graduated from the University with a master's degree in education.



1962

Crimson Girls, now known as Capstone Men and Women, are created to serve as UA's official student ambassadors.



Vivian Malone and James Hood become the first African-Americans to remain enrolled at UA. Malone graduated in 1965. Hood returned to campus in 1995 and received a Ph.D. in interdisciplinary studies in 1997.

1963



1968

The Black Student Union, originally known as the Afro American Association, is formed by Dianne Kirksey and other students. Kirksey later went on to be the first African-American on the UA homecoming court.

"We couldn't wear shorts in the early 1960s, even if you were going to PE."



which lent itself to many jokes amongst male students.

"During that decade, there were some opportunities for advancement for women college graduates, such as in education, but once women who were teachers got married, they were expected to quit," Lindquist-Dorr said.

During the Great Depression, it was thought that women who worked were taking jobs away from men, even though the kinds of work that they did were different, Lindquist-Dorr said. "Eventually, other types of jobs became more acceptable for women. As restaurants and cafes became widespread, waitresses and beauticians—what we would call pink-collar jobs—became appropriate as we moved towards more of a consumer culture."

Throughout the early 20th century, female enrollment increased at UA and at colleges nationally, but it particularly spiked in the 1940s when many of the nation's men were off fighting in World War II. UA recruited women from across the country to fill the male student gap that the war caused. In

1944, 70.8 percent of the students at the Capstone were women. This shifted after the war as men came back and went to college on the G.I. Bill.

In the 1950s, restrictions on women's movements, dress and majors continued at UA. But many women remember the time fondly.

Marian Loftin, who graduated with a degree in education in 1958, said attending UA was a wonderful experience. She played in the band, which was ranked one of the best in the nation. "All of my life, I absolutely wanted my vocation to be a wife, a mother and a classroom teacher," she said. "And I was able to do that because of UA."

Loftin lived in Tutwiler Hall, which at the time had no air conditioning but had heat. There was a curfew for female students, which was about 9 p.m. on weekdays and midnight on Saturdays. "That gave us a closeness," she said. "We just had each other. There weren't cellphones and none of us had TVs in our rooms."

Dresses and skirts were the required dress code. But women snuck in wearing jeans and gym clothes by covering them up with raincoats, rain or shine. "We were conformists in the 1950s, but they did do panty raids then," Loftin said. "The girls would throw their panties out, but I didn't throw mine. It was a peaceful time and a fun time."

The 1950s were also a time of racial turmoil and change on campus. Autherine Lucy Foster, the first black person to enroll at UA, started pursuing a degree in education at the Capstone in 1956.

Loftin shared a children's literature class with Foster and was fascinated by her. "I always said she was the nicest person and she had the greatest looking raincoat," Loftin said. "I surely did have pride in Autherine Lucy Foster being a woman and so courageous. When we heard she was a woman, our sorority, the Delta Thetas, were happy and we said, 'about time.'"

In the 1960s, the number of students in universities across America exploded as the baby boomers made it to college.

Anne Payne, who attended UA from 1960 to 1963, graduated with a degree in home economics and education. Other degrees were available to women back then, but she wanted to be a teacher like her parents. She worked at the Tennessee School for the Deaf for 31 years, spending her last 13 years as the high school principal.

"We couldn't wear shorts in the early 1960s, even if you were going to PE," Payne said. "Hours were set in the dorms. If you went out on a date you had to be back in the dorms by 9 p.m. except on the weekends. If you stayed out later than the curfew, you would not be able to go out for a week. We had a house mother who would be there at the door when you came in and out."

Payne said she didn't see a problem with the rules or restrictions placed on women at UA. "It was just the times we were in," Payne said.

What stands out to her the most about her time as a student during the 1960s is segregation. "I was there when



1974
Delta Sigma Theta becomes the first historically black sorority on campus. That same spring, chapters of Alpha Kappa Alpha sorority and Zeta Phi Beta sorority were chartered.

UA adds five women's sports teams to its varsity roster: basketball, golf, gymnastics, swimming and diving, and volleyball.



1978
Women's intercollegiate athletics merges under the direction of UA athletics, opening up additional funding for scholarships, staff, equipment and activities.

1988

The UA women's gymnastics team wins its first of six NCAA national championships under Coach Sarah Patterson.



1989

XXXI is founded as the only all-female honor society on campus. Each spring, 31 women who have shown great commitment to UA through service, leadership and character are tapped in on the mound.

XXXI

Lynn Yeldell becomes the first woman elected SGA president.



"I think we had it good. In some ways I would say that it was the best of times."



The 1970s was a period of change at the Capstone for women. **FAR LEFT:** Delores Boyd celebrates being tapped into Mortar Board in 1971. **LEFT:** a female student protests on campus in 1970. **BELOW:** two students visit during the late 1970s.



then-Gov. George Wallace did his stand in the schoolhouse door. A few days before it happened, the National Guard showed up and they patrolled the halls of the dorm. The night before they had us all go to Foster Auditorium and told us what was happening and what they expected from us. Coach Bear Bryant spoke and said, "Don't do anything that would embarrass your momma." That always stuck with me."

When former UA vice president of student affairs Dr. Kathleen Cramer attended the University as an undergraduate from 1970 to 1974, the Capstone was changing, but still a much different place for women than it is today.

"It was a time of rapid change for undergraduate women," she said. "In my first year, we had curfews and we had to sign in and out of Tutwiler. In my sophomore year they changed the curfew hours, and by my senior year there were no curfews."

During her senior year in 1974, doors opened for women to join many traditionally all-male organizations. Cramer took advantage, joining the SGA as an executive assistant to the president and became a member of Omicron Delta Kappa, the leadership honor society.

"Stereotypical '70s culture was here," Cramer said. "We definitely felt strongly about the right to vote. We were being drafted. We had great concerts, but we've always been a fairly traditional campus."

"I think we had it good. In some ways, I would say that it was the best of times."

Throughout the 20th century, the culture for female students at the Capstone continued to evolve, opening doors for the women of today.

1991

The number of women enrolled at UA surpasses men and has increased since.

1992

Lena Thomas Austin becomes the first woman to portray Big Al. She portrayed the mascot 1992-94.



1993

The Women's Resource Center is created. The center, now known as the Women and Gender Resource Center, provides free counseling and advocacy services to victims and survivors of interpersonal violence and offers programming to promote social justice and address gender disparities.

2002

UA student Kana Ellis is selected as the first recipient of the Honors Student of the Year Award by the National Collegiate Honors Council.

2003

Carla Ferguson becomes the first black woman to accept a bid from one of the University's 15 traditionally all-white sororities, Gamma Phi Beta.

ΓΦΒ

2009

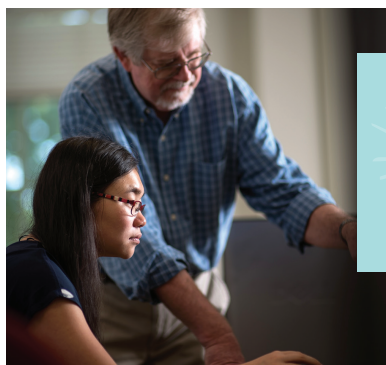


The women's wheelchair basketball team wins its first national championship. The team goes on to win championships in 2010, 2011, 2015 and 2017.

A Launchpad to Success

UA WOMEN TODAY

BY BRYANT WELBOURNE AND ADAM JONES



Thirty seven of the 66 prestige scholarships awarded at UA over the last nine years have gone to female students.

LEFT: Donna Xia is a senior conducting chemistry research with Dr. David A. Dixon.

The nearly 22,000 women at The University of Alabama today follow the lead of those who came before them over the past 125 years, serving as examples of grit and promise while demonstrating excellence in research and service.

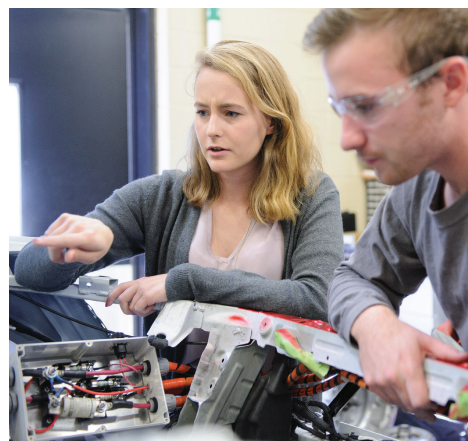
"Women have played a profound role in shaping the history of The University of Alabama," said UA President Dr. Stuart R. Bell. "Those of previous generations serve as benchmarks for the women on campus today who are using the Capstone as their launchpad to success, in the process making the world a better place."

Today's campus is radically different from the

campus that greeted the first two women to take classes at UA in 1893. Women play a vital role in campus life, in and out of the classroom. For one, there have been more female students than male every year since 1991, according to University records.

In the science and technical fields, women at the University shine bright. Probably the two most prestigious national scholarships for students studying in science, technology, engineering, math, or STEM, are the Goldwater and Hollings scholarships. The University is among the top institutions in the nation for these scholars, and the majority of UA's scholars over the past decade have been women.

BELOW: Haley Loftis, '18, earned both a bachelor's in electrical engineering and a master's in business administration through the STEM Path to MBA Program.



"You can't gloss over the history of women not being welcome in the sciences, but there certainly is a lot more of us now," said Donna Xia, a senior from Tuscaloosa studying chemical engineering. "We are able to reap the benefits from those who have come before us."

Xia was one of UA's two Goldwater Scholars in 2018, both of whom were women. Xia is an active researcher in the lab of Dr. David A. Dixon, the Robert Ramsay Professor of Chemistry, as well as a student in the Randall Research Scholars program.

She came to the University because of the chance to work in a research lab as an undergraduate student, working with biomass fuels her freshman year before transitioning to Dixon's computational chemistry lab. Long term, she wants to attend graduate school and use data analytics to help solve health care problems.

She said she has not been treated differently in the classroom, the lab or in the broader scientific community. "The problems that we need solved are not for men or women, but for everybody to solve," she said. "We have to work together to solve it."

For Haley Loftis, being a woman in a STEM field was a positive experience. Loftis graduated in 2018 with a bachelor's degree in electrical engineering and a master's in business administration through the STEM Path to MBA Program. During her last year on campus, she also served as project manager for the UA EcoCAR 3 team, overseeing UA's effort in a national competition to turn a Chevrolet Camaro into a plug-in hybrid electric vehicle.

"During my time here, I've been able to make more industry connections, find mentors in faculty members and other students, and gain experiences in a variety of fields beyond my major area of study," said Loftis, originally from Kansas City, Missouri.

Still, it is common for people to show surprise when she tells them about her major, her work on the team or that she landed an engineering job right after graduation.

"I think people are a lot more accepting of and open to women in STEM fields than they used to be, but there are still societal stigmas and barriers to overcome," Loftis said. "The path I'm pursuing may have been viewed as unacceptable or unachievable for a female in the past, and now, more often than not, it's just unexpected."

2012

Dr. Judy Bonner becomes the first female president of the Capstone.



The UA women's golf team wins its first NCAA national championship, the first for the University not in football or gymnastics.



The UA softball team wins its first NCAA national championship.

2014

Karen Phifer Brooks, a 1972 alumna, becomes the first female president pro tempore of The University of Alabama Board of Trustees.



Simply by being a UA student, women have played pivotal roles in promoting diversity and inclusion since trailblazer Autherine Lucy Foster was admitted as the first African-American student at UA in 1956. That same fortitude is in Marissa Navarro. After noticing the Hispanic/Latino community was not represented through a campus organization, Navarro created the Hispanic-Latino Association for students and employees during her freshman year.

"The goals of the association are to create a 'familia,' serve as a medium between our community and the University, promote awareness and representation, and serve our campus and community," said Navarro. "We want to provide an environment that is safe and inclusive not only for students, faculty and staff, but for anyone who has ever felt left out."

In February, Navarro received the Horizon Award during UA's Realizing the Dream Banquet held annually to celebrate the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. The award is presented to a young adult who possesses outstanding vision and hope that promote social justice, equality and peace. "I couldn't believe I was being recognized," said Navarro. "It felt like a win for my community and family more than a win for myself."

When looking for traits in UA women, compassion and a caring spirit often come to mind. This is no different when it comes to Theresa Stoddard. Stoddard's heart for others has led her to conduct workshops for marginalized

groups at the national and international levels.


Stoddard served as a teaching fellow to mostly Latino middle school students in Santa Fe, New Mexico, through the program Breakthrough Collaborative.

"The program provides a very intense learning experience because we are trying to get them to a place where they can go to college," said Stoddard. "It was a very rewarding, but challenging experience."

She also interned with the Center for Peace Studies in San Jose, Costa Rica, and implemented alternatives to violence projects in socially vulnerable populations. "I learned a lot about myself and what I can handle during my time in Costa Rica," said Stoddard.

After graduating in May, Stoddard is working and teaching this year in Madrid, Spain, through a Fulbright Award. She hopes to work in health equity and cross-cultural health justice movements.

It was 125 years ago that two brave women set foot on the Capstone, paving a path for thousands of women to follow. The path wasn't always easy, and it wasn't always clear, but as more women continued to strive for an education to better themselves, to better their lives, and to better their communities, they've made their mark.

Like the alumnae who came before her, Stoddard hopes to make a positive impact in the world. For her—and many others—the University has helped make the difference. 

ABOVE FROM LEFT: Marissa Navarro created the Hispanic-Latino Association at UA her freshman year. Theresa Stoddard served as a teaching fellow to middle school students in Santa Fe, New Mexico.



2015

Emma Talley wins NCAA individual championship in women's golf. She now plays on the LPGA Tour.

2017

Walker Jones becomes the first woman to serve as the president of The University of Alabama President's Cabinet.

BREAKING DOWN THE NUMBERS

SEC schools with highest percentage of female students

Georgia
57.4%

Ole Miss
56.4%

Alabama
56.3%

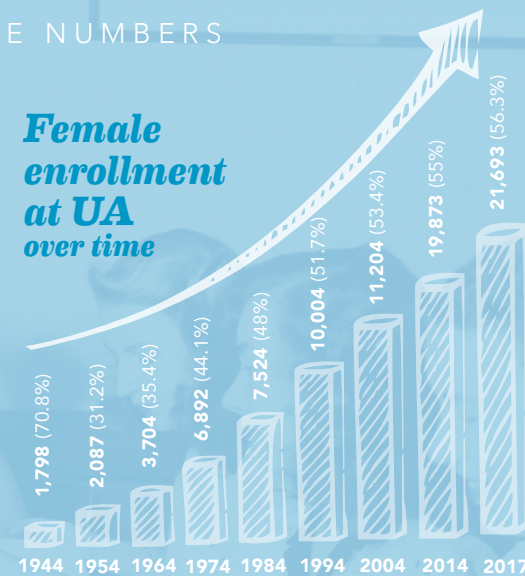
Florida
55%

Kentucky
54%

South Carolina
53%

Undergraduate female enrollment, 2017

Female enrollment at UA over time



93.6%	COLLEGE OF SOCIAL WORK
91%	CAPSTONE COLLEGE OF NURSING
80.8%	COLLEGE OF HUMAN AND ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES
74%	COLLEGE OF EDUCATION
71.7%	COLLEGE OF COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION SCIENCES
71%	COLLEGE OF CONTINUING EDUCATION
56%	COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES
38.8%	CULVERHOUSE COLLEGE OF BUSINESS
24%	COLLEGE OF ENGINEERING

Female undergraduate enrollment at UA, by college