"Opening the Schoolhouse Door" at The University of Alabama

A two-pronged approach to achieving and maintaining excellence via inclusiveness and diversity

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Special Relevance: 50th Anniversary of "Stand in School Door in 2013

- 1st A. A. Master's/Doctoral degrees in 1966
- Even at 40th anniversary in 2003, graduate school viewed as "white" with ca. 8-9% A.A. enrollment
- Since 2002, 11 consecutive years of increasing A.A. enrollment, more than double that of 2003, to almost 700/14.2%
- Annual national rankings in top 2-3 among 50 flagships in matriculation <u>and</u> graduation of underrepresented groups

The Graduate School of The University of Alabama

Overall Strategic Goals Fully Embrace Inclusivity/Diversity as INTEGRAL

Partner with colleges and departments to develop nationally-prominent graduate programs that synergistically contribute to the University goal of a 35,000-student, first-tier, student-centered research university by enhancing UA's scholarly, teaching, and service missions.

Increase the size, **quality, and diversity** of the graduate student body and maximize opportunities for graduate student and graduate faculty development.

In short, be the best student-center graduate program in the Southeast

Growing w/Diversity - - requires BOTH better recruiting and lower attrition/shorter time to degree

At UA, largest demographic (in terms of growth AND social isolation/student attrition =

- Students from under-represented groups, particularly those who were recruited from HBCU or MBI undergraduate institutions, but also women in STEM disciplines and first-generation college students
- Graduate students with dependent children

First Step: Enhanced recruiting

- Personal recruiting visits to all HBCUs in SE plus many outside region- "high touch" approach
- Even greater development of personal relationships with counterparts at other institutions
- Re-invigorated already strong "magnet" programs (e.g., SREB Doctoral Fellows)
- Involve departments as proactive partners

2nd Step in Process: Create new support and mentorship programs to attract AND retain students

1. CGS Peterson grant in 2008 to create novel mentorship programs

2. New McNair Graduate Fellowship Program in 2008 to attract undergraduate McNair Scholars from national pool

McNair Graduate Fellowships

- Goal: move from ca. 10-15 former McNair Scholars to 50+ on campus
- Enhanced, multi-year fellowships in partnership with departments to guarantee 4 – 5 years support plus tuition grants for non-fellows
- 6 Fellows in Fall 2008 to 13 in 2011-12 and 2012-13 = ca. 40 full Fellows plus 20 students w/tuition grants in Fall 2012

CGS/Peterson's 2008

- Two mentorship target groups: 1)under-represented students and 2) students with dependent children (CGS/Peterson's award for innovation in creating an inclusive graduate student community)

- plan would be executed <u>irrespective of whether it was funded or not</u>

Resultant CGS/Peterson's Proposal, funded in Dec 2008

- Based on UA's strong track record in diversity, minority student attainment, and inclusivity in years since the 1963 "Stand in the Schoolhouse Door"

- $20,000 from CGS/Peterson's, matched by UA with 2 Grad Fellow positions to peer-manage two support programs, plus in perpetuity support for all program components (basically CGS support icing on the cake)

Program 1: "Tide Together": Team Mentoring for Graduate Students

1. Provide resources that will help students progress towards completion of their degree
2. Provide networking opportunities that will help students meet their personal and professional goals
3. Provide academic guidance and encouragement through close and sustained contact with a mentoring team
4. Create a system of accountability for faculty and students that facilitates the successful completion of a graduate program

Eligibility & Selection

- Eligibility:

  Member of an under-represented group in graduate education

  Female in the STEM disciplines

  First generation/low income college student

- Selection:

  Written application and follow-up interview
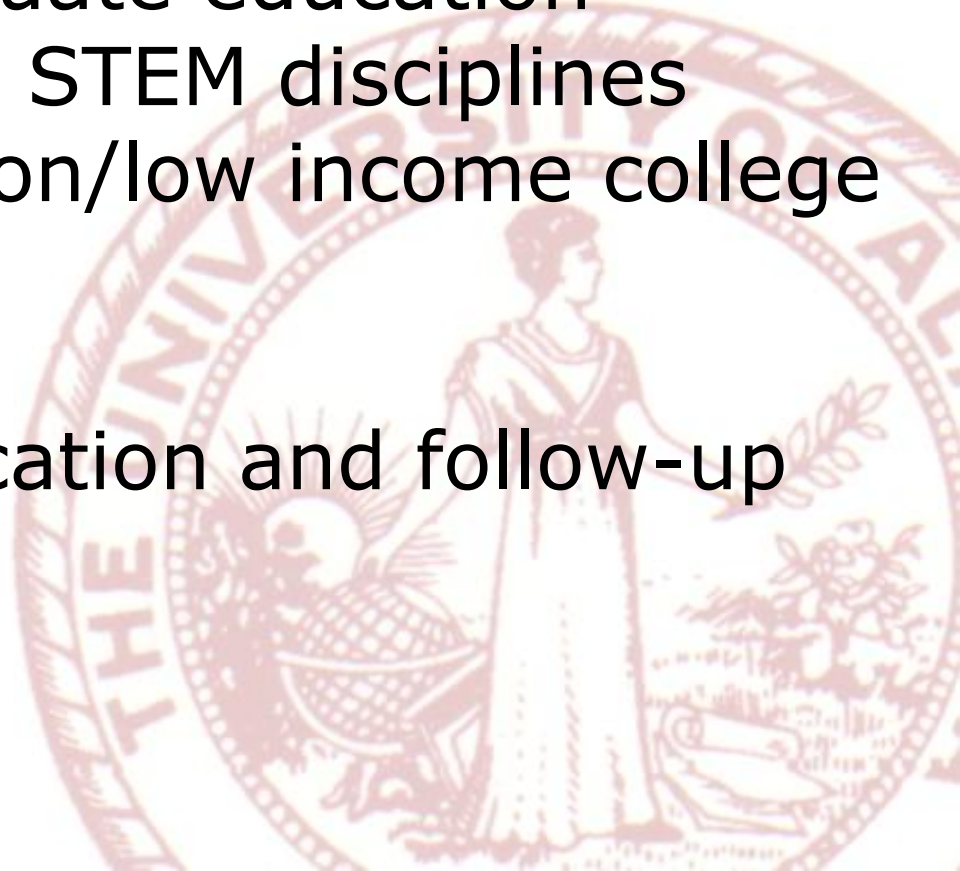
Who are the Tide Together Participants?

2009 Cohort

22 participants
18 female/4 male
17 African American
1 African
2 Asian
1 Hispanic
1 Caucasian
77% African American
64% African American women

2010 Cohort

26 Participants
19 female/7 male
15 African American
2 Asian
2 Hispanic
1 Middle Eastern
1 Pacific Islander
5 Caucasian
58% African American
54% African American women

Who Comprises the Mentoring Teams?

2009

23 Faculty Mentors

  9 African American

  13 Caucasian

  1 Asian

22 Peer Mentors

  10 African American

  8 Caucasian

  1 Hispanic

  3 Asian

8 Community Mentors

2010

24 Faculty Mentors

  9 African American

  13 Caucasian

  2 Asian

25 Peer Mentors

  11 African American

  8 Caucasian

  2 Hispanic

  3 Asian

Objective One: Provide Resources

Brown Bag Luncheons and Seminars

*Completing a Thesis or Dissertation

*Achieving IRB Victory

*Writing Literature Reviews

*The Imposter Syndrome (Feeling Like You Don't Belong)

*Library Resources and RefWorks

*Work-Family Balance

*Powerful Poster Presentations

*Becoming an Academic Writer

*Effective Oral Presentations
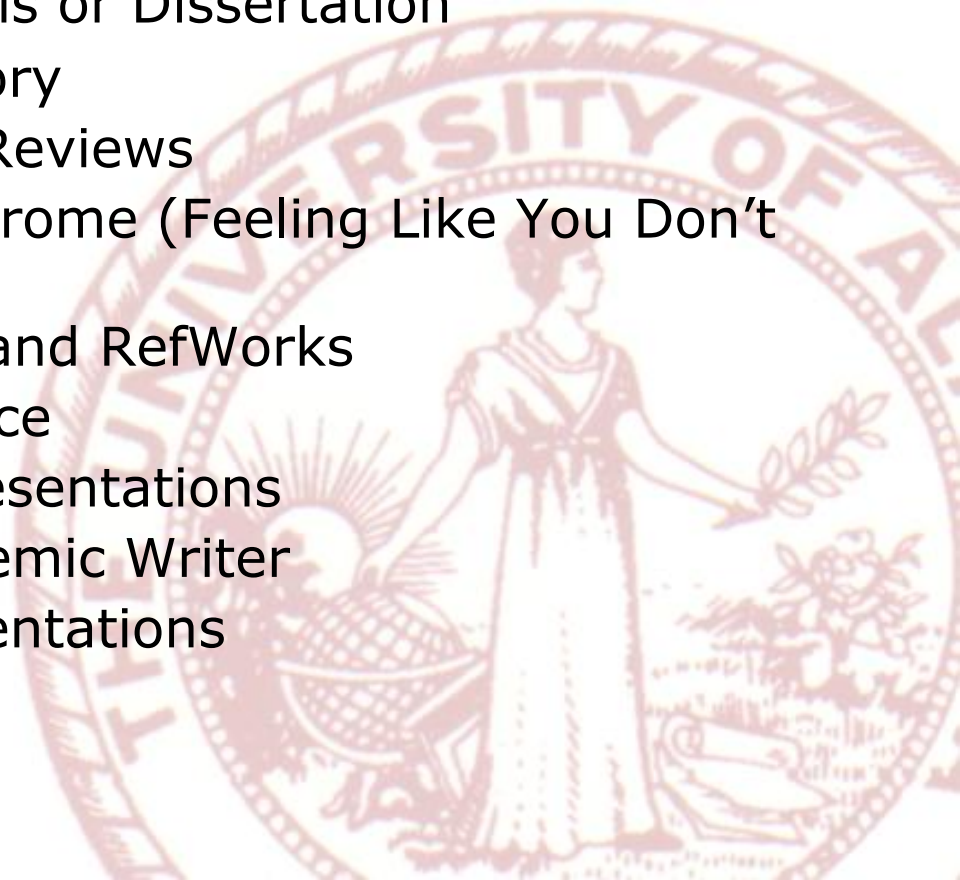
Objective Two: Networking

- **Receptions:** Black Faculty & Staff Association; GAANN Fellows; Bridge to the Doctorate Fellows; SREB Fellows; Graduate School Deans; Faculty and Administrators from A & S College and College of Engineering

- **Social Events** (on campus and off): Ballroom Dancing, First Fridays, Karaoke, Grad Night at the Rec, Farmer's Market, Birmingham Civil Rights Museum, Art Night

- **Departmental Opportunities** via peer and faculty mentors

- **Community mentors** (2009 cohort only)

Objective Three: Academic Guidance

- **Crux of the program**: Regular meetings with peer mentor and faculty mentor
- **Expectations of peer and faculty mentors:**
1. Meet with mentee at least once a month
2. Be accessible by phone, email, and/or text
3. Communicate with Tide Together staff
4. Participate in Writing Boot Camp

Objective Four: Accountability

- Weekly communication with Tide Together Coordinator
- Monthly blogs
- End-of-semester grade check
- Evaluation of the program by outside evaluators
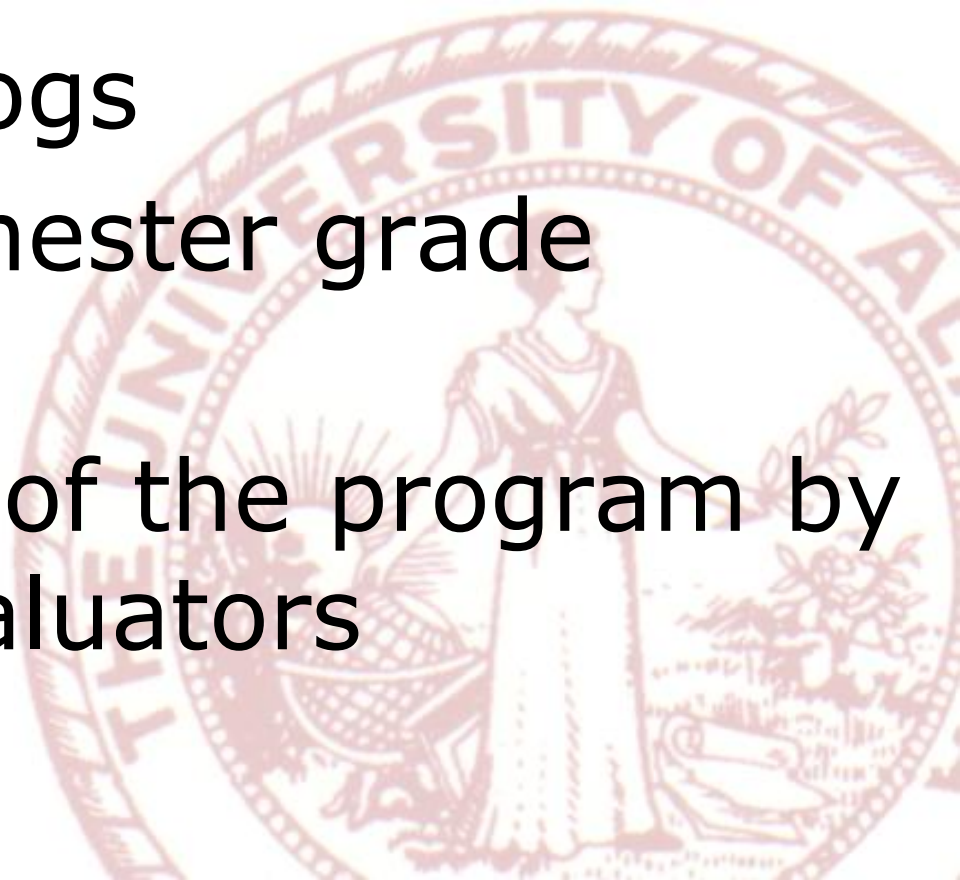
Writing Boot Camp
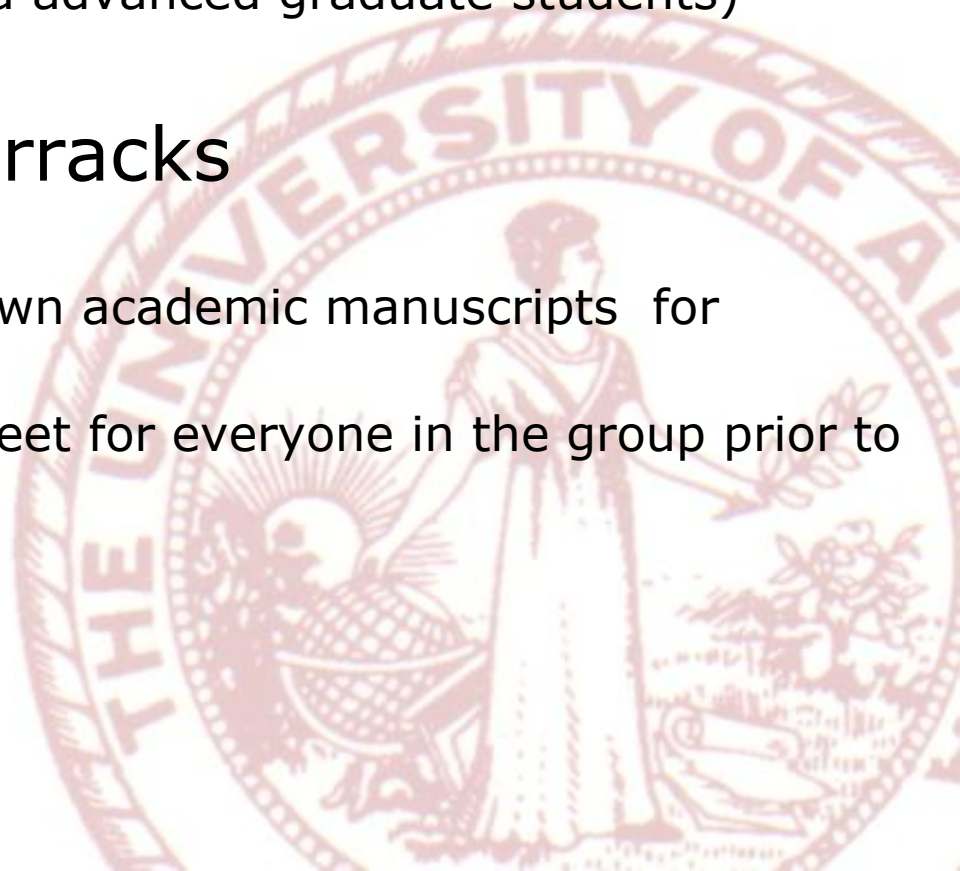
- ## Basic Training

  Writing for Publication (panel of faculty who are editors)

  Critique Groups (critique academic article under the guidance of faculty and advanced graduate students)

- ## Back to the Barracks

  Work on one of their own academic manuscripts for submission to group.

  Complete a critique sheet for everyone in the group prior to second session.

Writing Boot Camp

- ## Achieving Victory – Group Session II

  Writing for Publication (2nd panel)

  Presentations in Critique Groups

  Critique Session

  Celebration Dinner

Culminating experience = presentation at professional conference, final dissertation proposal, journal article, etc.

To facilitate professional presentations and incentivize mentors to participate with mentees in going to conferences, each eligible for up to $300 extra per meeting support (ca. 60 yearly for over $18,000)

Program Outcomes and Future

- CGS/Peterson Funding expended by end of 2011, but program now self-sufficient in perpetuity through application fee income

- In 3+ complete years and almost 100 mentees, 2 T.T. mentees have dropped out after 2.5 years (for jobs in their home countries) and 2 have transferred to other universities = >95% retention

- Even sharper increase in recruitment of under-represented minority students (e.g., Black/African American's up 34% (+176) in 4 years since fall 2008 to 14.2% of grad student population

- Multiple presentations at regional and national conferences on program design and outcomes and eventual journal article
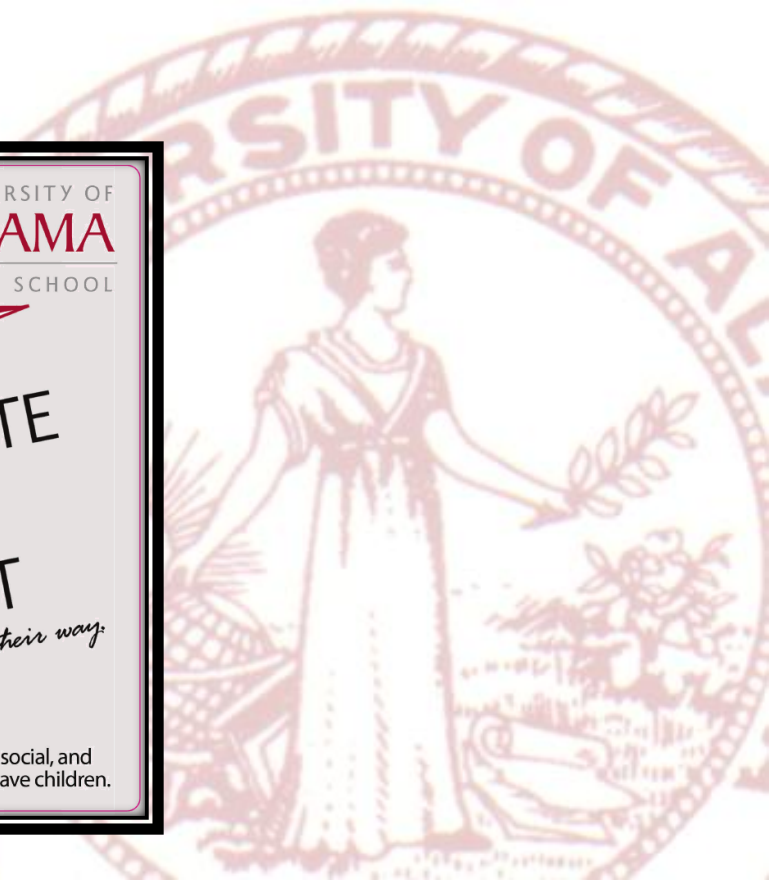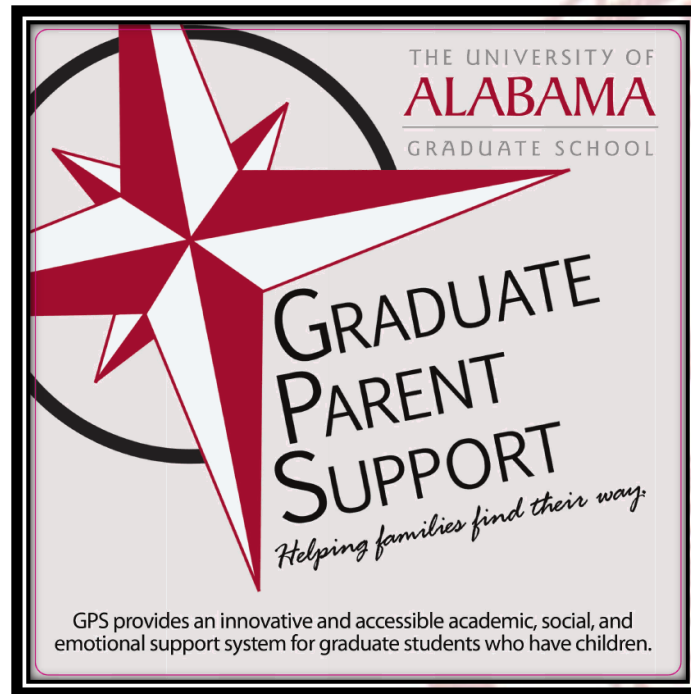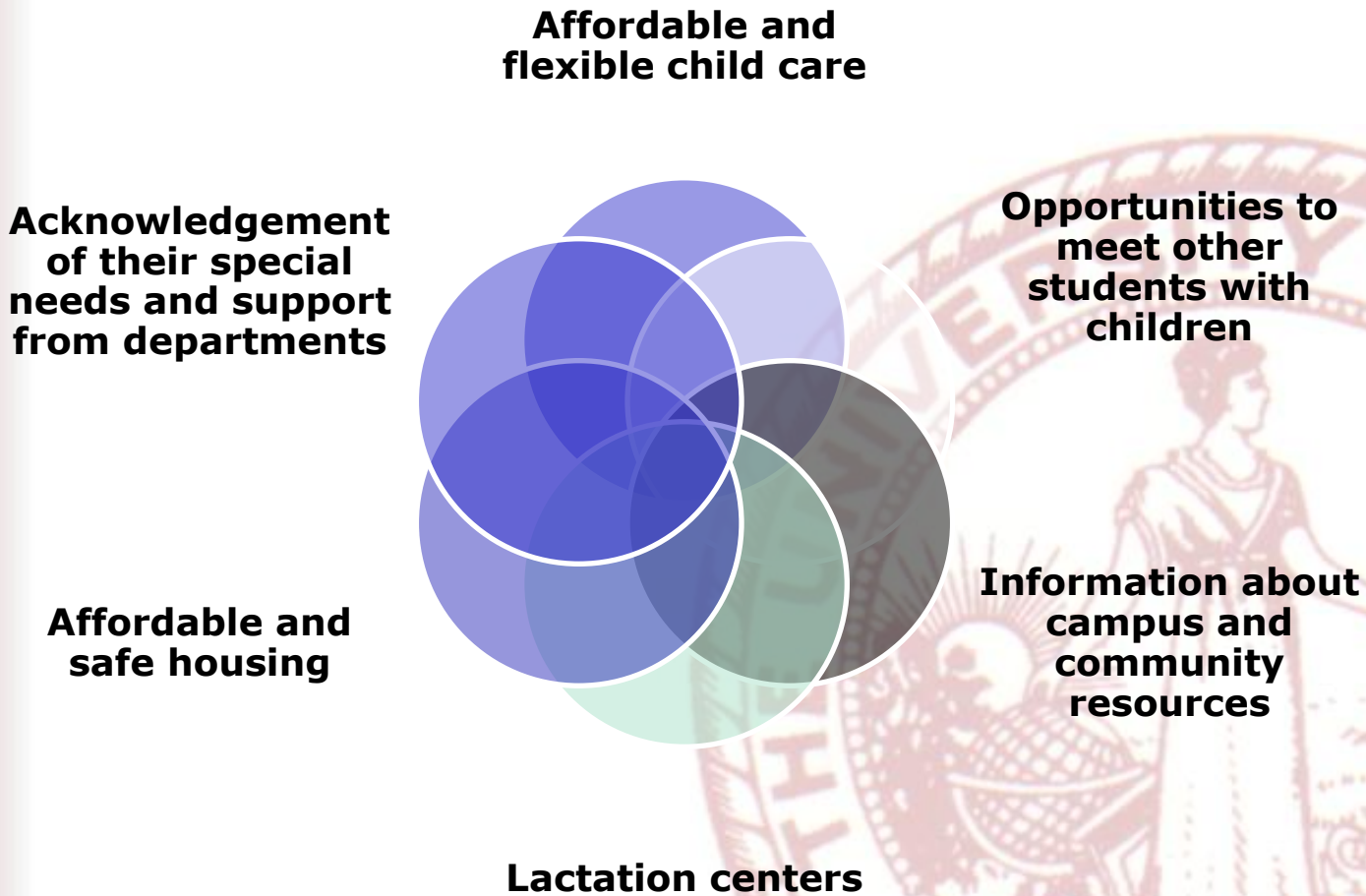
Tide Together Website

- http://uatidetogether.blogspot.com/

Graduate Parent Support (GPS) program

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WHAT OUR STUDENTS WANTED:

Affordable and flexible child care

Acknowledgement of their special needs and support from departments

Opportunities to meet other students with children

Affordable and safe housing

Information about campus and community resources

Lactation centers

Graduate Parent Support (GPS)

- Serves over 500 graduate students with children (+ ca. 200 undergrads)
- Partners with numerous campus and community organizations (e.g., Women's Resource Center, Child Development Resource Center, UA Athletics, College of Education, McClure Education Library, Tuscaloosa Public Library, Northbrook Apartments, SGA)

GPS Objectives

1. Provide information about campus and community resources available to graduate students with children
2. Provide a centralized platform for students to communicate about various topics related to work/family balance
3. Coordinate events that allow graduate students with children to network with each other, with professors, and the larger community
4. Serve as an advocate for graduate students with children
5. Create and sustain services that help student parents accomplish their educational goals by helping them balance work/family responsibilities

Sample of Activities

- Semester Kick Off Swimming Party and Resource Fair
- Play Dates at Area Parks
- Alabama Soccer's Grad Student Night
- Grad Night at the Rec Center
- Family Hike at UA Arboretum
- Trick or Treating (Sorority Row)
- Wii for Kids/Study Night for Grads
- GPS Special UA Men's Basketball Game
- GPS Family Story Time at McClure Library
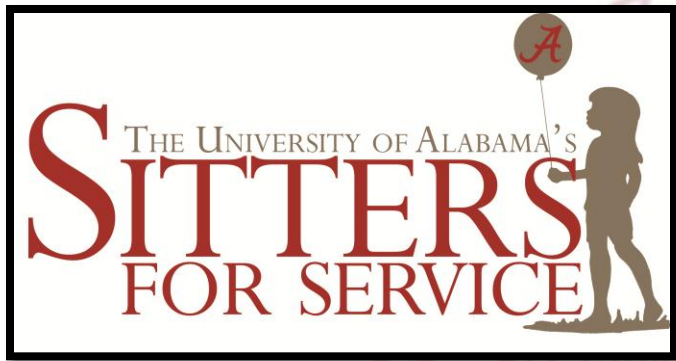- Brown Bag Luncheons

Services

- Free Tutoring for children of graduate students (co-sponsored with College of Education)
- Special housing for graduate students with children (partnership with Northbrook Apartments)
- Sitters for Service (links undergraduate students fulfilling community service requirement with graduate students who need free babysitting)
- LactationCenters (partnered with Women's Resource Center)

Off-Shoots of GPS

GPS Website

- www.gps.ua.edu