The University of West Alabama has continued its ongoing efforts to recruit black students, faculty, and administrative staff. The following is a synopsis of diversity efforts and achievements during the past year.

The University of West Alabama continues its work with minority and disadvantaged business through its Division of Outreach Services. For more than nine years, the division has assisted in the creation and growth of minority and disadvantaged businesses throughout the West Alabama Region by helping these businesses secure minority-business certifications, financial assistance, government contracts, contract bonds, training and technical assistance.

This past year the Division of Outreach Services was approached by the Alabama Department of Transportation to assist with the development of a statewide Procurement Conference for minority and disadvantaged business owners. The October 28 – 30, 2013, conference was designed to educate minority, women and disadvantaged businesses on methods of securing transportation, defense and state contracting opportunities. In addition to assisting with conference planning, the University was also charged with the recruitment of businesses from across the state. The conference attracted approximately 150 business representatives to the event. University personnel remain engaged with conference attendees and other minority businesses in need of counseling and other business services.

UWA continues to partner with other Alabama based institutions of higher education to advance program activity via membership in the Alabama Association of Higher Education Diversity Officers (ALAHEDO). ALAHEDO’s mission is to advise its members on issues, policies, and practices that affect diversity at higher education institutions in Alabama. The association proposes initiatives to ensure that institutions fairly meet the needs of minority faculty, staff and students.

The University of West Alabama’s Department of Athletics became one of only eighteen Division II schools selected for an NCAA Coaching Enhancement Grant, which provides funding for Division II institutions to enhance diversity and inclusion through the hiring of full-time coaching positions. The grant, which funds UWA’s Assistant Cross Country Coach position, addresses the issues of access, recruitment, selection and long-term success of women, racial/ethnic minorities and other individuals in Division II who seek to overcome hiring barriers.
The University of West Alabama Department of Athletics was also selected for the NCAA 2013 Division II Strategic Alliance Matching Grant Enhancement Program, which provides funding for Division II institutions to enhance diversity and inclusion through the hiring of full-time administrative positions. The five-year grant, which funds UWA’s Assistant Compliance Director position, addresses the issues of access, recruitment, selection and long-term success of women, racial/ethnic minorities and other individuals in Division II who week to overcome hiring barriers.

In 2011, the College of Education received a two year PBI formula grant entitled Project BLOOM. Project BLOOM (Bringing Learners Opportunities through Outreach and Mentoring) is a collaborative effort between the Julia Tutwiler College of Education and the College of Natural Sciences and Mathematics. Project BLOOM promotes the enhancement of STEM Teacher Education for black American students through progressive workshops and outreach activities, imbuing them with the skills to integrate STEM best teaching practices in the teacher education program. The project addresses the critical shortage of minority students enrolling in teacher education programs in the areas of science and mathematics. It also provides support on multiple levels to retain students in the program until they successfully complete the requirements to obtain teacher certification through the Alabama Department of Education. Project BLOOM is designed to recruit first generation black American students as Project BLOOM candidates. Project BLOOM has two different tracks in which students are eligible for candidacy. The first track targets existing UWA students. The second track targets high school students from local partnership schools.

Project Engage is a capacity-building effort on the part of the University of West Alabama to attract and retain students in STEM disciplines. A major focus of the project is to increase the retention rates of STEM majors between their freshman and sophomore years by immersing them in an engaging STEM-related curriculum, guided career counseling, and strategic mentoring activities. A secondary focus of Project Engage is to increase retention rates of sophomore, junior and senior-level STEM students through their continued participation in the project. The project also seeks to address the critical shortage of minorities in professional STEM fields by conducting outreach activities with area K-12 schools to encourage enrollment growth in science, math, and technology degree programs. The project is designed to improve passage, persistence, and retention rates of minority students in STEM courses.

In order to facilitate an increase in minority students’ motivation to pursue STEM-related careers, retention in STEM programs and completion of STEM degrees, Project Engage has implemented the following major components:
1. Strategic Mentoring of Minority STEM students;
2. Intensive STEM Engagement;
3. Guided Career Exploration;
4. Outreach to High-Need Students;
5. Collection and Analysis of Persistence and Completion Data.

High quality and timely data are collected and evaluated to determine the program’s impact on participants.

The University of West Alabama also encourages and supports a diverse student population. Black students accounted for a little more than 49% of the overall enrollment for Fall 2013, with the total number of black students equaling 2,173. Graduate enrollment of black students was 1,336, with undergraduate enrollment making up the remaining 837 students. The University continues to monitor its admission policies and retention and transfer policies on a regular basis to ensure that all students receive equal treatment. In addition, all literature and informational brochures used in student recruitment and admissions are reviewed annually to determine if they contain clear statements of the University’s non-discrimination policy.

The University established the Black Faculty and Staff Association (BFSA) on September 18, 2008, to serve as an advocate for the enhancement of educational equality. The association works as a visible and viable agency dedicated to address the mutual needs and concerns of the University’s black students, faculty, and staff. The goal of the BFSA reflect the goal of the University of West Alabama to establish and maintain a welcoming and inclusive campus environment for all and to eliminate discrimination in all phases of University life.

Currently, the University of West Alabama has sixteen full-time black faculty members. The percentage of full-time black faculty is 13.2%. Five of these faculty are tenured, nine are tenure-track, two are non-tenure track. One is currently a Minority Faculty Development Fellows, and two others are past recipients of the fellowship.

The University employs seventeen full-time administrative staff members, which is 27.5% of administrative staff. Minority administrative staff hold the following positions: Facilities Manager for the Bell Conference Center, Director of Safety and Security and Chief of Campus Police, Director of Auxiliary Services, Program Coordinator of the Regional Center for Community and Economic Development, Director of the Small Business Development Center, Director of the Division of Outreach Services, Coordinator of ADA Services, WIA Program Coordinator, Upward Bound Coordinator, Storeroom Manager, Manager of Supply/Bookstore, Associate Dean of
Graduate Studies, Chair of the Department of Biological Sciences, Assistant Director of User Services, Program Coordinator of Community and Economic Impact Grants, Employment Specialist and Housekeeping Supervisor.

The University also has black professional staff in the following positions: five assistant coaches, PC Technician, Administrative Coordinator in Graduate Studies, Curriculum Laboratory Librarian (also holds rank of Assistant Professor), two Admissions Counselors and Director of Field Experience.