

Alumnus of the year recognized for contributions to health education

Randall McDaniel, Ed.D., OTR/L, CRC, recalls that in 1961 his father held up a UF course catalog and told McDaniel “your future is in here.”

“There was no question I would go to UF. My father had started but didn’t finish. The only question was, what would my major be,” McDaniel said.

Under the guidance of Alice Jantzen, Ph.D., founding chairwoman of the occupational therapy program, McDaniel found his career in the College of Public Health and Health Professions, graduating from the college’s programs in occupational therapy in 1966 and rehabilitation counseling in 1968.

For his longstanding commitment to educating health professionals, McDaniel has been named the College of Public Health and Health Professions’ 2004 Alumnus of the Year.

McDaniel serves as the Wayne T. Smith Distinguished Professor of Education at Auburn University and works in private practice as a vocational and rehabilitation expert.

As the director of Auburn’s graduate programs in vocational evaluation and rehabilitation counseling, McDaniel has secured more than \$4.8 million in grants to support students and educational programs, and is the author or co-author of more than 40 publications.

“McDaniel is a nationally recognized leader in rehabilitation education who has been responsible for innovations in computer-assisted technology and vocational consultation strategies,” said Horace Sawyer, Ed.D., chairman of UF’s rehabilitation counseling department.



Dr. Randall McDaniel

McDaniel’s current interest is in electronic course delivery and accommodating students with disability. He has pioneered the first online rehabilitation program using streaming media in the nation and is presenting on this topic at the 20th World Congress on Rehabilitation International this summer in Oslo, Norway. He also is working on a grant proposal to the National Science Foundation with Auburn University’s department of engineering to provide wireless engineering solutions for the mobility and communication needs of people with sensory impairments.

McDaniel received the U.S. Department of Education Rehabilitation Services Administration Commissioner’s Award for Excellence, and a 2001 Alabama Senate resolution commended him for distinguished service to Auburn University and a legacy of exemplary leadership and humanitarianism. Additional honors include awards from the National Rehabilitation Association for his service to people with disabilities and recognition from Auburn University for outstanding teaching.

And looking back on his career, McDaniel credits UF with setting him on the right track.

“A degree from UF is like blue chip stock,” McDaniel told the college’s graduates at this year’s graduation ceremony. “It just increases in value.” ●