Over five decades, UAB has evolved from an academic extension center into an autonomous, comprehensive urban university and academic health center within the University of Alabama System. UAB has established wide-ranging programs in the College of Arts and Sciences, the Collat School of Business, the Heersink School of Medicine and the schools of Dentistry, Education, Engineering, Health Professions, Nursing, Optometry and Public Health, with graduate programs serving all major units. UAB has 18 graduate programs ranked in the top 25 of the U.S. News Best Graduate Schools 2023 rankings.

Fall 2022 enrollment surpassed 21,500 students for the fifth consecutive year. The freshman class was the most diverse ever. Sixty-six percent of the 2,217 students in the freshman class were female, 55 percent were underrepresented and 35 percent were the first in their families to attend college. The freshman class had an average ACT of 26.5, and a high school GPA of 3.79.

UAB is situated near downtown Birmingham and the historic Five Points South district. The campus stretches across 100 square blocks and occupies more than 100 primary buildings. UAB is Alabama's largest single-site employer, with nearly 28,000 employees and an annual economic impact on the state exceeding $12.1 billion. In 2021, UAB was named America’s No. 1 Best Large Employer by Forbes, topping a list of more than 500 public and private corporations, hospitals, university, Fortune 500 companies and more. UAB also was named the Best Employer for Diversity among colleges and universities by Forbes in 2021. In 2022, Insight into Diversity magazine named UAB a "Diversity Champion" (among 16 universities nationally) for the fifth straight year.