FEBRUARY 12, 2016

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UA BOARD OF TRUSTEES

University Boulevard
plan set for vote today

$11.3 million project expected to cause major detour

By Ed Enoch
Staff Writer

The University of Alabama-System board of trustees will consider revised plans for a repaving project along University Boulevard on the east side of the UA campus and a new adaptive athletic facility when it meets today.

The trustees' physical properties committee approved the resolutions on Thursday. The full board will consider agenda items approved in committee today.

The project's budget would increase from $926,000 to $11.3 million. The project would be funded with $8.6 million in grants from the Alabama Department of Transportation and $2.7 million from UA.

The project would be divided into two phases.

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"This sucker will be a traffic problem," said trustee James Wilson III, the committee chairman, noting an anticipated detour during the work. "But it is a definite upgrade we will be proud of. We will use it as an entrance way and something exciting for the visual aspect of the university."

Phase 1 would include repaving and landscaping of University Boulevard from Sixth Avenue to roughly the site of the marching band's practice field during the summer break.

The work would cause closing the stretch of road. The university is working with a traffic consultant and the city of Tuscaloosa on a traffic management plan for the traffic detour that will be caused by the work, according to Tim Leopard, associate vice president for construction at UA.

The roadway would include two traffic lanes, bike lanes, and a center turn lane or a landscaped median. The landscaped median will occur between Devotie Drive and Second Avenue, according to an information packet.

The work would include replacing the existing concrete roadbed with asphalt, replacing curbs, installing new medians and irrigation, sidewalk lighting, and rebuilding of storm inlets.

Phase 2 would include repaving and landscaping from the eastern end of the phase 1 work to Bryant Drive and from the west end of the Alberta Bridge to just east of the University-McFarland interchange. The stretch would include four lanes, bike lanes, expanded sidewalks, and center turn lanes or a landscaped medians. The work would start after the end of the 2016 regular football season and continue through the spring of 2017, according to Mike Lanier, president of HOAR Management.

The roadwork for phase 2 would be similar to phase 1 but also include burying overhead power and telecommunications lines, the widening of existing sidewalks from Second to Anna avenues, new 10-foot sidewalks north of University Boulevard and the replacement of the traffic signal at Fifth Avenue.

The phase 2 work is not expected to close all lanes of traffic, Lanier said.

In other business, the committee approved the demolition of Temple Tutwiler Hall and a new dining building on the Bryce campus.

The proposed budget for the demolition of Temple Tutwiler Hall is $100,000. The demolition will accommodate plans for the expansion of nearby sorority houses.

The committee approved preliminary plans for a $5.4-million, 10,000-square-foot food service building on the Bryce campus that will offer a dining option close to the new academic building and other facilities nearby.
The University of Alabama System Board of Trustees approved preliminary plans for an Adaptive Athletic facility at UA and a new football operations building on its Birmingham campus.

The two new facilities were part of a lengthy physical properties agenda approved by trustees on Friday.

The preliminary plan for the adaptive athletic facility, which will be attached to the south side of the Student Recreation Center, is a 27,036 square-foot, facility that includes a gym, training and storage space, offices and locker rooms. The gym would include an NCAA-sized basketball court and seating for 500. While the gym would be a permanent home for the wheelchair basketball teams, the facility is envisioned as a space serving all of the adaptive programs on campus. The budget for the project is $10 million.

The new football operations building at UAB is currently planned as a 46,000-square-foot, two-story facility to be located along Sixth Avenue South.

The $15.3 million project is pitched as a modern facility for the Blazer’s football program that meets all the requirements for NCAA and SEC compliance.

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FACILITY
From Page B1

include administrative and meeting space, training rooms, storage, locker rooms as well as study and dining space. The project also includes a regulation artificial turf practice field adjacent to the building.

The trustees also approved the early steps of a proposal to create individual degree tracks on each of the campuses offering students a pathway from a bachelor’s degree to a doctorate in nursing practice.

The board approved plans to submit a proposal to Alabama Commission of Higher Education for distinctive and collaborative doctor of nursing practice degrees at UAH, UAB, and UA.

A joint program at the three campuses offering a track for master’s degree holder to a doctorate has existed since 2008, according to Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs Charles Nash.

The trend for the program is heading toward a pathway for a bachelor to doctoral degree program, Nash said.

“Because our joint program is only a master to DNP, that puts us at a disadvantage,” Nash said.

The existing joint program would co-exist with the proposed individual programs on each campus. The program would eventually return to the board for final approval once they are approved by ACHE, which provides coordination for instructional programs for institutions statewide.
BOARD OF TRUSTEES

UAB football building to get vote

$15.3 million operations center on today’s agenda

By Ed Enoch
Staff Writer

The University of Alabama System Board of Trustees will consider plans for a new $15.3 million football operations building and artificial turf practice field at UAB when it meets today in Birmingham.

“This is a tremendous project for our program,” Athletics Director Mark Ingram said. “We had some good meeting with the architects and had conversation about what we are going to do and how it is going to help us improve our program, not just for football but for all athletics.”

The physical properties committee approved the resolutions on Thursday. The full board today will consider agenda items approved in committee.

“Well it goes without saying in our latest recruiting efforts, there is a lot of excitement about where we are headed,” head football coach Bill Clark said at the meeting. “I think there is no doubt that this is something that has been a long time coming, and we are beyond excited about where we are headed with this.”

The committee meeting was a stark contrast to the mood of the UAB institutional meeting in early 2015 when protestors angry over UAB President Ray Watts decision to end the football program citing financial reasons packed the gallery in protest of the decision.

Watts reversed his decision later that spring following a grassroots effort lobbying for the return of the programs and pledges of financial support from the community. At the time, Watts said UAB would not increase the institutional support to athletics and the remaining funds needed to make the program competitive would have to come from fundraising and other sources.

In November, the trustees pledged to support an on-campus football practice complex and the possibility of a long-term home for the Blazers off campus at a proposed football stadium complex at the Birmingham-Jefferson Convention Complex in downtown Birmingham.

The preliminary plans for the new facility call for a 46,000-square-foot, two-story football building to be built on Sixth Avenue. The project will be funded initially with bonds guaranteed through an ongoing fundraising campaign.

The new building would provide modern facilities for the program, according to UAB Vice President of Financial Affairs Allen Bolton.

“As everyone recognizes facilities are a key component in the recruitment of student athletes and in the development of competitive teams,” Bolton said. “So we have considered a new football operations building and practice field in the context of other programs in our and similar Division I conferences.”

The new building will include space for offices, team meeting rooms, locker rooms, training and weight rooms, equipment storage, a dining area and a study hall. The regulation-sized practice field would be artificial turf and adjacent to the building.

As part of the project, the Ullman West building, which now houses athletic offices, will be demolished and the entrance of the historic Samuel Ullman School main building restored, according to Thursday’s presentation.

The top-ranked architecture firms for the project are Goodwyn Mills and Cawood, Davis Architects, and Studio 2H Design, all of Birmingham.

Tad Snider, executive director of the BJCC, provided a brief update on the convention center’s exploration of design and program options for new facilities that could serve as a modern home for the Blazers football program.

The center is working with UAB Athletics on a memorandum of understanding, he said.

The center’s leadership has been meeting with firms to discuss design and program options for a new facility, Snider said. Three conceptual designs are being considered with the likely next round of decisions about the next steps coming later in the spring.

“As we get that information back, we will make some decision about how we move forward,” Snider said.

In other business, the committee approved a $1 million budget for a project to build a new grandstand and press box at the UAB Fast Pitch Softball Facility.

The project includes demolishing the existing press box and building a new grandstand adding additional seating for 1,000 spectators.
OTHER UA
BOARD OF TRUSTEES ACTION

The University of Alabama Board of Trustees took this other action Friday af-
fecting the system’s campuses in Tuscaloosa and Birmingham:

UA
■ Revised the scope and budget of phased
repairing and landscaping project on
University Boulevard from $525,000 to
$11.3 million.
■ Approved demolition of Temple Tutwiler
Hall with a budget of $100,000 for the
expansion of nearby sorority houses.
■ Approved an architect agreement
with Barganier Davis Sims Architects of
Montgomery for the Alpha Omicron Pi
Sorority house. Fee will be 6.1 percent
of construction costs.
■ Approved architect agreement with Cole
& Cole Architects of Montgomery for the
new Delta Zeta Sorority house. Fee will be
of 5.9 percent of construction costs.
■ Approved architect agreement with
Holmes & Holmes Architects of Mobile for
the new Pi Beta Phi Sorority house. Fee
will be of 5.9 percent of construction costs.
■ Authorized negotiation of an architect
agreement with KPS Group Inc. of
Birmingham for the $22.6-million resen-
nation project of H.M. Comer Hall.
■ Authorized the preliminary budget of
$4.2 million for the new Sigma Phi Epsilon
fraternity house and an architect agree-
ment with Fitters Architects of Tuscaloosa
for a 6.5 percent fee of construction costs.
■ Authorized preliminary plan and a bud-
get of $5.4 million for a 16,600-square-foot
food service building on the Bryce campus.
■ Authorized a five-year lease agreement
with Tuscaloosa Cellular Partnership for
use of space on the university’s 300-foot
radio tower at a base monthly rent of
$2,500 and a 1 percent annual increases
beginning in year two.
■ Approved the merger of the departments
of Journalism and Telecommunication
and Film to create the Department of
Journalism and Creative Media.
■ Named former interim Provost Joe
Bowie a professor emeritus.
■ Approved retaining Raymond James
and Associates for one year for an annual
fee not to exceed $50,000 as a financial
advisor for bonds and capital improvement
financing.
■ Accepted the gift of a 14-year-old
American Holsteiner bay gelding named
"Sky's the Limit" for the equestrian
program.

UAB
■ Revised the scope and budget of the
renovation Wallace Tumor Institute base-
ment for the Advanced Imaging Center
from $15.8 million to $18.1 million.
■ Authorized using in-house architects
for the renovation of the second floor of
the Sterne Library for use as the INTO
International Student Center.
■ Approved a $2.25 million budget for proj-
et to replace exterior doors and windows
at Camp Hall residential building.
■ Approved a $1 million budget for a proj-
et to build a new grandstand and press
box at the Fast Pitch Softball Facility.
■ Approved a preliminary scope and a $6
million budget for a project to install new
underground heating and cooling lines on
the west side of the academic campus.
■ Revised the budget for the construction
of an ophthalmology clinic on the second
floor of the Physician Office Building at
Callahan Hospital from $1 million to $2
million.
■ Approved purchase and installation of
two DaVinci surgical robots for the
University Hospital for $5.45 million.
■ Approved purchasing the organ recovery
suite from the University of Alabama
Health Services Foundation by the
University Hospital for $2.9 million.
■ Approved negotiation of a contract with
Soledo Operations as a campus dining
vendor.
■ Approved creating a master of arts
degree in education in the School of
Psychometry.
■ Established the Nathan Shock Center for
Excellence in Basic Biology of Aging, UAB
Microbiome Center, and UAB Center for
Disability and Health Rehabilitation.
■ Approved restructuring the departments
within the School of Optometry into the
Department of Optometry and Vision
Science.
■ Changed the name of the Division of
Trauma, Burns and Surgical Critical Care to
the Division of Acute Care Surgery.
■ Approved the administrative restructure
of the Sterne Library and Lister Hill Library
of Health Sciences into a single unit, the
UAB Libraries.
In Georgia, a Pioneer of Integration Guides the Merger of an HBCU and a 2-Year College

By: Staff

Seeking Strength as One

"In our part of the country, under the old Jim Crow system," says Arthur N. Dunning, "we had, from the late 1870s to 1964, systems that were separate by law." So now, he says, he’s glad to report that the University System of Georgia’s in-progress merger of two institutions, across the remnants of that imposed color line, "hasn’t raised unexpected issues."

The system’s seventh merger in recent years has provoked some controversy, in part because it involves markedly different institutions: Albany State University, one of three historically black public colleges and universities in Georgia, and Darton State College, whose 5,470 students, about half of them white and half of them African-American, are enrolled in open-access, two-year programs.

In 1967, Mr. Dunning, Albany State’s president, was among the first students to integrate the University of Alabama and its football program. He encourages critics of the merger to take a historical perspective on segregation and its continuing reversal. "I’m surprised when I talk about that to community groups, how many people come up to me later and say, ‘You gave me a history lesson; I didn’t realize any of that.’"

Mr. Dunning became Albany State’s interim president in late 2013; from the next fall to the fall of 2015, enrollment dropped from 3,910 to 3,492. In 2015 he fired four financial-aid officials when an audit implicated them in the misuse of federal funds.

Now, after being named in November as permanent president at Albany State, which is the lead institution in the merger, he faces the challenge of increasing enrollment. In late 2015, university officials said they planned to suspend new admissions to 10 degree programs there that were considered low-performing because of small enrollments by the fall of 2016. Those included core programs like English, history, and music. That plan has not gone into effect and is still under review.

To capitalize on the presence of a large U.S. Marine Corps supply base near Albany, the university will begin offering, this spring, a bachelor’s degree in supply-chain management.

That, says Mr. Dunning, exemplifies the emphasis on jobs that he hopes will appeal to potential students in and around Albany, which has one of the highest poverty rates in the country. Mr. Dunning, now in his 29th year with the Georgia system, says creating a larger, consolidated Albany State will permit the gradual addition of more such programs.

"The idea of a more educated population tied to economic development," he says, "is something that we are deeply passionate about." — Peter Monaghan

A Dive Into the Bay of Pigs

See next page
The diplomatic embargo with Cuba had not yet been lifted when Karen Talentino was approached with the possibility of leading students to go scuba-diving in the communist country. Ms. Talentino, vice president for academic affairs and a biology professor at Saint Michael’s College, in Vermont, was intrigued.

The invitation came from Patricia González, director of the Center for Marine Research at the University of Havana. Ms. González was visiting Vermont as a guest of the Vermont Caribbean Institute — a nonprofit that arranges partnerships between organizations in both locations. She suggested that she and Ms. Talentino collaborate on an ecology course that would involve underwater research in Cuba’s Bay of Pigs, which has some of the healthiest coral reefs in the Caribbean.

"I was very impressed with Dr. González — I just liked her a lot and could imagine working with her on a course," says Ms. Talentino. "And I thought that from a cultural standpoint it would be great to take the students to a country that none of them have ever visited and that not many Americans have visited."

Over the next year, Ms. Talentino created a two-credit coral-reef ecology course at Saint Michael’s, traveling to Cuba to scout the reefs and develop the curriculum. Her efforts were paid for by the college’s Dr. A. Francis Politi International Fund, which sets aside about $150,000 each year for study abroad. Ms. Talentino led her first trip, with 11 students, at the end of 2013, and her second, with 13 students, in January. Helping her guide this year’s group was the college’s vice president for student affairs, Dawn Ellinwood.

This time around, all students who wanted to dive were certified in the skill before the trip, Ms. Talentino says; their work involved measuring the diversity of organisms in the reef.

The second group was also "more comfortable having political conversations" than the first was, she says. "The students were amazed by how open people were to talking about the challenges, and joys, of living in Cuba." — Angela Chen

Violence and Wellness

Steven Choe, an associate professor of cinema at San Francisco State University, is interested in darkness and light: how narratives are used to justify violence in both film and the outside world, but also how they might spur forgiveness instead.

Mr. Choe joined the university last fall as a member of its new research cluster on violence, trauma, and health. The interdisciplinary group, one of two the university created to focus on topics important to society, also includes professors in psychology and kinesiology.

He says his new job offered an opportunity to widen his work from writing on theory and aesthetics to testing his ideas in real-world situations.

"I’m very interested in how individuals justify violence against another," says Mr. Choe, who studies stories of revenge, especially in German and Korean cinema. He would like to take his

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inquiry a step further: "How can these narratives of violence be interrupted so individuals aren’t committing these acts?"

Mr. Choe had been on the faculty of the University of Iowa for seven years. His second book, "Sovereign Violence: Ethics and South Korean Cinema in the New Millennium," is set to come out this summer.

Daniel Bernardi, interim dean of San Francisco State’s College of Liberal and Creative Arts, helped create the proposal for the cluster. What makes it unusual, he says, is its examination of the effects of violence and trauma on wellness. The university explores community wellness through its Health Equity Institute, which is working with the cluster.

The other two faculty members in the cluster, Melissa Hagan, an assistant professor of psychology, and Charmayne Hughes, an associate professor of kinesiology, have expertise in children and trauma, and the effects of trauma on the body.

How all three of their fields might fit together for specific projects is the question the three colleagues are working on now. "It is a challenge," Mr. Choe says. "I’m trying to stay open." — Kathryn Masterson

Ness Book Award Winner

Michael S. Roth, president of Wesleyan University, received this year’s Frederic W. Ness Book Award. The Association of American Colleges and Universities presented him with the prize at its annual meeting in January in recognition of his book Beyond the University: Why Liberal Education Matters (Yale University Press, 2014). A committee of higher-education leaders that was chaired by Johnnella Butler, a professor of comparative women’s studies at Spelman College, selected the winner.

Obituaries: Computing Visionary

Marvin L. Minsky, a professor emeritus of media arts and sciences at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and an expert on artificial intelligence, died on January 24. He was 88.

Mr. Minsky built the first wired neural-network simulator, Snarc, in 1951, while studying for his Ph.D. in mathematics at Princeton University. He joined MIT’s department of electrical engineering and computer science in 1958. There he helped found the Artificial Intelligence Laboratory and was a founding member of the university’s Media Lab, where he taught until recently.

Among his inventions are visual scanners and mechanical hands with tactile sensors. His books include the seminal Perceptrons, which he wrote with Seymour A. Papert; The Society of Mind; and The Emotion Machine.

Other deaths:

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Richard C. Gilman, a president emeritus of Occidental College, died on January 15 in California. He was 92. During his tenure, from 1965 to 1988, the college's endowment increased from $11 million to $130 million, and its national reputation rose.

Carolyn Wright, a poet and a professor of English and literary arts at Brown University since 1983, died unexpectedly on January 12. She was 67. Ms. Wright was named a MacArthur fellow in 2004. Her collection of poems One With Others won a National Book Critics Circle Award for the 2010 publishing year. A new book of poems, ShallCross, is slated to be published by Copper Canyon Press this year. — Anais Strickland
OUR VIEW

Lottery bill should spell out spending

When the Powerball jackpot reached a record $1.6 billion before it was won last month, we have no doubt that public support for a lottery in Alabama increased. The prospect of winning that kind of money is tantalizing, even to some who oppose gambling in principle, and state-sponsored gambling, in particular. We suspect at least a few of those opponents found a way to buy a ticket or two.

But that dizzying amount of money is not what prompted State Rep. Alan Harper of Northport to introduce a bill that would put the creation of a state lottery before voters in November. Harper announced last December he would sponsor a lottery bill in the current session of the Legislature, well before the Powerball jackpot had surpassed $300 million, let alone reached $1.6 billion.

That a conservative Republican would introduce such a measure speaks volumes in this red state, a state whose voters historically have opposed gambling and who overwhelmingly rejected a lottery proposed by then-Gov. Don Siegelman 17 years ago.

In retrospect, Siegelman's proposal for a lottery to fund education had no chance, despite a huge campaign to support it that perhaps created the illusion it could pass. In the years since, Democrats in the Legislature have frequently pitched lottery legislation that has gone nowhere, even when they were in the majority.

But now, the Legislature, controlled by the GOP since 2010, seems more inclined to consider allowing a referendum on gambling as a means to generate revenue for the state's depleted coffers.

Last summer, in special session, lawmakers considered a measure, thought it was ultimately abandoned, to allow voters to decide whether to approve a state lottery and Las-Vegas-style casinos at the state's four existing dog tracks.

And Harper said he was prompted to introduce his bill — State Sen. Jim McClendon is sponsoring a companion bill in the Senate — because he is approached constantly by citizens who want another opportunity to vote on a lottery.

But the shift in public sentiment — a recent poll found a significant majority of Republican voters support a lottery — goes only so far, and the bills are not without opposition, even though a House committee approved Harper's bill on Wednesday.

Some lawmakers oppose allowing gambling under any circumstances. Others are concerned the proposed bills do not specify how lottery revenue would be spent, which in our view is a deal-breaker.

That government would encourage its citizens to gamble — you've seen the billboards — is reprehensible. But we also value the concept of personal responsibility, and some people are going to gamble anyway, whether it's here or in another state.

We have consistently favored allowing the people to vote on the issue — and settle it. Still, under no circumstances should the Legislature pass a gambling bill that does not specify how the revenue would be distributed.
ALABAMA LEGISLATURE

Lottery bill clears first hurdle

By Kim Chandler
The Associated Press

MONTGOMERY — Lottery legislation on Wednesday cleared its first hurdle in the Alabama Legislature, a sign of eroding opposition to legalized gambling in the conservative state.

The House Economic Development and Tourism Committee approved a lottery bill on a voice vote after a brief public hearing. Bill sponsor, Rep. Alan Harper, said people in the state constantly tell him they want to end Alabama’s status as one of the few states in the country without a lottery.

"Everywhere I go I hear the question, “When are you going to let us vote?” Harper, R-Northport, said.

Bills by Harper and Sen Jim McClendon, R-Springville, would put the idea of creating a state lottery before state voters in November. The proposal would leave legislators to decide many of the details later,
LOTTERY
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including how the proceeds would be used.

The committee approval comes as lottery legislation gets its first serious debate in the Alabama Legislature in 17 years. State voters in 1999 rejected a lottery proposal by then-Gov. Don Siegelman. Democrats, in the years since, have introduced lottery legislation without success. Opposition among Republican lawmakers to gambling has dwindled as neighboring states have approved lotteries and state lawmakers regularly struggle to put together budgets without new revenue.

Gambling opponents dominated public hearings in House and Senate committees, citing lottery ticket sales statistics and Bible passages as they urged the state to continue to oppose gambling as a revenue source.

"It's going to be the poor that are buying the tickets. They are the ones that are going to be targeted," Joe Godfrey, executive director of the Alabama Citizens Action Program, told lawmakers.

Rep. Rich Wingo, R-Tuscaloosa, asked committee members, "Do you really think Jesus Christ is in this? Honestly, deep in your heart do you believe Christ is involved in a lottery?"

However, Mac McArthur, the executive director of the Alabama State Employees' Association, said the state needs to find an additional source of revenue, noting how a tax package was largely unsuccessful in the Legislature last year.

A Senate committee held a public hearing, but did not vote on McClendon's bill. Some lawmakers have raised the vagueness of the proposals as a concern.

Sen. Pro Tem Del Marsh said he expects lawmakers will want additional details.

"I do agree it's very vague right now. I did suggest to the senator he might want to find a way to tighten that up. Otherwise, I think it might have some difficulty in committee," Marsh, R-Anniston, said.

Harper said he is willing to accept amendments to specify the distribution of the funds.

Other lawmakers, including Marsh, said they would prefer to simultaneously debate casino gambling as a revenue source, along with lotteries.

Rep. Pebblin Warren, who represents a Macon County district where a bingo casino was shuttered after being raided by the state, urged lawmakers to consider allowing casinos in the state.

"If we are going to get out to the people and talk about gaming, it's time we deal with whole gaming issue," Warren said.

Eric Johnston, a gambling opponent and attorney, told the committee that he was concerned that removing the prohibition on lotteries in the Alabama Constitution — without more specifics on what they would be — could open the door to casinos. McClendon disputed that and said his intent was only to allow a lottery.
From U.S. attorney to state's Democratic chair

Associated Press

A one-time chairman of Alabama's Democratic Party who also served as the chief federal prosecutor in Montgomery has died.

Law partner Ken Riley says Redding Pitt died Sunday. He was 71.

The cause of death wasn't immediately released Monday.

Pitt was a Decatur native who served as chairman of the state Democratic Party from 2001 to 2005 after working as U.S. attorney in Montgomery for seven years beginning in 1994.

President Bill Clinton appointed him to the federal position.

Party chairwoman Nancy Worley says Pitt was currently serving as a vice chairman of the state organization.

He "was an excellent party chairman and Redding Pitt is named chairman of Alabama's Democratic Party in 2001. File

vice chairman, a scholar of history and politics, and a strong supporter of the Democratic Party's core principles," Worley told the Decatur Daily.

Pitt has been with the Birmingham-based law firm of Farris, Riley and Pitt since 2001.
Governor's budget proposal

Bentley: Move $181 million from education
Shift will balance General Fund

Mike Cason  mcason@al.com

Governor Robert Bentley and state legislators are at odds over a proposal to take $181 million from the state's Education Trust Fund and use it to fund other state services.

The Legislature took the same approach last year, shifting $80 million from money earmarked for education to shore up the General Fund.

Bentley favors replacing the education money for the coming year via a one-time withdrawal from an education savings fund

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BENTLEY
FROM AL

set up by the Legislature.

Much of Alabama’s revenue is earmarked for education. The state projects a 6 percent increase in the Education Trust Fund for the coming fiscal year — up $382 million to a roughly $6.3 billion total. In contrast, revenue earmarked for the state’s General Fund is projected to fall $42 million short of last year’s total, leaving General Fund revenue at about $1.8 billion.

Last year, the Legislature changed the distribution of money from the state’s use tax, which moved about $80 million from the Education Trust Fund into the General Fund.

Bentley’s proposal, announced after his Tuesday State of the State address, would move all the proceeds from the general fund to the General Fund, which would increase revenue there by about $150 million annually.

And also proposed moving money from the insurance premium tax, about $31 million a year, into the General Fund.

Senate President Pro Tem Del Marsh, R-Anniston, said the new split on the use tax revenue approved last year was the right move, but he does not support moving more education money to balance the General Fund.

“It was a pretty much, I think, a ladies’ and gentlemen’s agreement last year that we weren’t coming back to education to solve this problem again,” Marsh said. “So I would be very surprised to see those dollars come from education at this time.”

House Speaker Mike Hubbard, R-Auburn, was more blunt on Monday night: “I will not support just taking money from education and moving it to the General Fund.”

Bentley’s plan would preserve education spending in fiscal 2017 by taking a one-time withdrawal from the Budget Stabilization Fund to replace the lost education revenue.

The Legislature created the Budget Stabilization Fund under a 2011 law called the Rolling Reserve Act.

It sets a cap on education spending and require a portion of revenue in excess of the cap to go into the Budget Stabilization Fund, to be used only when needed to prevent proration — the across-the-board percentage cuts to spending that had been a regular tactic to balance budgets in past years.

Alabama Finance Director Bill Newton has told legislators that there is a 10 percent gap between agency needs and available revenue in next year’s General Fund.

The governor’s General Fund budget proposes $78 million for the Alabama Medicaid Agency, an $108 million increase, and $41 million for the Alabama Department of Corrections, a $20 million increase.

Those two agencies combined account for about 66 percent of General Fund spending this year.

The Department of Corrections request does not include any money for the governor’s ambitious plan to rebuild the state prison system. That $800 million proposal will be housed in a separate legislation. The governor says the state can pay off the bond debt with the money saved on maintenance and operations as it replaces aging prisons with modern facilities with smarter designs.

Other highlights of Bentley’s budget proposal include a 2 percent pay raise for state employees who have not received a cost of living adjustment from the Legislature since 2007, and a 2 percent raise for education employees in K-12 and community colleges.

There is wide support in the Legislature for a pay raise for educators.

Republican caucuses who hold majorities in the House of Representatives and Senate, support a raise but have not specified a percentage. The House Democratic caucus has called for a 5 percent raise, plus a 2 percent cost of living adjustment for education retirees.
In Tuesday’s address, Gov. Bentley also targets state’s poverty

Charles J. Dean cdean@al.com

Gov. Robert Bentley has proposed a sweeping plan to tear down most of the state’s aging and dilapidated prisons and replace them with four new state-of-the-art penitentiaries. Bentley said his plan, announced in his State of the State Address on Tuesday evening, would cost $700 million to $800 million — money that the state would borrow — would save millions of dollars a year and keep prison workers, inmates and communities safer.

The plan includes the notorious Julia Tutwiler Prison for Women, which has for years come under scrutiny for allegations by female inmates of physical abuse including rape and other sexual violence.

The governor said the state’s historic issues with prisons — overcrowding, crumbling buildings, safety issues for workers, inmates and the general public — can no longer be dealt with by trying to maintain the system as is.

“This is major,” said Bentley. “We’ve had a problem in this state that takes up 23 percent of our General Fund. This problem is not going to go away. If we don’t address it, it’s not going to change. It’s going to continue to eat up more and more of our money. The facilities we have are so old, so dilapidated that the millions and millions of dollars we spend every year is just to keep these prisons from falling apart. And this is our prison system.”

“We have to build some new modern prisons and consolidate the ones we have,” said Bentley.

The $700-$800 million bond would be repaid over time with money saved from the millions of dollars now going for upkeep, maintenance and the required cost of duplication of too many prisons.

SEE BENTLEY, A14
BENTLEY

FROM AL

"I believe this will solve our prison issue for the next 30 years," said Bentley.

Bentley's plan for prisons is only one part of a set of goals for Alabama over the last three years of his administration.

OTHER ISSUES

Bentley's to-do list includes the following:

Offer free tuition to the state's two-year college system for students from low-income families. Under the program, the students would partner with the state's two-year colleges beginning in 7th grade. The program would offer tutoring, academic advising and college entrance exam preparation, as well as workshops for parents, summer programs and college visits.

Double from $10 million to $20 million the amount of money going to the state's much praised, but still far from fully implemented, Pre-K program.

Pay raises for public school teachers and two-year college employees in addition to state employees, all of whom have not had a pay raise in a number of years. Bentley would not say how much money he will seek.

Increase the number of doctors, nurses, dentists and nurse practitioners in rural Alabama. This plan calls for increasing the number of scholarships for medical students who are training to be primary care doctors. The scholarships would require them to practice in rural areas. Now, only 10 percent of medical professionals work in rural areas across the state. In addition, Bentley wants to offer a $5,000 state tax credit and will work to pass federal authorization offering a $50,000 tax credit to medical professionals if they practice in rural communities.

Expand broadband Internet service to over one million rural Alabamians by putting in place the infrastructure — digging ditches, laying wire and cables, clearing bureaucracy — all needed before private Internet providers can offer service. Broadband would better connect schools, hospitals, public safety, homes and businesses with high speed Internet currently unavailable in almost a fourth of the state.

Bentley said all of the goals represent an effort to deal with the one persistent fact that keeps the state from reaching its full potential: poverty.

"One of the things that holds us back, and we not only have to recognize this, we have to own this because it is ours, and that's the fact that we are the sixth-poorest state in the country," said Bentley in an interview in his office on Monday. "Our poverty holds us back educationally, holds us back economically. We are undereducated and undertrained and really too dependent on governmental programs."

Bentley said poverty is not a black or white issue, and it's not a political issue.

"Percentage-wise there are just as many poor people in Winston County as there are in Dallas County," said Bentley, referring to the predominantly white population of rural Winston County in north Alabama and the largely black population of Dallas County near Montgomery. "This is an Alabama issue."

STATE BUDGETS

And what about state budgets? Bentley proposes a General Fund budget that will make some cuts to state agencies and programs. But in large part he supports a budget that would basically level fund the most critical state programs like Medicaid, prisons and courts.

Bentley wouldn't say how he plans to balance the budget. But when asked if he planned to recommend that legislators take some limited dollars from the state's better-funded education budget, the governor said that might be an option.

Last year, lawmakers and Bentley agreed to take $80 million in education money and put it into the General Fund. Key lawmakers this year have said tax increases are not on the table and that if the General Fund is to be level funded, the only place to get the money will be from the state education dollars.
Blue Cross of Alabama blames $135 million projected loss on Obamacare

Insurer says pre-existing conditions ran up claims costs

Executives at Blue Cross Blue Shield of Alabama are predicting losses of $135 million in 2015, mostly due to the costs of insuring patients who gained coverage under Obamacare.

The insurance company has already tallied losses of $109 million through the end of October. The final results will be available at the beginning of March, according to a statement released by the company.

"Beginning in 2014, the (Affordable Care Act)-eliminated health underwriting and waiting periods for pre-existing conditions allowing individuals to buy healthcare coverage regardless of their health condition," read a statement from spokeswoman Koko Mackin.

"Company data indicates that many of our new individual ACA customers have used an extensive amount of medical services, which is causing total claims paid and their related operating expenses to exceed premiums."

Customers who became insured through the Affordable Care Act have been older and sicker than average. According to Blue Cross, they have drug costs that are 25 percent higher than other customers, and costs that are 50 percent higher for outpatient surgeries and hospitalizations.

Blue Cross Blue Shield of Alabama joins several other Blue Cross plans across the country that have reported steep losses in the last two years. Blue Cross Blue Shield of North Carolina reported losses of $400 million in the first two years of the Affordable Care Act. That insurer has cut sales commissions and advertising for Obamacare plans. Blue Cross Blue Shield of New Mexico pulled individual plans from the health insurance exchange after regulators denied a 53 percent rate increase.

RATES GOING UP

Blue Cross Blue Shield of Alabama is not taking similar steps. The company raised rates in 2016 by an average of 28 percent, and eliminated platinum and some gold-level plans. The company also shrunk its workforce slightly by not filling open positions, according to the statement.

The company’s financial problems suggest that all insurers offering plans on the Health Insurance Exchange may be struggling, which will affect costs for customers—and potentially reduce payments to providers, wrote Michelle LaVone, insurance analyst for Decision Resources Group, in an email.

"Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Alabama’s net losses could portend even higher rate increases in 2017 for all participating carriers both on and off the Health Insurance Exchange," LaVone wrote. "Blue Cross of Alabama is king, and its losses suggest its closest competitors—if you can call them close—face similar challenges but lack the clout and influence to make self-serving amendments."

$2 BILLION IN RESERVES

According to the statement, Blue Cross executives remain positive about the future of company, and expect income to stabilize in the coming years. Cynthia Cox, who leads research into health reform and private insurance at the Kaiser Family Foundation, said experts and insurance executives expected some instability in the first few years of the Affordable Care Act.

"We all knew going into this that insurance earnings could be volatile in the first few years because insurance companies had never offered anything similar," Cox said.

Blue Cross of Alabama is in a good position to weather that volatility, since it has more than $2 billion in reserves, according to the Alabama Department of Insurance. Premium increases in 2016 could slow or stop company losses this year, Cox said.

"With the premium increases we’ve seen, that could bring these plans into stabilization," Cox said. "This year we'll see, are they sufficient? Or will they need to rise again in 2017?"
ALABAMA LEGISLATURE

Session starts with familiar woes

Agencies could face budget cuts

By Kim Chandler
The Associated Press

MONTGOMERY — Alabama lawmakers began the 2016 legislative session on Groundhog Day with familiar budget woes that could spell funding cuts for many state agencies.

The Legislative Fiscal Office on Tuesday told lawmakers that the General Fund budget will have about $95 million less to spend in the next fiscal year. Acting Finance Director Bill Newton said the state will have 10 percent less than the amount Gov. Robert Bentley feels is needed to maintain government services, but did not give a specific figure.

The difficult budget comes after legislators spent much of 2015 battling over how to fill a General Fund funding shortfall. Newton said lawmakers face a "very similar" situation this year.

"Do you remember the movie Groundhog Day?" Newton said in reference to the 1993 movie where Bill Murray's character must live the same day over and over until he finally gets it right.

Legislators said that unlike last year, there is little appetite now for tax increases, making it more difficult to close the gap.

"We've all been tasked with taking a few pieces of fish and a couple of loaves of bread to feed the multitudes with. ... so we've got a big task ahead of us," said House Ways and Means General Fund Chairman Steve Clouse, R-Ozark.

Lawmakers last year met in two special sessions before approving a cigarette tax increase and other measures to minimize cuts to state agencies, but some cuts still had to be made.

"I think that's a non-starter based on what happened last year," said Senate Finance and Taxation General Fund Chairman Trip Pittman.

Pittman said absent new revenue, "there will be some real cuts in some of the departments and allocations."

Bentley will present

SEE SESSION, B3
his ideas when he gives his proposed budget to lawmakers today.

Rep. Merika Coleman-Evans, D-Pleasant Grove, criticized what she said is a general unwillingness among lawmakers to look at various revenue options. She said they should consider changing corporate taxes to stop large companies from avoiding taxes by shifting profits out of state. Gambling legislation should also come up for consideration, she said.

Alabama government spending is divided into two budgets: the Education Trust Fund that pays for education spending and the General fund that pays for Medicaid, prisons, child welfare services and other non-education services.

The state's education budget, which is fueled by income and sales taxes — revenue sources that tend to grow with the economy — is in better shape. The Legislative Fiscal Office projected the education budget will grow by $382 million.

Bentley and lawmakers in both parties have said they want to use part of that increase for a pay raise for teachers.
More money expected in education budget, lawmakers to prioritize needs

By: Mary Sell Montgomery Bureau

MONTGOMERY — A 2017 budget recommendation from the Alabama Commission on Higher Education includes as a secondary priority a 7 percent increase for the University of North Alabama and Athens State University.

The first-priority funding recommendation includes increases to fund rising insurance and retiree benefit costs that the institutions have no control over and would have to cover by pulling money from somewhere else, said Gregory Fitch, executive director of the Alabama Commission on Higher Education, or ACHE.

As for the second priority — a 7 percent funding increase for universities — Fitch said it would be up to individual university boards to allocate the money.

"The institutions could apply it to salaries, or whatever they need," Fitch said.

He presented the budget recommendation to lawmakers Monday during an education budget hearing.

The Legislature officially begins its 2016 session and budget-making process today.

Rep. Terri Collins, R-Decatur, said each university’s request needs to be considered as funding is decided.

"I think we’re waiting to hear from each institution about what they want and why they want it," Collins said.

In talking about university needs, Fitch told lawmakers 51 percent of high school graduates enroll in higher education the following year, and more than 30 percent of them need remedial course work in math and English.

Meanwhile, 83 percent of students in four-year colleges seek some type of financial aid.

“Fifty-three percent rely purely on loans,” Fitch said.

Meanwhile, the state’s K-12 system presented numbers Monday for $4.3 billion in 2017, an additional $334 million. That increase did not factor in raises for teachers.

Official 2017 revenue estimates for the education and General Fund budgets have not yet been made public, but lawmakers are more optimistic about the education budget. Several have said raises for teachers are a priority.
“There should be some increases (in funding) that will let us do some of the things mentioned here today,” Collins said.

Collins is on the education budget committee and chairs the education policy committee in the House. She said lawmakers will be looking to prioritize funding needs based on what “moves the dial the most for our students.”

Collins said her priorities include getting more teachers in the K-12 system so that classrooms aren’t as crowded, and getting a raise for teachers.

The state’s two-year college system will present its budget needs this morning.

**Performance-based budgeting**

Senate education budget committee chairman Sen. Arthur Orr, R-Decatur, began Monday’s hearings by saying lawmakers will be talking this year about performance-based budgeting within higher education.

That could include basing funds on certain markers, such as graduation rates or the cost of degree programs offered.

Orr said in the Senate, lawmakers are asking if education money is being spent well.

“We don’t need to be doing any harm in higher education, but if there is a better way, we want to look at that,” Orr said.

One north Alabama lawmaker who in the past year has been critical of education spending is Rep. Ed Henry, R-Hartselle. Last week, Henry was removed from the education budget committee by Speaker Mike Hubbard, R-Auburn. But Henry on Monday said spending reform will continue.

“The day the speaker called me, I said I didn’t care if I came off the committee as long as we continue to look at reform measures in Montgomery,” Henry said Monday. “I had an assurance from the speaker that absolutely those things will be high on our to-do list.”

Henry accused the Alabama Department of Education of wasting money and being too top heavy.

Hubbard said “zero-based budgeting,” in which agencies have to account for and justify their spending, will be a priority this year.

**Henry’s assignments**

Henry remains on the House Education Policy Committee, where he will be able to talk to education leaders.

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Henry said he didn’t think his move off the budget committee was related to his criticism of Hubbard and support for Rep. Phil Williams, R-Huntsville, who will challenge Hubbard for the top leadership spot in the House. Hubbard faces a 23-count felony indictment accusing him of using his office for personal gain. He’s said he’s innocent.

In the committee shuffle, which Hubbard’s office said was needed after the deaths of two GOP lawmakers last year, Henry became vice chairman of the ethics and campaign finance committee.

Henry on Monday said he’s working on a resolution that would ask the state Supreme Court for an opinion on whether the Legislature should be electing its leaders, including Hubbard, every year. Henry has argued recently that lawmakers should not be picking their leaders every four years, as has been the practice for decades.

That resolution would need the support of both bodies in the Statehouse.
Nine issues to watch in the 2016 legislative session

By: Kim Chandler

The Alabama Legislature begins the 2016 regular session on Tuesday. Here are nine issues to watch:

BUDGET WOES: Difficulties in the state General Fund are again expected for lawmakers in the 2016 session. Available revenue is expected to fall short of what is needed to maintain services. Gov. Robert Bentley is not proposing any general fund tax increases in his proposed budget. Legislative budget chairmen likewise said they see little enthusiasm for tax increases, which will likely mean cuts for many state agencies.

LOTTERY: Lottery legislation could get its first serious consideration in the Alabama Statehouse in 17 years. Republicans and Democrats have introduced rival proposals to establish a state lottery. There is disagreement over how lottery proceeds should be spent, and there could be push-back from lawmakers who also want casino legislation. Alabamians voted down a proposed lottery in 1999. Alabama is one of six states without a lottery.

TEACHER RAISE: One of the few issues where state politicians find themselves in agreement. Democrats, Republicans and Gov. Robert Bentley have all said they will seek a teacher pay increase in the upcoming session. The disagreement will come over how much of a raise that the Education Trust Fund, the state budget that funds public education, can provide without hurting education programs. Suggestions for the pay increase ranged from 2 percent to 5 percent ahead of session.

TENURE CHANGES FOR TEACHERS: The bill by Senate President Pro Tem Del Marsh would extend the time required to obtain tenure from three to five years. Student performance growth would also become component of performance reviews. Marsh dropped an idea for performance-based pay. However, schools could get bonuses for test score improvement. Teachers, who are new, highly rated or work in hard to fill specialties could also get recruitment bonuses for taking jobs in high-poverty or underperforming schools.

PRISON CONSTRUCTION: Gov. Robert Bentley is expected to propose a bond issue to consolidate aging Alabama prisons and replace them with new larger, regional prisons, some lawmakers said. The initiative comes as the state prison system has been in a negative spotlight for crowding and safety concerns. Sen. Cam Ward, chairman of the state’s prison reform task force, said the state is pumping millions of dollars into maintaining dilapidated facilities.

GASOLINE TAX: The Legislature’s transportation committee has held a series of pre-session meetings about the possibility of raising the state’s gasoline tax increase to pay for road and bridge construction in the state. Advocates said the price of road construction and repairs has increased exponentially while improvements in automobile fuel efficiency have caused tax collections, which pay for the work, to stagnate. Opponents have argued that the public is not in a mood for tax increases.
SPEAKER’S TRIAL: Republican House Speaker Mike Hubbard is scheduled to go to trial on ethics charges in March, a date that falls in the middle of the session. While it is possible, if not likely, that the trial will get delayed during appeals of pretrial rulings, Hubbard’s ability to lead became an issue in pre-session wrangling. Hubbard’s critics have threatened to make motion to remove him from the speakership, although Hubbard appears for now to easily have the votes to survive such a challenge if it comes. Hubbard said he has thought about “scenarios” if trial and session do overlap, but he declined to elaborate.

GUNS IN CARS: People would be able to carry a loaded handgun in their vehicles without a concealed carry permit, under a bill proposed in the Alabama Senate. Republican Sen. Gerald Allen of Tuscaloosa said that people should be able to have their weapons in their cars just as they can in their homes. The Alabama Senate has approved similar legislation in past sessions but the idea had not gotten final approval. The proposal, in the past, has sparked opposition from law enforcement officials who voiced concerns about public safety.

BAN THE BOX: The proposal by Democratic Sen. Quinton Ross would prohibit companies from asking about a job applicant’s criminal history in the first job application. Employers could still ask about a person’s past convictions, but the question would have to come later in the application process.
Schools spend on lobbyists to get state money; college budget process under review

By: Mary Sell Montgomery Bureau

MONTGOMERY — Last year, the University of North Alabama hired a Montgomery-based lobbying firm to represent its interests in the Alabama Statehouse.

As a result, the university spent $163,565 in fiscal 2015 on lobbying in the state capital and Washington, D.C., compared to $72,252 in fiscal 2013.

But the spending on a lobbyist in Montgomery was needed, Clinton Carter, UNA's vice president of business and financial affairs, said recently. Needed largely, he said, because UNA's state per-student funding was chronically among the lowest of all universities.

"We would love to never need to hire a lobbyist," Carter said. "However, the reality is in order to be competitive, and the way our state government and budgeting process is structured, you can't get through without a lobbyist."

The Decatur Daily recently sent public record requests to the state's public universities asking for lobbying expenditures in Montgomery and D.C. in the past three years. The requests asked for expenses related to in-house staff members and third-party lobbying firms, as well as any travel costs incurred by the schools.

The state's two largest universities said they could not fulfill the newspaper's request.

The University of Alabama System, the state's biggest, said in a written response that no one person or office exclusively advocates for the system, but rather a large number of individuals engage in such activities. "Thus, it is practically impossible, without incurring extraordinary time and costs, to even roughly approximate the cost and expenses of our internal staff who may have represented or advocated on behalf of The University of Alabama System ..."

The response said the system also has a large number of consultants on a wide variety of matters.

The system did say in the past three years it paid $693,952.48 in fees and expenses to Van Scyoc Associates for consulting in Washington.

Similarly, state and federal government relations at Auburn University involve a number of people who spend varying amounts of their time advocating on the university's behalf, but they also have many other, unrelated responsibilities, spokesman Mike Clardy said in a response.

Auburn did pay $180,000 annually to the firm Forbes Tate for federal consulting services.

Mould retired from Athens State last year and became its third-party lobbyist. He was paid $12,000 for that role in fiscal 2015. Travel for Glenn and Mould totaled $7,577, according to the university.

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During the three years, JSU had a $60,000 per year agreement with Federal Solutions in D.C. In 2014 and 2015, it also contracted with Garrett Jemison for $24,000 a year for additional lobbying efforts there.

USA’s Montgomery-related costs in the past three years, including travel, were about $456,000, it reported. In D.C., that number was about $90,000.

The Jones Group was paid almost $100,000 for its year-long contract.

“Since President Boyd’s new administration began at Alabama State University, the university has not had any new lobbyists or contracts for lobbyists,” the school said in a statement. “Also, since that time, it has not expended monies in support of lobbying, nor has it had anyone in-house perform the same duties.”

Alabama A&M and the University of West Alabama had not responded to the requests as of late last week.

A new formula for funding?

In fiscal 2015, UNA’s per-student funding was $4,618, according to the school. Only the University of West Alabama had a lower amount. The median for all universities was $5,641.

State funding, said Carter, often is based on previous years’ allocations and “who speaks the loudest.” He said UNA thinks all universities should be funded on a formula that takes into account the number of students served and the cost of providing various academic programs.

Some lawmakers agree. This year in the Statehouse, talk about changing higher education funding is beginning.

“We will be starting a conversation on performance-based budgeting,” said Sen. Arthur Orr, who now is chairman of the Senate education budget committee. “There is a sense in the Legislature that we fund the various institutions at various levels, and that’s the last we hear from them.

“Do we know that they’re serving their missions the best that they can?”

Nearly 40 states have some sort of performance-based funding model for higher education, Orr, R-Decatur, said.

He said the conversation in the Statehouse will include potential markers of a university’s performance, including graduation rates, and how to best measure them. For example, just looking at graduation rates may not be fair if a school serves many low-income students who have to drop out when their scholarships run out, Orr said.

There also are the costs of different programs to consider. The University of Alabama Birmingham and the University of South Alabama have higher state funding because they have medical schools. In general, educating engineers costs more than educating liberal arts majors.
“Some institutions have grown a lot faster than others,” Orr said. “Maybe as they’ve grown, that growth hasn’t been reflected in the budgetary appropriation.”

Sen. Larry Stutts’ district includes UNA and he’s in favor of funding changes.

“The way we fund higher education is very arbitrary,” Stutts, R-Tuscumbia, said. He said it’s been that way for years and each new budget, percentage increases are added in some places. “All you’ve done is compound your error.”

Stutts pointed to Florida, where performance funding is based on about 10 metrics, some of which were chosen by the schools. They include a six-year graduation rate and the university’s average cost per undergraduate.

“The problem we have in Alabama is that schools like UNA and Athens State, which are very efficient — we don’t reward the schools for that,” Stutts said.

Orr said universities are welcome to share their thoughts during what he said will be a deliberative process. He said it’s possible but not probable that legislation will be introduced this year.

“We’ll certainly be working with (House education budget chairman Bill) Poole to make sure we have the fairest formula for funding that we can have,” he said.

Stutts, who is on the Senate General Fund budget committee, said last week he’s bothered by state dollars being spent on lobbyists. “They could be used on services,” he said.

Earlier this month, when several General Fund agencies presented their 2017 budget needs to lawmakers on the General Fund committees, Sen. Bill Holtzclaw, R-Madison, asked them if they hire lobbyists. He said he wants to know how much of agencies’ allocations go to lobbying efforts.

“I hope someone on (education budget committees) asks those questions,” Holtzclaw said recently.

The four- and two-year college systems and K-12 system have budget hearings Monday and Tuesday at the Statehouse.

Mary Sell covers state government for The Decatur Daily. She can be reached at msell@decaturdaily.com. Follow on Twitter @DD_MarySell.
From poverty to wealth

Sharecropper's son built billion-dollar enterprises

By Ed Enoch
Staff Writer

The story begins when John Barfield was sick as a boy in 1932 with a fever his parents feared would take his life.

In the black community of Kaulton Quarters in West Tuscaloosa, his family crowded at his bedside of their shotgun house on the hill, armed with tearful prayers and home remedies.

"My father said 'Johnny, no matter what we did. Your fever got worse,'" Barfield said.

On this particular day, the story goes, in an almost unheard of occurrence, two white women walked down the streets of the black section of Kaulton Quarters, up the steps to the Barfields' home, and came to the 5-year-old's bedside.

"They said to my mother and father, 'We would like to help you.'" Barfield said.

One of the women wrote a note and an address and gave it Barfield's father, a sharecropper who cut lumber for railroad ties to support his family. The women instructed him to go as fast as he could to the address and give the note to the man who resided there. The women left with as much mystery as they arrived.

SEE WEALTH, A7

Tuscaloosa native John Barfield was the speaker for the Rotary Club of Tuscaloosa on Tuesday. Barfield is an entrepreneur who founded a billion-dollar corporation. GARY COSBY JR./STAFF PHOTO

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Barfield opened his comments to the Rotarians on Tuesday at the Indian Hills Country Club with jokes about his unlikely beginning as a high school dropout home from Europe after a stint in the Army who started as a custodian cleaning toilets. Barfield and his wife, Betty, went on to start nine companies in fields including commercial cleaning and maintenance, engineering and workforce management.

Barfield was the son of sharecroppers chasing a better life up North. His trips to different Rotary clubs to speak were organized in part to allow the 88-year-old to visit the places his family lived as it migrated north, according to Harvey Newcomb III, director of principal gifts for the Rotary Foundation.

During his trip to Alabama, Barfield visited Margaret, where his father worked as a coal miner before the threat of violence during an attempt to unionize the mine drove the family further north, where the family eventually settled in Michigan. On Monday, Barfield, his daughter and granddaughter and a close family friend toured Tuscaloosa in a stretch limo with the help of District 2 City Councilman Harrison Taylor, who guided the long car through the narrow and winding road of the old section of Kaulton Quarters in search of something familiar.

Brandon Marsh, the godson of Barfield’s eldest daughter, grew up hearing the stories about the miracles in Alabama with the messages on the importance of faith and family.

“When you hear the story about Kaulton Quarters it paints a rural picture,” Marsh said.

The hill where the Barfield home sat is now an industrial site behind chain-link fences. As the car followed the perimeter of the site covered with sheet metal buildings and busy forklifts, Barfield recalled boyhood experiences in a vanished lumber mill town.
There was the time the mad dog ran through the streets of town, frothing at the mouth and crashing into houses. The taste of roasted potatoes and peanuts he ate on his grandparents' porch as he listened to family stories. Sleepovers at his grandparents' home and the sound of rain on a tin roof.

"I remember so many things, and, by inviting me back to Tuscaloosa, you have given me an opportunity to relive some of that. These are memories I will treasure for the rest of my life. Thank you for the opportunity," he told the Rotary Club on Tuesday.

Earlier over a breakfast of pancakes, eggs and bacon at the Embassy Suites, Barfield said he still feels the presence of his angels and marvells at the string of miracles in his life.

"If you compare where I am today and where we started from and what we started with, you have got to say it was a miracle," Barfield said. "We did not have anything. What did I get this mind to do something that most of the people I grew up with didn't even think about?"

Most of his friends in Michigan graduated from high school and went on to work in factories, a typical career path for young black men. Barfield dropped out of high school to join the Army.

"I dropped out of school because it seemed, at that time, exciting to become a soldier. The other thing was I didn't see any opportunities for going to college, although there were — but I didn't see them," Barfield said.

He returned from postwar service Europe, married, and took a job in 1949 as a custodian at the University of Michigan. He made about $70 a week, or less than $4,000 a year.

"That was not enough money to support my growing family, and so I began to look for work to supplement my income," Barfield said.

Barfield cleaned small homes being built on the outskirts of Ann Arbor, Michigan, work others didn't want to have to do.

"What they saw as a curse, I saw as an opportunity," he said.

Barfield could clean two houses a day, making $35 per house.

"I found that I was making $70 in a day whereas I was making $70 a week working for the University of Michigan," he said.

That discovery was the catalyst for his career as a businessman.

"For the first time in my life, I began to realize the value of my time and my talents," he said. "I found out, by working for myself, I was worth seven times more than that. So discovering that my time was more valuable than they felt, it encouraged me to move farther."

That epiphany about self-worth is a message Barfield tries to convey to the young people he meets.

"Don't be satisfied with what people are willing to give you. Work hard and earn as much as you can," Barfield said. "This is yours. You decide what your value is worth. That is what I try to teach young people today."

Barfield quit his job as a custodian at the university in 1954 to focus on his growing cleaning business, which expanded to include commercial and industrial buildings. He sold that successful business in 1968 to International Telephone and Telegraph.

"I was 39 years old. I worked for them for three years as a manager and left and started another business, which I sold also," Barfield said. "From there on, I just began to build and sell businesses."

See next page
Barfield’s dream of owning his own business began earlier in a Pennsylvania coal town where his family lived between leaving Alabama and settling in Michigan. As a paperboy, Barfield met Robert Lutton, a businessman who made his living selling soap after losing much of his fortune to calamities that befall a rollercoaster he owned.

"I would always arrange to end my paper route at his store because I loved to talk with him," Barfield said. "I had never seen anybody who had a job where they could wear a white shirt and tie to work and work in their own little shop."

At the time, Barfield’s father had always worked in the cotton fields or the coal mines. He recalled his father, a physically powerful man, walking home tired in the cold. Barfield’s father would bathe in the kitchen in a basin of hot water prepared by his mother. Some evenings during dinner, Barfield’s father would fall asleep, exhausted from his long workday.

Barfield started by sweeping Lutton’s shop. But as an inquisitive boy, he soon learned to help package the powdered soap and help with inventory. He gave up his paper route to sell the repackaged soap door-to-door for 15 cents a box, earning a 5-cent commission.

“That was my introduction to entrepreneurship,” Barfield said. “I said from that experience someday by the grace of God, I am not going to be a coal miner, I am not going to work in the fields; I am going to be a businessman. I am going to wear a white shirt and a tie to my job every day like Mr. Lutton, and I am going to have a business of my own.”

Lutton’s tutelage is among the providential encounters Barfield calls his miracles.

“I owe my success as an entrepreneur to Mr. Lutton more than anyone else," he said.

On a rainy afternoon in the clubhouse at Indian Hills Country Club, Barfield told the Rotarians gathered to eat and hear him speak that entrepreneurship and creating opportunities for others was the work for which God spared him more than 80 years ago.

“I think the purpose God had for my life was to be as much a blessing to less fortunate people as I possible could, and I think that has been the secret of our success,” Barfield said.
Diversity panel to meet this week

By Ed Enoch
Staff Writer

A subcommittee on diversity and inclusion has been formed to address concerns and priorities. The subcommittee's goal is to identify priorities and provide actionable recommendations to the strategic planning council, which will present the recommendations to the campus. The committee plans to meet weekly to discuss and refine the strategy.

The subcommittee is led by co-chairs George Daniels, assistant dean in UA's College of Communication and Information Sciences, and Norma Baldwin, professor of political science. The committee is comprised of representatives from various disciplines, including faculty, staff, and students.

The representatives span a variety of communities and perspectives on the campus. "I think people are coming from different places and disciplines," said one representative. "We want to address diversity in all its forms, including race, gender, and sexual orientation.

The representatives aim to foster an environment of understanding and inclusivity. They are committed to making the campus a more welcoming place for all students and faculty.

The subcommittee plans to host public meetings and gather feedback from the campus community. They hope to have their recommendations ready for the strategic planning council's consideration in the upcoming months.

Subcommittee members include:
- George Daniels, assistant dean in UA's College of Communication and Information Sciences
- Norma Baldwin, professor of political science
- Elie Shaaban-Magafa, director of the Women and Gender Resource Center
- Elliott Spillers, Student Government Association president and strategic planning council member
- Marie Robbins, senior associate director of athletics and strategic planning council member
- Charter Morris, director of International Students
- Lane McLelland, director of Crossroads Community Center
- Judy Thorpe, director of Office of Disability Services
- David Blair, director of the Office of Veterans and Military Affairs
- Kat Gillan, director of the Office of Fraenrety and Sorority Life
- Khorian Patterson, student and deputy director of the Black Student Union
- Amanda Bennett, student and member of the group We Are Done
- Vel Lewis, student and director of multicultural affairs for the SGA
- Ron Nelson, student and alternate for SGA
- Alex Reeder, student and interim president of Spectrum
- Lindsay Macher, student and media coordinator for the Feminist Caucus
- Cassidy Ellis, graduate student and alternate for the Feminist Caucus
- Abdullah Bakar, student and international student representative
- Yin Wang, student and alternate for International students
- Kyle Jane Childs, graduate student representing the Capstone Alliance
- David Deutsch, assistant professor and alternate for the Capstone Alliance
- Shaw Castle, student representing veterans' affairs and armed service personnel
- Nirmala Erevelles, professor
- Andrea Dobyns, doctoral student representing graduate students with disabilities
- Michael Fonis-Jimenez, associate professor
- Marcus Cotton, assistant director of admissions for the School of Law and vice president of the Black Faculty Staff Association
- Andre Deinam, assistant professor representing the UA Black Faculty and Staff Association

The subcommittee hopes to have its recommendations ready for the strategic planning council's consideration in the upcoming months. They are committed to fostering a diverse and inclusive campus community.

"Absolutely we are looking at changing structures as a university, looking at what we need to do on putting those things in place," Shaaban-Magafa said. "But I think the larger goal or challenge is to make communities that address equity, are safe, and are healthy for all of the members of the community."
Center's goal is to support diversity

By Ed Enoch
Staff Writer

University of Alabama students, faculty and administrators packed a room in the Riverside residential complex Monday night to celebrate the opening of the campus' new Intercultural Diversity Center.

The center is the result of months of conversations between university administrators and students, who rallied for more diversity and inclusion on campus in the fall. The center was among the changes the advocacy group We Are Done argued would help create a more inclusive and equitable campus.

"The center is a center for students by students," Vice President of Student Affairs David Grady said. The center, which includes space for studying and socializing, is staffed by six students and under the division of Student Affairs. The center will collaborate with other resources on campus such as Crossroads Community Center to help create a supportive community.

The students who helped craft the vision for the center called it a positive step for the campus, but added more could be done, a sentiment also echoed by Grady.

"We made this for you; it is your home. Let's make it a home," Amanda Bennett said.

Bennett, a senior and one of the student coordinators, described the center's two rooms on the first floor of the Riverside Annex as a safe place for marginalized students to feel secure and connected on campus but also a place for all students to fellowship, ask questions and learn from each other.

"My hope for the center is this will be a place we can all be renewed in our minds," senior Courtland Patterson said.
Listening sessions for strategic plan slated

By Ed Enoch
Staff Writer

The first of a series of listening sessions that will inform the ongoing strategic planning process at the University of Alabama is schedule for today.

The sessions announced so far are intended for faculty and staff specifically with other general listening sessions to come later, according to a university spokesperson.

A listening session for office, clerical and technical staff will be at 3 p.m. today in Room 110 of the Alabama Institute for Manufacturing Excellence.

A listening session for the professional staff will be at 3:30 p.m. Feb. 18 in Room 10 of Alston Hall. A third session will be for the Faculty Senate and faculty will at 3:30 p.m. Feb. 23 in Room 205 of Smith Hall.

Different areas of interest identified in the process will be addressed by subcommittees which will report to the main council. UA President Stuart Bell said he hopes to present the five-year plan in April.
University of Alabama students create their own comic book company

By: Drew Taylor

For more than a year, Ethan Newsome-Jackson and Kris Pearce have been obsessed with the same woman.

She only exists on paper, but for the two University of Alabama students, creating the character in the upcoming comic book “Breeze” has been grueling, mainly in how to present the heroine’s duality.

“She’s very care-free, where she enjoys all kinds of things, but she lives in a very dark world,” Newsome-Jackson said during a recent work session with Pearce at The Comic Store on Hargrove Road. “She actually gets through it and keeps her sense of humor about it.”

Even the way Breeze looks, complemented with spiky hair and a mask, is a combination of deliberate choices.

“A lot of feminine characters in the comic book world are usually sexy and the artists accentuate their body parts,” he said. “But with Breeze, we wanted to keep it sexy, but not have too much.”

As Newsome-Jackson sketches story panels for an upcoming issue, Pearce explains that “Breeze” was an effort to not only create a character that recalled the comic book heroines they grew up reading, but with a twist.

“We wanted to give a deadly character a fun power,” Pearce said. “She’s like a deadly fairy.”

When published, “Breeze” will become the next installment in the duo’s comic book company, Dream Ink Comics, which has produced five comics and sold more than 100 copies since distribution began in August.

Three years ago, Newsome-Jackson and Pearce hit it off through their mutual appreciation of comic books, especially “Batman,” the Japanese manga series “Akira” and “Static.” However, it was their unfavorable discussion of a comic book they had recently read that started something bigger.

“We just sat there and thought ‘I can do a better job than this,’ ” Newsome-Jackson said. “We then decided that we should try to do something.”

The first comic created was “Ghost Phase.” The plot involves a character who fights crime through special powers he developed after being exposed to radiation while buried alive.

“The first book we did took about six months because we had no idea what we were doing,” Newsome-Jackson said. “From there, we shortened the time to about a month or so.”
Pearce does the majority of the writing, but both men complement each other throughout the production process. For example, Pearce said Newsome-Jackson keeps the stories grounded to involve realistic problem-solving in unrealistic circumstances, while Newsome-Jackson credits Pearce for bringing in three-dimensional characters that flesh out the drawings.

“I think being good friends for three years helps,” Pearce said. “We're not afraid to tell the other that one idea could be better.”

Since starting Dream Ink Comics, the partners have released “Ghost Phase,” “Red Dragon” and “Negative Zero,” which is sold in stores as close as Little Rock, Arkansas, and as far away as Vancouver. Since August, the company has sold over 100 copies of its comics.

When the duo gave a copy of “Ghost Phase” to The Comic Strip owner Greg Hulsey, he immediately started selling copies.

“I'm hoping they can produce more books so I can give them their own rack,” Hulsey said.

Newsome-Jackson, who is majoring in aerospace engineering, said he hopes to continue the company after he leaves the University of Alabama. Although he does not want to go into comic publishing full time, creating comics gives him something that reinvigorates him.

“For me, I’m learning a lot through partly owning this company,” he said. “You learn how to time manage, market, research and a lot of different things you would never think you would have to learn.”

Pearce, who would like to work in film production, said creating comic books has helped him improve as a writer.

“It definitely has taught me so much, like character development and story arc,” he said. “You have to be very specific in getting from the beginning to the middle to the end and that took a long time to learn.”

For the time being, Newsome-Jackson and Pearce are just focused on doing the best stories they can.

“Each one has been better than the last,” Newsome-Jackson said.
2 Police officers receive no disciplinary action for off-campus incident

By: Stephanie Taylor

Two of the three Tuscaloosa police officers who were under investigation for possible use of excessive force against University of Alabama students were returned to duty, Police Chief Steve Anderson said Tuesday.

Officers Phillip Champion, Gregory Pimm and James Kent were placed on administrative leave with pay after the Nov. 8 incident at 12th Avenue Place Apartments. Videos of Champion striking one student and Pimmusing a Taser to subdue him went viral, causing what Anderson called "a black eye" for the city.

Kent, the first officer who responded to the apartment on the noise complaint, remains on leave, according to a TPD news release sent to the media just after 5 p.m. Tuesday.

Pimm and Champion were not disciplined after the internal investigation was completed. They returned to work in mid-January, Anderson said.

They were required to receive remedial training in the use of force, decision-making and de-escalation techniques.

Officer Justin Sams, who used profanity during the incident, was not placed on leave but received a written reprimand and remedial training to improve his communication skills, according to the release.

Misdemeanor charges against the students -- Matthew Macia, Brandon Williford and Caroline Giddis -- are still pending.

The Tuscaloosa News submitted a public information request to the Office of the City Attorney on Feb. 1.

The request asked whether the officers had returned to duty and, if so, the dates they were reinstated.

The News requested any written findings of the internal investigation and the officers' personnel files.

City attorney Glenda Webb said the internal investigation report is not a public record. The portions of the personnel files that are public have not yet been provided.

The press release did not address a question in the public records request about whether the department has enacted new policies regarding their response to noise complaints.

The incident happened at an apartment complex just off the University Strip, hours after the Alabama-LSU football game.

See next page
Videos show Officer Kent asking the students to exit the apartment, and he appeared to become angry when they refused and asked whether they were being arrested or detained.

After about two minutes, officers entered the apartment and dragged out the three students who were arrested.

That's when the officers used the stun gun and police baton to subdue one of the men.

Videos taken by bystanders quickly circulated on the Internet and made national news. Some public criticism focused on the students for not complying with the officers' requests, but most was directed at the officers' response.
Researchers
study
rainforest
recovery

2 help co-author
paper on regrowth
after trees cut down

By Ed Enoch
Staff Writer

A pair of researchers at
the University of Alabama is
among the co-authors of a
paper in the latest edition of
the journal "Nature" about the
rate at which forests in Cen-
tral and South America regrow
after being cut down.

Eben Broadbent and Angeli-
ca Almeyda Zambrano were
among teams gathering data
at 1,500 individual plots across
45 sites. The two worked in
Bolivia in 2006, gathering
information from more than
8,000 trees, shrubs and palms
in 20 plots. The paper "Bio-
mass Resilience of Neotropical
Secondary Forests" was pub-
lished online by "Nature" on
Wednesday.

"What this paper is show-
ing is how long does it take for
a forest to look structurally

SEE RECOVERY, A8
similar to a forest if it had never been cut,” said Almeyda Zambrano, an adjunct professor of geography.

As part of the research, the teams explored why it takes some secondary forests longer than others to recover.

The neotropical sites included undisturbed forests and tracts, which had been cleared, at varying ages of secondary growth.

Farmers in the tropics tend to farm clear-cut plots, typically 1 to 2 hectare squares, for a few years before abandoning them or converting them to pastureland, Almeyda Zambrano said. The teams worked with the land owners to determine the age of each property based on when it was abandoned.

At the different sites, the teams calculated the age of the growth and surveyed the forests. The teams recorded trees, shrubs and palms with stems of more than 5 centimeters in diameter, the species present, as well as soil samples. The teams also calculated the carbon uptake and storage, the above ground biomass, for the plots.

The researchers focused on the above-ground biomass because it is currently what policymakers are interested in as they debate strategies to deal with climate change, according to Broadbent, an assistant professor of geography. The above-ground biomass is about 50 percent carbon, he said.

With the information, the teams constructed a map of the biomass recovery rates of different forests in the neotropics across different climates and geographies.

The research teams, who were doing similar
work previously, decided to coordinate research efforts, forming a group is called 2ndFor to look at the neotropical forests.

The map 2ndFor produced is a regional picture of the forests that had not existed before the researchers pooled their resources, Almeyda Zambrano said.

"Basically, by combining all our skills at data sets, we can answer a question that hasn't been answered before," Broadbent said.

The scale goes beyond the efforts of previous individual studies.

The team looked at about 20 different variables in their research, including previous uses as farmland. It turned out the most important variable was water, Almeyda Zambrano said.

"It turns out rainfall was the main reason," she said.

Understanding how forests recover and why different areas see different rates or regrowth could help policymakers concerned with carbon capture and climate change, according to Broadbent.

Expanding on the idea of the intersection of research and policy, Broadbent said policymakers concerned with carbon capture, theoretically, could choose to target resources devoted to regrowth on areas where it happens quickest and would have the greatest impact. The research also can inform understanding of the consequences for cutting forests in areas where recovery of secondary forests will be slower.

As secondary forests are growing, they are trapping carbon at a higher rate than primary forests, Almeyda Zambrano said.

She likened the relationship between primary, old growth, and secondary forests to adult humans and children. The secondary forests' growth resembles the faster growth of children, while primary forests are like adults whose bodies have completed their major physical growth.

"It is important to know how fast that is happening," she said. "Especially if you want to get more carbon."
UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA

Museum will hold family night tonight

Safari theme highlights free community event

By Leila Beem Nunez
Special to The Tuscaloosa News

University of Alabama students from 21 different graduate departments will take people on a virtual safari tonight at the Alabama Museum of Natural History during Hands-On Family Night.

In its fifth year, the Hands-On Family Night at the Museum will be from 5:30 p.m. to 8 p.m. at the museum inside UA's Smith Hall, 427 Sixth St. The free, safari-themed event will feature interactive exhibits, music, refreshments and prizes. It is being sponsored by UA's Graduate School, the Graduate Parent Support Program, the Graduate Student Association and the Alabama Museum of Natural History.

Cori Perdue, director of Graduate School programs, said the event is a great opportunity for both the graduate students and people throughout the community.

"I think it's really cool for our grad students to have a chance to get out of their labs and do something fun and education-oriented with the kids," Perdue said. "It's also great for younger people to see what grad students do, and even for parents to get a chance to get a sense of all the different departments there are at UA."

Last year, more than 100 graduate students dressed up as pirates during the event, presenting their exhibits and interacting with the 550 people who turned out for the night. This year, young participants will have the chance to participate in hands-on activities like writing in field journals, which will be provided, building their own binoculars, and looking at live insects.

Perdue said the event began five years ago as a way for UA students who are parents to get connected to the campus and area, but the special night has since become more of a community event open to all. She said with the wide range of exhibits and activities, there is something for everyone to enjoy.

"Any age can go," Perdue said. "Honestly, we have college kids who come in and do it, and we have tiny kids who come in and do it. I've got four kids, and they always come."

Bonnika Ashley, vice president of the Graduate Student Association, which is in charge of organizing the departments, said the event gives graduate students who are parents the opportunity to network with other parents in the community.

"I think this is a great community event to connect the students with other people in the area who have kids, who are aware of all the parental responsibilities, as well as being professionals," she said. "I think it's entertainment for the children, but also a great outlet for parents to meet other people."

Tyler Chestnut, Graduate Parent Support coordinator, said he hopes this year's family night will again bring in a lot of people from the community.

"We're hoping we get a lot of community involvement and for people to see what the museum has to offer and just get some fun out of it," Chestnut said. "The main focus is that families and kids have the opportunity to get out and have some fun in an educational environment."
ELECTION 2016

UA rally aims to register more voters

Members of the student chapter of the Southern Poverty Law Center at the University of Alabama hold a "Get Out The Vote" rally outside the Ferguson Center Monday, February 8 2016. Margaret Sasser, left, helps Samantha Rubinchik register. STAFF PHOTO/GARY COSBY JR.

By Nick Privitera
Special to The Tuscaloosa News

With the March 1 primary getting closer, efforts to register people to vote are increasing in Alabama.

On Monday, a rally and voter registration drive on the University of Alabama campus aimed to attract young people into the political process.

“Our goal (was) to get more students to vote today; regardless of political leaning because it is important that people express their voice,” said Dwyer Freeman, president of Southern Poverty Law Center on Campus.

SEE UA RALLY, A4

More online

To see more photos of UA's voter registration, visit www.tuscaloosanews.com.
The rally, held at the Ferguson Center Plaza, was co-sponsored by the SPLC on Campus and the American Association of University Women. A news release from SPLC on Campus, an offshoot of the Montgomery-based SPLC, said similar events are planned on college campuses across the country. The event at UA was the groups’ first.

Friday is the deadline to register to vote in the March 1 primary, which will feature Democratic and Republican presidential candidates, candidates for one of Alabama’s two Senate seats and a handful of countywide government offices.

Kyle Campbell, president of UA College Democrats, said that while most voters are more interested in the presidential race, their votes will be more influential in the local races.

“There are a lot more things to vote for than just president of the United States. To tell the truth, your votes in those (local) elections are probably more consequential,” Campbell said.

While more people vote in years in which presidential elections are held, the level of participation among young voters has remained persistently low through the years. According to the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement at Tufts University, in 2014 youth voter turnout fell to its lowest level on record. According to the center, 19.9 percent of 18-29-year-olds cast ballots in 2014. That represents a decline from an average of 26.6 percent for the same age range in other midterm elections over the previous 40 years.

Lecia Brooks, outreach director for the Southern Poverty Law Center, said Monday’s rally served as a teaching moment for students about how crucial voting can be.

“It’s great to see students taking charge, getting involved and educating others about the importance of registering and showing up to vote,” Brooks said in a news release. “This type of student involvement is reminiscent of the student-led movement during the civil rights movement. Given Alabama’s history, it’s fitting for the first SPLC on Campus voting event to be held here.”

Voters have until Friday to hand-deliver voter registrations – or updated voter information – to the Tuscaloosa County Board of Registrars at the Tuscaloosa County Courthouse Annex.

For those mailing in their registrations or new information, letters must be postmarked by Feb. 13 and sent to Tuscaloosa County Board of Registrars, Tuscaloosa County Courthouse Annex, 2501 Seventh St., Suite 200, Tuscaloosa, AL 35401-1891.

Online voter registration is also available at the Alabama secretary of state’s website, www.alabamavotes.gov.

Registered voters will be able to vote March 1 in either the Democratic or Republican primary.
BREAST CANCER AWARENESS

Today is last day to purchase luminarias

Proceeds will help fight cancer

By Drew Taylor
Staff Writer

Casey Johnson says a single lit luminaria can do a lot for those who have been affected by breast cancer.

Johnson, director of development for the DCH Foundation, said that not only can a luminaria show support for those with cancer, but specialized ones purchased through the DCH Foundation can help treat those who are fighting the disease.

The DCH Foundation will be selling luminarias for $10 each through the close of business this afternoon, setting them up around Coleman Coliseum on Friday night to commemorate the 12th annual “Power of Pink” Alabama gymnastics meet against Kentucky.

The foundation has been selling luminarias for the “Power of Pink” meet since 2009.

“This is a pretty inexpensive way for someone to participate in the Power of Pink, but it has a huge impact,” Johnson said.

Proceeds from luminaria sales go toward the foundation’s Breast Cancer Awareness Fund, which have a way to honor those that mean a lot to them,” she said.

To purchase a luminaria, call the DCH Foundation at (205) 759-7349 or visit thedchfoundation.org.

—Reach Drew Taylor at drew.taylor@tuscaloosanews.com or 205-722-0204.

CANCER

From Page B1

has raised more than $1.6 million toward breast cancer treatment since the fund was first established in 2004.

“Those funds come together and are able to make a difference in someone’s life, whether it be through a mammogram or additional testings and wigs,” she said.

Johnson said that once the luminaria is purchased, a special message can be inscribed on it to honor someone who has fought the disease.

“We have all been touched by cancer in some way and I think it is important for the community to
Nation’s prominent public universities are shifting to out-of-state students

By: Nick Anderson and Danielle Douglas-Gabriel

TUSCALOOSA, Ala. — America’s most prominent public universities were founded to serve the people of their states, but they are enrolling record numbers of students from elsewhere to maximize tuition revenue as state support for higher education withers.

The shift has buttressed the finances and reshaped the profile of schools across the country, from the University of California’s famed campuses in Berkeley and Los Angeles to the universities of Arkansas, Oregon, Missouri, South Carolina and numerous other places. Forty-three of the 50 schools known as “state flagships” enrolled a smaller share of freshmen from within their states in 2014 than they had a decade earlier, federal data show. At 10 flagships, state residents formed less than half the freshman class.

Nowhere is the trend more pronounced than here at the University of Alabama, where students who cheered this month when the Crimson Tide won its fourth national football championship in seven years were mostly from other states.

In 2004, 72 percent of new freshmen here were Alabamians. By 2014, the share was 36 percent. That was the largest swing in the country among 100 flagship and other significant state universities The Washington Post analyzed using federal data on student residency.

The percentage of in-state freshmen fell at more than 70 of those schools during that decade.

There were declines of 20 or more percentage points at UC-Berkeley and UCLA, Idaho State University and the flagships of South Carolina, Missouri, Oregon and Arkansas. There also were drops of more than 15 percentage points at Michigan State, Ohio State, and the universities of Illinois, Iowa, Kentucky and Washington.

The overhaul of the student body at big-name schools reverberates in statehouses and among consumers.

“People inside states believe that they have greater access to their state universities,” said Marguerite Roza, a Georgetown University research professor who studies education finance. Many are now asking, she said, “who does that public university belong to anymore? And what is it doing? Is it seeking ‘elite’ status? That’s great, but not if your own kids can’t go there.”

Kendall Roden, 21, of Garland, Tex., said she was lured to Tuscaloosa even though she had been admitted to the University of Texas. Alabama offered her a sizable scholarship, and she said she has thrived as a management information systems major.

Plus she got to see coach Nick Saban’s team win national titles in her freshman and senior years. Being a football fan, she said, is “a huge part of my life and Alabama’s culture. It’s the lifeblood of the university.”
On one level, the shift is all about money. Tuition and fees for out-of-state students at four-year public universities average $23,893, according to the College Board. In-state students are charged an average of $9,410. The out-of-state premium, 150 percent, is lucrative for schools that draw thousands of non-residents.

"They pay full freight," said UCLA Chancellor Gene Block. "They bring in huge amounts of additional revenue." That funding is key to maintaining academic excellence, he said.

In 2004, 94 percent of UCLA's freshmen were Californians. Ten years later, the share was 73 percent. The number of Californians entering as freshmen at Westwood remained relatively stable — averaging about 4,100 from 2008 to 2014 — but the number of non-residents surged after the economic recession in 2007 to 2009.

There was an out-of-state spike at Berkeley, too, creating political problems. Three of every 10 freshmen at the California flagship in 2014 came from out of state, up from 1 in 10 a decade earlier. Gov. Jerry Brown (D) — a Berkeley alumnus — wondered last year whether "normal" residents from the nation's most-populous state were getting a fair shot at admission to their top university. University of California President Janet Napolitano, who oversees the system, pledged afterward to limit out-of-state enrollment last year in Berkeley and Los Angeles. All of UC's undergraduate campuses are planning to raise their in-state totals significantly in the next school year.

Block said non-Californians provide a big non-financial benefit: a cosmopolitan atmosphere on a campus with global reach. Several hundred in each class at UCLA and Berkeley are foreigners.

"There's no substitute for international students," Block said. "They bring perspective you just can't get from the domestic population. It really does add to the environment for everybody."

Numerous studies have shown the historic decline of state support for higher education, although several states raised appropriations modestly in recent years. The Delta Cost Project at American Institutes for Research found this month that state and local funding per student at public research universities was 28 percent lower in 2013 than in 2008, after adjusting for inflation.

The fiscal vise forced universities to trim costs and raise revenue, largely through tuition in-creases or additional students. Out-of-state expansion proved especially crucial for schools in states with stagnant numbers of high school graduates.

"The primary driver for us was the demographic reality," said Roger Thompson, vice president for enrollment management at the University of Oregon. At that flagship, the in-state share of new freshmen fell from 68 percent in 2004 to 47 percent in 2014.

Experts say there is no sign the trend will reverse.

"The reliance on non-resident tuition income is probably going to continue," said George Pernsteiner, president of the State Higher Education Executive Officers Association. "Even in
the states that have seen increases in state support in the last few years — have they reduced their non-resident enrollment? Well, no.”

Some flagships bucked the trend. At the University of Maryland in College Park, the in-state share of the freshman class rose from 67 percent in 2004 to 72 percent in 2014. There were similar single-digit increases at the universities of Florida, Georgia and Tennessee.

At the University of Virginia, which sets aside about two-thirds of freshman seats for state residents, the geographic balance barely changed. Greg W. Roberts, dean of admission at U-Va., said out-of-state demand is so high that non-resident applicants are admitted at a far lower rate (24 percent) than Virginians (44 percent).

Shannon Gundy, undergraduate admissions director at U-Md., said recruiting top out-of-state students is difficult. It often requires “spending” money — through discounts and scholarships — to land students who are shopping for the best deal.

“A lot of schools have financial re-sources that allow them to entice out-of-state students to come, and that’s not something that we’ve done,” Gundy said. “We do offer scholarships for in-state and out-of-state students, but it’s not our intention to go out and grab out-of-state students for the sake of having them. We want to make sure we are remaining true to our mission.”

Texas A&M University, one of the nation’s largest, gave 95 percent of its freshman seats to Texans in 2014, the highest in-state share among schools The Post analyzed. The flagship University of Texas at Austin was not far behind, at 89 percent. Those figures reflect the state’s surging population and the guarantee of admission to the best students from every public high school.

“We serve the state,” said Michael K. Young, Texas A&M’s president. “Our demand curve is extremely high for in-state kids. They are really good, and there are a lot of them.” But Young said he would like to increase out-of-state enrollment a bit, to “enliven perspectives” at College Station through geographic diversity.

University of Alabama officials say they, too, serve their state. But they have done it in large part by recruiting outsiders. Demographics and state finances— left them little choice, they said. Alabama’s population has grown at a lower rate than the nation’s, and its output of high school graduates has been up and down. Volatility in state funding for higher education led the flagship in 2003 to launch a major out-of-state growth plan, hunting for students in Texas, Georgia, Florida and beyond. Undergrad enrollment shot up more than 90 percent in ensuing years, topping 30,000 in 2014.

“When students vote with their feet to be at your institution, that’s a really great outcome,” said the university’s president, Stuart R. Bell. Geographic diversity benefits students, he said. “Our graduates need to be able to thrive in a very dynamic and flexible world.”

Bell said the flagship, founded in 1831, is not overlooking Alabamians. “We’re serving every student who could come to the university and be successful here,” he said.
The transformation in Tuscaloosa is hard to overstate, faculty and administrators say. The manicured greens of the central quad, the Denny Chimes bell tower of brick and limestone, and the core academic halls with columned facades remain as they were in generations past. But a building spree — said to entail an opening or renovation every 90 days — has enlarged and modernized a campus packed with more students than ever. Faculty, weary of budget cuts before the boom, received substantial raises after it.

Many students from out of state cite three factors that drew their attention: a winning football tradition, an honors college and merit scholarships. Coach Saban earns $7 million a year, but the value of the marketing boost his team provides the school is immense.

The honors college, launched in 2003, has about 6,000 students. They qualify through high grades and test scores (minimum score of 28 on the ACT or 1250 on SAT reading and math), and they get benefits including seminars capped at 15 students per professor, as well as service and research opportunities.

Scholarships often clinch the deal. Alabama spends about $80 million a year on scholarships and grants for students without financial need (not counting athletic scholarships), twice as much as it does on need-based aid, according to data provided to analysts. Discounts to the out-of-state price — which total about $35,000 for tuition, fees, room and board — help the school land high-achievers normally wooed by more prestigious schools that can cost up to $60,000 a year.

“Really, it was about money and scholarships,” said Henry Poole, 19, a junior math major from San Diego. “I basically decided I didn’t want to spend $200,000, $300,000 or however much money. I decided I could make this work. There’s a lot of cool opportunities here.”

Amanda Bennett, 21, a senior in English and African American studies from Atlanta, said she turned down schools from the Ivy League and elsewhere to come here because Alabama offered the most competitive academic scholarship. “I couldn’t have asked for a better deal,” she said.

The influx from out of state is helping to reshape the image of a school famous as a scene of civil rights battles. In 1963, Gov. George C. Wallace, an ardent segregationist, made his “stand in the schoolhouse door” at Foster Auditorium to protest the admission of African Americans Vivian Malone and James Hood. In the past decade, the school has grown somewhat more racially diverse: In 2004, 83 percent of undergrads were white; in 2014, the share was 77 percent.

Last year, students elected the school’s first African American student government president since the 1970s. Elliot Spillers, 21, a senior in business management from Pelham, Ala., said support from non-residents helped propel his victory.

“Students here from Chicago, Texas, California — they’re changing the culture of this university,” he said. “They have been able to put pressure on this campus and make a difference — and change it for the better.”
Coach hopes center will be ‘stabilizing force’ for students

By Angel Coker
Staff Writer

To most, University of Alabama head football coach Nick Saban will be remembered for his success leading the Crimson Tide football team. But Saban is making his mark elsewhere, too.

The Saban family donated money and was instrumental in raising money to build the Saban Catholic Student Center at the St. Francis of Assisi University Parish where Saban is a parishioner. They broke ground Monday on the site where the new center will be built.

SEE FOUNDATION, A5

Terry Saban hugs Father Rick Chenault in front of a banner with an artists rendering of the new Saban Catholic Student Center on Monday. The new center will be located at St. Francis of Assisi University Parish and will be 4,000-square-feet. The center will serve the University's Catholic student population. GARY COSBY JR./STAFF PHOTO

“Because we moved around a lot, the church has been really almost a sanctuary for us and a stabilizing force in our family,” Saban said at the groundbreaking ceremony before he and his wife, Terry, donned hard hats and shifted dirt with shovels.

He said he is sure many students feel the same way about the church.

He and his wife wanted to be instrumental in helping provide a new center that would allow students to gather, socialize, think about their faith and be affected by positive leadership in an effort to develop solid, moral, spiritual character and be successful in life, Saban said.

“It’s a great resource for students being able to have somewhere to congregate, just get to know each other, get to know God,” said Elijah Kuhn, a junior chemical engineering major at UA from Denver, Colorado, who has been an active member at the church since his freshman year. “Here at St. Francis, I’ve met every single one of my friends ... and being able to have this new student center will allow more people to come in and just grow in everybody’s relationships with each other.”

The 4,600-square-foot student center will have three main rooms: a quiet room for studying and educational purposes, a rec room with TVs and gaming tables and a gathering area. It is expected to be complete by the start of the fall semester in August.

The cost for the center is an estimated $2 million.

“We’re quadrupling our space dedicated to the students,” said the Rev. Tom Ackerman, pastor of St. Francis. “Up until now, we had a table to study on, a ping-pong table right next to it, and a pool table next to that, and then a place for watching television and couches and having that all sort of in one room. (Now) we’re splitting that all into three rooms.”

The 1974 church that once stood on the site where the student center is to be built was demolished in December. A new St. Francis of Assisi Church, more than double the size of the 1974 church, was built three years ago at a different spot on the property to accommodate the growth of the congregation.

With about 5,000 self-identifying Catholic students at UA and the church serving about 50 to 60 of those students in a typical weekend, the students needed a large facility, Ackerman said.

“(The student center will give students) the opportunity to come here and experience fellowship with one another and support one another and engage in different activities,” he said.
CAPITOL SCHOOL

Big Al inspires kids to write stories

Young authors read works at Bryant Museum

By Leila Beem Núñez

Special to The Tuscaloosa News

Students from a Capitol School elementary class huddled together on the floor of UA's Paul W. Bryant Museum Friday morning. In unison, they shouted “Roll Tide” and then listened attentively as classmates went up one by one to read stories they wrote about UA's mascot, Big Al.

Teacher Missy Richey said her class has been learning adjectives and that they modeled their stories after children's writer Eric Carle's popular book, "Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?" Instead of a brown bear, the children incorporated Big Al and described what they would see at an Alabama football game, like a "talented band member" and a "serious Coach Saban." They accompanied their stories with their own illustrations.

“We used Eric Carle’s idea,” Richey said. “And with the great 16th national championship at the University of Alabama, I put two and two together and thought, ‘Hey, let's write a book, ‘Big Al, Big Al, What Do You See?’”

Capitol School student Yemi McKnight, 8, was one of the first to read his story before his classmates, ranging in age from 7 to 9. He said he was excited to be at the museum and that he had learned a lot about using adjectives with his

SEE STORIES, B3

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class in the last week while writing their stories.

"It took me about a week to write it," McKnight said. "I had to come up with a lot of different things, and it was really fun."

McKnight said his favorite part of his story was including his "wonderful grandfather" as a sight he would see at an Alabama football game. He remembered a game they went to together this past season.

"He brought me to a game, and it was in fall, and it was one of the first games we were having and it was surprisingly warm, so he was wearing shorts," McKnight said, pointing at his illustration.

The students also scattered around the museum to look at the exhibits. Working in groups and armed with iPads, they took pictures to use in creating informative slideshows. Richey said that for the children to take in all the sights in the museum hands-on was the best way for them to learn.

"You don't just go to a museum and just look — you do things," she said. "So we're learning by doing and then we're carrying it over when we go back to school."

Jan Scorlock, who works at the museum, said the children did a good job reading their stories in front of their classmates and cameras.

"To be able to read with a big group ... (looking) over your shoulder — that's hard to do," Scorlock said.

Richey said she was pleased with the field trip and with the work of her students. She said things like editing their stories were sometimes challenging for the children, but all were able to create their own books.

"We've learned, as Bear Bryant would say, that hard work and determination work," Richey said.
Local biotech company begins clinical trials at UAB

By: Alan Alexander

A Birmingham biotech startup has begun clinical trials at the University of Alabama at Birmingham Comprehensive Cancer Center for its new method of monitoring cancer patients via a single drop of blood.

Circulogene Theranostics, which we pegged as one of Birmingham's startups to watch this year, in November launched its propriety liquid biopsy technology that expedites cancer diagnosis and allows for more targeted treatment of up to 10 different types of cancer. The company enriches circulating cell-free DNA from a single drop of blood to generate patient-specific reports for oncologists on the best treatment.

It's a new method that medical researchers say could save cancer treatment centers and patients thousands of dollars and valuable time.

Circulogene Theranostics CEO Mike Mullen said the trials cover multiple tumor types and include 400 patients, a number that is expected to increase as the company begins to work with more oncologist investigators. He expects some of the findings to be presented at various cancer scientific sessions in June.

"We're eager to work with such a highly respected group of researchers who recognize the unique ability of our proprietary enrichment technique to provide maximal DNA data output with minimal input," Mullen said. "We look forward to aligning with the world-renowned UAB cancer center to further evaluate the effectiveness of our droplet-volumes-of-blood technology."
Zika: Unfinished Business

By: Roger Sergel

Experts discuss the Zika-microcephaly link and the world's response thus far

The emergency of Zika virus in the Western Hemisphere has provided yet another challenge to the world's public health community. Nine months after Zika was first detected in Brazil, clinicians, researchers, and health officials are grappling with a number of unanswered questions:

- How solid is the link between Zika and microcephaly?
- Has the public health response been sufficient?
- What is the outlook for the U.S.?

MedPage Today invited four infectious disease specialists to discuss these issues. They are:

Richard Whitley, MD, co-director, Division of Pediatric Infectious Diseases, University of Alabama at Birmingham, and past president of the Infectious Disease Society of America (IDSA)

Amesh Adalja, MD, senior associate at the UPMC Center for Health Security, and member of IDSA's public health committee

Christopher Ohl, MD, professor of medicine, Section on Infectious Diseases, Wake Forest Baptist Health

Antonio Crespo, MD, Orlando Health Physicians Infectious Disease Group
Medical detectives

Doctors at UAB often end ‘diagnostic odyssey’ for families seeking answers to medical anomalies

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S

tephanie Smith’s third child, Gage, was different from the start. He didn’t cry like a normal baby, and as he grew, he missed most major milestones, she said.

Smith enrolled her son in physical therapy and sought answers from medical doctors, who couldn’t pinpoint a problem with her son. They diagnosed his delay and provided a bleak prognosis that he might never learn to walk, talk or take care of himself.

Gage defied expectations and learned to communicate and read at a third-grade level. Then, when he was 9, he began complaining about pain in his hips.

Smith made an appointment with a doctor, who took an X-ray and immediately referred the family to Miami Children’s Hospital.

“The doctor said, ‘He has the bones of a 90-year-old man,’ ” Smith said.

Gage’s bones appeared to be breaking down. But that wasn’t all — Smith’s two youngest children, Aiden and Mandalynn, began to have learning problems as they entered school, and also suffered a mysterious breakdown in bone that caused crippling pain.

Gage traveled to Tampa and Orlando, where Smith said doctors performed a bone biopsy.

“The doctor came out in the middle of

SEE DOCTORS, A6

“There are things that are, in a certain sense, new discoveries. We find things that no one has ever seen before.”

Dr. Bruce Korf, director of the Undiagnosed Diseases Program

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surgery,” Smith said. “He said, ‘I’ve never seen anything like it in my life. You can take your finger and press on his bone and it’s like a kitchen sponge.’”

The biopsy didn’t provide any useful clues as to what was ailing the Smith children. Nor did subsequent tests performed in South Carolina. Doctors simply identified all three children as suffering from an unknown bone disease, and tried to treat the symptoms.

The Smith family moved to Boaz and began bringing the children to UAB; eventually landing in the office of Dr. Robb Lowe, a pediatric rheumatologist who treated the two youngest children.

Lowe typically treats children with juvenile rheumatoid arthritis and other autoimmune diseases, which he almost immediately ruled out for the Smith children. Still, he kept the children in his care, since he often encountered patients with confusing clusters of symptoms, he said.

“We get a lot of mystery kids in rheumatology,” Lowe said. “I have a collection of kids. I don’t know what they have, but I don’t tell them to go away because they have no other place to go.”

Lowe referred the family to the newly created Undiagnosed Diseases Program, a partnership between UAB and HudsonAlpha Institute for Biotechnology that uses innovative whole exome sequencing to identify the genetic causes of debilitating diseases. The program launched in 2013.

After more than two decades of searching, the program finally found an answer for the Smiths. The three youngest children suffer from a disease called mucolipidosis III, which impairs a cell’s ability to process waste.

The disease is so rare that only about 650 cases have been diagnosed worldwide, Smith said. Both parents must carry the gene that causes the disorder, and each baby has a 1-in-4 chance of developing the disorder, according to the National Organization for Rare Disorders.

For the Smiths, diagnosis won’t lead to a cure, but it does provide some answers.

“It has helped with being more aware of what to expect,” Smith said, “and not having everyone think that you’re crazy.”

Lowe has also started Mandalynn on an experimental treatment that has showed promise for patients in New Zealand. Soon after she began the treatment, her mother said her teacher noticed improvement in her attention.

Dr. Bruce Korf, director of the Undiagnosed Diseases Program, said the clinic was launched to help families like the Smiths. So far, about 100 patients have been admitted to the program. Not all of them have received diagnoses, but several have, Korf said.

Patients typically arrive at the clinic with large medical files that must be reviewed by physicians, Korf said. “Sometimes we have to sort through one to two decades of medical records,” Korf said.

After the records have been reviewed, patients may be offered cutting-edge genetic tests.

“Often, it ends the diagnostic odyssey,” Korf said. “For some patients, it really changed their course of treatment.”

Late last year, officials from UAB announced the creation of a new clinic at Children’s of Alabama that will provide improved services to pediatric patients.

Korf said clinic doctors have diagnosed diseases such as mucolipidosis III, which are known but rare, alongside conditions that have only been identified one or two times.

The clinic can also provide some answers for patients and families suffering from conditions that have never been identified in medical literature, he said.

“There are things that are, in a certain sense, new discoveries,” Korf said. “We find things that no one has ever seen before.”
UAB cancer center urges HPV vaccine

Amy Yurkanin  ayurkanin@al.com

Officials from the UAB Comprehensive Cancer Center have joined the leaders of other top cancer centers to urge more widespread use of the cancer-preventing HPV vaccine.

Only about 40 percent of 11- and 12-year-olds in the United States receive all three doses of the vaccine, which can prevent 90 percent of cervical cancers, said Dr. Warner Huh, director of the UAB Division of Gynecologic Oncology.

In Australia, where the vaccine is mandatory and used by more than 75 percent of preteens, doctors have observed a huge drop in abnormal pap smears and cervical cancer cases, Huh said.

The human papillomavirus, or HPV, causes about 27,000 new cancer diagnoses each year, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The virus also causes genital warts.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration approved Gardasil, the HPV vaccine, in 2006. A 2014 version of the vaccine protects against even more strains of the virus.

Huh said the campaign is aimed at parents and doctors. Pediatricians are responsible for advising most families about the vaccine, Huh said.

"Most pediatricians will never see a case of cervical cancer," he said, "so there's a bit of a disconnect."

A strong recommendation from a pediatrician has been shown to convince parents to vaccinate their children. Current guidelines recommend the vaccine for girls and boys younger than 13.

It can prevent certain types of anal and throat cancers in addition to cervical cancer.

According to a coalition of cancer centers, the number of HPV-related cancers in the United States translates to a new diagnosis every 20 minutes.

Huh said some parents may have heard alarming reports about suspected side effects, but stressed the vaccine is safe.

"I will tell you with great confidence that this is the most scrutinized vaccine, and one of the safest vaccines developed," said Huh, who has been involved in the research and development of HPV vaccines.
UAB raises minimum wage to $11 an hour

Kelsey Stein  kstein@al.com

The state’s largest employer — UAB and UAB Medicine — plans to raise employees’ minimum wage to $11 an hour beginning in March.

UAB employs more than 23,000 faculty and staff. The institution currently pays $8.24 an hour, about a dollar higher than the federally mandated minimum wage.

The change marks UAB’s first minimum wage increase since 2007. It goes into effect with the March 20 pay period and will appear on the April 8 paychecks of more than 1,100 employees.

Based on national best practices at other universities, the minimum wage for part-time, temporary student-workers will remain the federal minimum wage of $7.25.

“This will continue to provide good opportunities for our students and allow them to remain competitive for these positions they enjoy,” Chief Human Resource Officer Alesia Jones said.

The increase gives UAB employees a slightly higher minimum than the newly implemented citywide wage floor. Last summer, the Birmingham City Council voted to raise the minimum wage to $8.50 in July 2016 and again to $10.10 in July 2017.
2016 TED Prize wish reveal to be streamed live at UAB Hill Student Center

By Tiffany Westry

University of Alabama at Birmingham associate professor and 2016 TED Prize winner Sarah Parcak, Ph.D., will reveal her wish to change the world from the TED2016 stage in Vancouver on Tuesday, Feb. 16, and the event will be live-streamed at a UAB watch party that is free and open to the public.

UAB invites the Birmingham community to join us for a TEDxUAB Live event to see what Parcak plans to do with the prestigious TED Prize. The event will take place at the newly opened Hill Student Center ballroom, 1400 University Blvd. Doors open at 6 p.m., and remarks will begin at 6:45, followed by the live stream at 7. Refreshments will be provided.

“This is an exciting time for UAB, Birmingham and the local TEDx community,” said Wes Lybrand with TEDxUAB. “Due to a shift in programming this year, the live broadcast will be available only to licensed TEDx organizers. We’re happy to partner with the university to provide a live stream for the community to share in this transformational event and learn more about Dr. Parcak’s efforts to preserve and protect ancient sites around the world.”

Each year, TED, the nonprofit devoted to Ideas Worth Spreading, awards the TED Prize to one exceptional individual and gives him or her the chance to conceive and launch a high-impact project — “a wish” offered to the winner without restriction. Parcak is a pioneer of space archaeology and has earned acclaim for being among the first to apply satellite imaging to locate archaeological sites in Egypt.

Parcak is a professor of anthropology in the UAB College of Arts and Sciences. She is a National Geographic fellow, TED senior fellow and founder of the UAB Laboratory for Global Observation. She has gained international attention for satellite mapping all of Egypt and unearthing 17 potential unknown pyramids, 1,000 tombs and 3,100 settlements. Parcak and her team have since uncovered thousands of additional ancient sites across Europe, the Mediterranean and the North Atlantic, and also have used satellite technology to map extensive looting in post-revolution Egypt.

The first TED Prize was awarded in 2005, born out of the TED Conference and a vision by the world’s leading entrepreneurs, innovators and entertainers to launch a global project that marries the recipient’s “wish” with TED’s global community.

The original prize: $100,000 and the TED community’s range of talent and expertise. What began as an unparalleled experiment to leverage the resources of the TED community has evolved into a $1 million award and an ambitious effort to spur global-scale change.

From Bono’s the ONE Campaign (’05 recipient) to Jamie Oliver’s Food Revolution (’10) to JR’s Inside Out Project (’11), Sugata Mitra’s School in a Cloud (’13), Charmian Gooch’s call to eliminate anonymous corporations (’14) and StoryCorps founder Dave Isay’s (’15) wish to take the platform global, the TED Prize has helped to combat poverty, take on religious intolerance, improve global health, tackle child obesity, advance education and inspire art around the world.

This is the first year TED Prize nominations for the $1 million award will be on a rolling basis.
Breakthrough: Scientists detect Einstein-predicted ripples, UAH researcher involved in discovery

By: Staff

Gravitational waves are a reality, according to scientists from an institution that has been hoping to observe them.

"We have detected gravitational waves. We did it," said David Reitze, executive director of LIGO, the Laser Interferometer Gravitational-Wave Observatory.

The discovery, based on ripples in space-time detected by LIGO, supports a prediction made by Albert Einstein that’s essential to his general theory of relativity. The ripples LIGO detected are based on the merging of two black holes, Reitze said.

"What’s really exciting is what comes next," he said. "I think we’re opening a window on the universe — a window of gravitational wave astronomy."

LIGO is described in a statement as “two identical detectors carefully constructed to detect incredibly tiny vibrations from passing gravitational waves,” one located in Louisiana, the other in Washington State. The project was created by scientists from Caltech and MIT and funded by the National Science Foundation.

Research scientist Dr. Tyson Littenberg at The University of Alabama in Huntsville (UAH) Center for Space Plasma and Aeronomic Research (CSPAR) helped the LIGO team develop sophisticated computer algorithms that comb through data and extract physical information from a detection. Dr. Littenberg has been involved in LIGO-related research since 2007 and applied on behalf of UAH for the university to become a member of the LIGO Scientific Collaboration. UAH was accepted in 2015.

Once it appeared that waves were detected, Dr. Littenberg found himself at the center of the action.

"I knew within a few hours of the detection on Sept. 14 that we had something big. Really big," he said. "Two of the data analysis efforts that I work on were right at the center of the action. Our job is to take a small segment of data that has been identified as being potentially interesting, and do an exhaustive analysis to figure out what the gravitational wave signal looked like in our detectors. It took months of analysis, re-analysis, checking, rechecking, and re-rechecking of the results before we were ready to say with confidence that we had something, and precisely what we had. The stakes are so high, we tried over and over again to prove ourselves wrong until, exhausted, we admitted defeat and said, "This is really it."

Szabolcs Marka, a physics professor at Columbia University, told CNN that "we will be able to study not just Einstein’s general relativity — we’ll be able to find objects we only imagined would exist. We should see a universe that has never been observed before.”

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Marka said to think of it as a “cosmic microphone,” an incredibly precise listening device that can detect distortions in space-time, the fabric of the universe. It’s so precise it can detect changes the size of a soccer ball in the entire Milky Way galaxy.

The discovery of gravitational waves is like opening another of our senses, Marka told CNN’s Rachel Crane: hearing the universe as well as seeing it.

“And when we hear the universe, we will learn about the secret life of black holes — their birth, their death, their marriage, their feeding. We will hear when a black hole eats a neutron star,” Marka said. “Nobody has ‘seen’ that before. We will not only understand it, we will ‘see’ it. It’s the most fascinating thing I can imagine.”

Indeed, black holes are a holy grail of the gravitational wave concept. To date, we’ve been able only to see their aftereffects — black holes themselves remain a conjecture. Discovery of gravitational waves would confirm their existence.

“It’s the first time the universe has spoken to us through gravitational waves,” said Reitze. “Up to now we’ve been deaf to them.”
UAH looks to detect engine, machine health using vibrations

By: Travis Leder

Our vehicles make a lot of noises and vibrations, but how are you supposed to know when something just doesn't feel right about your vehicle?

UAH scientists are trying to solve this problem.

"We want to detect problems before they happen using vibration," says UAH principal scientist Rodrigo Teixeira, who patented a patterned algorithm which analyzes machine vibrations in hopes of detecting faults.

Teixeira says this artificial intelligence design has proved to achieve 90 percent accuracy in blind tests. He hopes it will advance beyond the trial stage and lead to technology mechanics can use to figure out if something is wrong with your engine before you have to empty your wallet.

"You hear something different in the engine while you're driving, and then you stop at your mechanic while you do a regular check," explains Teixeira, "Now you say, 'Okay. I hear some funny noises. Could you check the engine?'" Teixeira hopes to take this technology to the marketplace, where it could potentially have a much broader application.

"We want to do that for not just cars, but for all machinery."

Teixeira says the algorithm could potentially be applied when testing military helicopters, wind turbines and even power plants.
UAH secures $500,000 for new business incubator

By: Travis Leder

UAH continues to find additional funding sources for its $12M business incubator designed to help support startups in high-tech fields while creating an additional network for collaboration and growth in Huntsville.

The proposed Invention to Innovation Center (I²C) is receiving an additional $500,000 from the U.S. Dept. of Commerce Economic Development Administration (EDA) which will go toward the construction of the Virtual Proof of Concept Center (POCC): The Growth & Acceleration of Products (GAP) Project. This is the university's effort to further ideas and technologies toward the marketplace.

UAH received $3M from the EDA in September and had originally hoped to secure all funding before the end of 2015, but university leaders have revised its timetable for the incubator.

"The I²C is in the planning stage now and will be somewhere around a 33-month effort," says UAH Office for Proposal Development director Dr. Virginia "Suzy" Young. "This task will help us put in place the necessary processes to get a head start on the center's mission by providing a 'virtual proof of concept' center so we can be ready to operate as soon as possible."

UAH was among 25 awardees receiving a total of $10M in funding from the EDA.
This 'N' That: Fulton's inspiration came from being an observer

By: Anna Gibbs

I sat down this week with Charlotte Fulton at her lovely home to talk about her life and the play, “Arise and Build.”

Charlotte is originally from Big Cove, near Huntsville, and graduated from Gurley High School. She is one of nine children.

Most of the books she read as a child were passed down to her by older siblings, so she read what they liked. Her two favorite books are, “To kill a Mockingbird” by Harper Lee and “Huckleberry Finn” by Mark Twain. She also likes to read books by James Michener.

Growing up, she said her house was very noisy because of all the siblings. As a result, she became an observer and listener. This is where her writing inspiration came from.

She received her degree from the University of Alabama in Huntsville, and majored in English and secondary education. She taught English in Madison County for six years.

Charlotte, her husband Bruce and their two sons moved to Limestone County in 1978, “because it was less expensive than Madison County at the time,” she says. At first, they lived out in the county and then moved to Athens. She then began her career in journalism and worked 15 years as a features writer for The News Courier, beginning in 1990.

“At the time, you had to pay for the right to see a movie,” she said. “I decided to start writing about the subjects I was interested in. I became interested in the history of Athens and its traditions.”

“Arise and Build” is based on the old Trinity School in Athens. Charlotte began writing about Trinity because the subject matter intrigued her. Richard Martin was working on restoring the school, she said, and asked her to write a book. It took six years to finish. She then developed it into “Arise and Build” with help from Frank Travis.

Proceeds from the historical musical, which is being staged this weekend at Athens State University's McCandless Hall, will benefit the new Pincham-Lincoln Center. The center was named after two prominent Trinity graduates.

Tickets can be purchased at Athens-Limestone Visitors Center or Kenny's Kutz.

Charlotte has written three books, though she's not sure when she may write another. She did, however, share an article she had just read about a 100-year-old man who published a book. We were both impressed by that.

Don't forget the Girl Scouts will be selling cookies from 3-5 p.m. on Friday, Feb. 12, in front of Mattie's Antiques in the Hometown Shopping Center on Jefferson Street.
If you have any news to share, please contact me at agibbs@my.athens.edu or P.O. Box 553 Athens, AL 35612-0553. I hope to hear from you soon.

One more thing — when you finish reading this article please call your mother and tell her you love her. I sure wish I could call mine.
Estela's Escuelas heads to Da Vinci School.

By: Staff

EL PASO, Texas - Schools in El Paso are coming up with exciting ways to get students interested in "STEM" fields ... science, technology, engineering and math.

ABC-7 visited the Da Vinci School for Science and the Arts Thursday where students worked with engineers from the University of Alabama at Huntsville to launch a balloon with a payload into the atmosphere. UAH is the premiere university pipeline for NASA recruits.

Students said the exercise gave them an idea of how engineers work together during special projects.

One student told ABC-7, "even if you're not going into anything that does not have to do with engineering and science, it helps you a lot because you learn how to work with people because you're put into group and sometimes you don't want to work with some individuals but it helps you work with them and know their strengths and their weaknesses and it helps you to learn yours as well."

Students enrolled in the step program at Irvin and Montwood high schools also participated in the activity.
Hottest Year On Record? Claim Not Backed Up By The Data

By: Staff

Environment: The narrative says we’re living in dangerous times as man’s carbon dioxide emissions heat Earth. But a scientist testifying before Congress showed that the temperature record telling that story can’t be trusted.

When the media reported — gleefully because it allowed them to advance their agenda — that 2015 was the hottest year on record, the temperature data that supposedly proved this was collected from surface-based measurements. Is this data trustworthy? Not according to John Christy, distinguished professor of atmospheric science, Alabama’s state climatologist and director of the Earth System Science Center at the University of Alabama in Huntsville.

Christy is a co-author of a paper that showed that about two-thirds of 1,218 government weather stations in the continental U.S. were located on sites that distort readings. These stations fix gauges near heat sources, such as air conditioner exhausts, urban structures that give off heat, and other objects “with unnatural thermal mass.” Christy told the House Science Committee on Wednesday that “it is difficult to adjust for these contaminating factors to extract a pure dataset for greenhouse detection because often the non-climatic influence comes along very gradually just as is expected of the response to the enhanced greenhouse effect.”

Other factors that “render surface temperature datasets to be of low effectiveness,” said Christy, include “lack of systematic geographical coverage in time, unsystematic measuring methods and instrumentation in time and space, the point measurement represents at best a tiny, local area, and is easily impacted by slight changes in the surroundings, which can occur for example when a station moves.”

Sea surface data also appear to be unreliable. Christy said water temperature trends at a 1-meter depth “do not track well with those of the air temperature just above the water (3m), even if both are measured on the same buoy over 20 years.”

Christy believes the more accurate gauge of global temperature is found by satellites and balloons, which measure atmospheric temperatures. It is “much more coherent in space and time in terms of its variations. It is not affected by human development at the surface. It is measured systematically,” he said.

Though satellite and balloon measurements provide a different temperature record than surface-based data, they are consistent with each other. Does this mean we should trust them more? That’s a logical judgment.

Satellite and balloon measurements differ, as well, from the climate change models that predict catastrophic warming. While the average of 102 Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change climate models project sharply climbing temperatures, the observed temperatures from balloon and satellite measurements move largely sideways.
"The models overwarm the atmosphere by a factor of about 2.5," Christy told the committee, "indicating the current theory is at odds with the facts."

Christy said the discrepancy "is not a short-term, specially selected episode, but represents the past 37 years," more than a third of a century.

"This is also the period with the highest concentration of greenhouse gases and thus the period in which the response should be of largest magnitude," he added.

Christy also told House members that climate change is still not well understood — the uncertainties are many — and that the impact of regulations on climate, such as those that are implemented in compliance with the Paris agreement, "will not be attributable or detectable."

Despite the work of Christy and others, we will continue to hear about 2015 being the hottest year ever. The howls will be unrelenting, the demands that we do more to stop climate change more desperate.

But the only fever will be on the brows of those who are obsessed with continuing the narrative.
Black History Month: Joy Agee, trailblazer in science

By: Demetria McClenton

February is Black History Month.

WAAY-TV will highlight trailblazers who are making a difference in the Tennessee Valley every Friday this month.

For this series, I wanted to find someone who excelled in science and/or engineering and I was urged to contact Joy Agee.

Agee is a PhD candidate at the University of Alabama in Huntsville doing research at HudsonAlpha.

I was immediately impressed by Agee’s determination and drive. She is a young woman who is following her passion and encouraging others along the way.

Halfway through the interview, Agee told me she became interested in researching one of the most aggressive forms of breast cancer after a close friend died.

That friend was 24 years old.

Since that day, she has made it her passion to find a way to cure or reduce the number of people diagnosed with breast cancer.

And her hard work is paying off.

After five years of research, Agee and her team found two proteins that makes cancer more likely to spread.

That discovery has fueled her passion to one day open a science lab and find more breakthroughs.
Climate expert John Christy to Congress: 'I would not trust model projections'

By: Paul Gattis

Testifying at a Congressional hearing on Tuesday, climate expert John Christy of Huntsville told the panel that models depicting a dangerous climb in temperature are flawed.

And it's on those flawed models, Christy said, that the Obama administration is basing policy.

"I would not trust model projections on which all policy is based here because they just don't match facts," said Christy, director of the Earth System Science Center at the University of Alabama in Huntsville.

Christy – a frequent invitee to testify at Congressional hearings -- appeared before the House Committee on Science, Space and Technology. The hearing at the GOP-controlled committee sought to undermine arrangements Obama made during the Paris conference in December.

The title of the hearing: Paris Climate Promise: A Bad Deal for America.

In his testimony, Christy focused on the science of his research at UAH and did not delve into policy. He displayed what's become a familiar graph that illustrates climate model projections overstating rising temperatures alongside data UAH has collected from satellites.

"I want to begin with the chart on display," Christy said in his opening statement. "This particular chart has caused considerable anxiety for the climate establishment who want to believe the climate system is overheating according the theory of how extra greenhouse gases are supposed to affect it.

"The message here is very simple – the theory does not match the observations as measured independently by both satellites and balloons."

Projected findings are a poor substitute for actual findings, Christy told the committee.

"It is a bold strategy on the part of many in the climate establishment to put one's confidence in theoretical models and to attack the observed data," he said. "To a scientist, this just doesn't make sense."

Christy closed his opening statement with his oft-repeated description of removing the United States from the earth altogether and the impact it would have on the climate.

"If the United States had disappeared in 2015, no more people, no cars, no industry, the impact on the climate system would be a tiny few hundredths of a degree over 50 years – and that's if you believe climate models," Christy said.

See next page
Asked during the hearings about rising sea levels and droughts that have been connected with climate change, Christy dismissed the singular events as adequate testimony.

"There's a little bit of hyperbole in things that people see changing right now," Christy said. "They've always changed, I suspect."

Christy also defended using satellite data to measure temperatures in the atmosphere as a more accurate measure of climate change rather than surface temperatures – which is what the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration uses.

More study is needed to better understand the science of climate change, Christy said.

"The key metric, the bulk atmospheric temperature, is not obeying what climate models say," he said. "The real world is not going along with that rapid warming. So that should tell us our understanding is not sufficient to explain what is happening. In the real world, we don't know how CO2 (carbon dioxide) is affecting the climate.

"The models need to go back to the drawing board."
The Weather Bureau Might Be Underestimating Australian Warming: Here's Why

By: Neville Nicholls

It's all a matter of perspective. Australia image from www.shutterstock.com

Former prime minister's business advisor Maurice Newman fired another attack at the Australian Bureau of Meteorology on Monday, arguing in The Australian that the weather bureau needs to be investigated for fiddling with the climate data that show Australia is getting warmer.

Technically known as “homogenisation”, the practice of removing biases from historical climate data has been well defended. In fact, you can do it yourself.

In his latest salvo, Newman claims that estimates of surface temperature trends by weather bureaus “diverge increasingly with satellite and radiosonde datasets”, and thus call into question the “integrity” of the surface data and the processing of those data.

This is a very easy claim to check, and interestingly it shows the weather bureau might actually be underestimating warming.

Surface v satellite

You can find yearly average Australian temperatures at the Bureau of Meteorology. I have plotted the mean annual temperature for Australia, expressed as difference from the 1979-2015 average, in the graph below.

I have only plotted the data since 1979, since that is the first year for which satellite estimates of temperatures are available. The Bureau estimates of average annual Australian temperature for each year are shown as the thin blue line. The linear trend is shown as a thick blue line.

The satellite data for the temperature of the lower atmosphere, averaged across Australia, are available from the scientists at the University of Alabama at Huntsville. I have also plotted these data in the graph below (as a thin red line).

These are the latest version of the satellite data (version 6.0). As with the surface data, I have plotted the satellite data as differences from their 1979-2015 average. The linear trend of the satellite estimates of temperature over Australia is shown as a thick red line.

You can see immediately that the two graphs vary up and down quite similarly, but that the two graphs are indeed diverging. This is because the satellite estimates of Australian temperature show much stronger warming than do the surface temperatures measured by thermometers by the Bureau.

The Bureau data show warming at a rate of about 1.3°C per century, over the period 1979 to 2015. The satellite data reveal a warming rate of about 2.4°C per century over the same period.
Why the difference?

It is not surprising that the Bureau’s surface data and the satellite data are not identical. They measure two different things, and use very different data to do it.

The Bureau’s data are from thermometers at the surface. These data are adjusted to take into account possible sources of bias, such as the urban heat island effect or changes in the location of the thermometers.

The satellite data are from remote observations of radiation from the lower layers of the atmosphere, observed by a small number of satellites. These data have been adjusted for changes between satellites, changes in instrumentation, and even changes in the time of observation. (You can read a discussion of these adjustments here.)

But despite all these adjustments (to the satellite data and to the surface data), the two estimates of temperature averaged across Australia show quite similar variations between years, and both show substantial warming over the period for which we have satellite estimates.

But the stronger warming trend in the satellite data suggests that the Bureau, if anything, is underestimating the rate at which Australia is warming.

However, I suspect that the stronger warming shown by the satellite data in the graph above is incorrect.

In the graph below I’ve used a slightly older version of the satellite data still available from the University of Alabama.

Using the older version of the satellite data (that has somewhat different adjustments made by the University of Alabama scientists), the similarity with the Bureau’s estimates of Australian average temperature is even more striking.

And the satellite data show a warming trend much closer to the Bureau’s estimate (although the satellite data still exhibit slightly more warming over Australia than do the Bureau’s surface measurements).

But whichever version of the satellite data we use, there is no evidence from the satellite data that the Bureau is overestimating the rate of warming, and there is some reason to believe, if we were to trust the satellite data, that Australia may even be warming (slightly) faster than the Bureau’s data indicate.
Committee on Science, Space and Technology to Review Paris Climate Deal

By: Asha Glover

The House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology is scheduled to hold a hearing on the Paris climate agreement on Tuesday.

The hearing, titled “Paris Climate Promise: A Bad Deal for America,” will be held at 10 a.m and members and witnesses will discuss Obama administration pledges to reduce gas emission by 26 to 28 percent by 2025.

Steve Eule, the vice president for climate and technology at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce; Dr. John Christy, professor of atmospheric science and director of the Earth System Science Center at the University of Alabama in Huntsville; Dr. Andrew Steer, president and CEO of the World Resources Institute; and Steven Groves, a Bernard and Barbara Lomas senior research fellow at the Heritage Foundation are expected as witnesses.
Let science speak without bias

*Objective, rigorous science stands on its own merits*

By: Brian Ransom

I think the *Manitoba Co-operator* is an advocate for the theory that observed warming over the past century is dangerous climate change caused by greenhouse gas emissions partially resulting from agricultural use of fossil fuels and cattle ranching.

I'm skeptical about the theory of anthropogenic global warming (AGW) but I nevertheless faithfully read what the *Co-operator* prints on the subject in hope of seeing evidence of causal linkage between damaging weather events and greenhouse gas emissions. Three articles in the Jan. 21 edition caught my attention because together they point to reasons for skepticism.

Cam Dahl’s “What does ‘science based’ mean?” poses an excellent question whether one is considering pest management regulations or greenhouse emissions control standards. Readers will have heard it claimed that the science is conclusively settled regarding global warming.

It’s not settled and for good reasons. Daniel Bezte’s piece titled “Record warmth top weather story of 2015” provides one. Bezte, writing about the University of Alabama’s satellite measurements that usually show lower temperatures than surface measurements, comments that “What is interesting, or rather important about the University of Alabama in Huntsville, is that none of the funding for its work comes from oil, coal or industrial companies or from any private or special interest groups.”

So the source of funding determines the scientific results? Does this standard apply to funding from governments and organizations committed to killing our fossil fuel-based economy?

Research funding is overwhelmingly directed at supporting the theory of dangerous AGW while studies funded from other sources are routinely rejected and their author’s credibility attacked. This approach cannot in any meaningful sense lead to a “science-based” outcome.

The scientific method is about disproving conventional wisdom, not confirming it. Objectively, rigorous science stands on its own merits. But a world caught up in the theory of AGW is not objective.

Nevertheless, inconvenient facts emerge as in Lorraine Stevenson’s article “Agro-climate data is a ‘mismatch’ with overall trends.” Soil scientists at the University of Manitoba found facts that conflict with climate change forecasts. The headline calls them a mismatch. Perhaps it is the forecasts flowing from the “settled science” of climate change that are a mismatch with reality insofar as being meaningful to farmers.
Scientist Creates AI Algorithm to Monitor Machinery Health

By: UAH

An artificial intelligence algorithm created by University of Alabama in Huntsville (UAH) principal research scientist Dr. Rodrigo Teixeira greatly increases accuracy in diagnosing the health of complex mechanical systems.

"The ability to extract dependable and actionable information from the vibration of machines will allow businesses to keep their assets running for longer while spending far less in maintenance. Also, the investment to get there will be just software," says Dr. Teixeira, who is the technical lead for the Health and Usage Monitoring Systems (HUMS) analytics project at UAH’s Reliability and Failure Analysis Laboratory (RFAL).

In blind tests using data coming from highly unpredictable and real-life situations, the algorithm consistently achieves over 90 percent accuracy, says Dr. Teixeira.

"This technology is in the trial stage. We are seeing how it performs in the field. If the results so far hold, we will build credibility and hopefully gain acceptance with our Dept. of Defense partners," he says. "At the same time, we are expanding our client base to include the private sector. There, we believe we will have an even larger impact in the way they do business."

Typical vibration analysis searches for anomalies in the vibration of machinery such as engines and gearboxes. These changes in vibration can signal wear and future maintenance needs long before the machinery fails.

"Any machine shakes and vibrates, and it will vibrate a little differently when there is something wrong, like a fault," says Dr. Teixeira. "If you can detect a fault before it becomes serious, then you can plan ahead and reduce the time machinery spends idle in the shop. As we all know, time is money."

The difficulty in extracting useful information from machinery vibration is the amount of random noise that exists in normal operating environments. Finding that useful information has been a "needle-in-a-haystack" problem. Current monitoring algorithms assume that vibrations are static and that signal and noise can be differentiated by frequency.

"The problem is that those assumptions never hold true in real life," Dr. Teixeira says. "Instead, what we have done is to take an artificial intelligence algorithm and 'teach' it the basic principles of physics that govern faults in a vibrating environment."

Dr. Teixeira's approach has provided the U.S. Army with a new way of producing actionable information from helicopter HUMS data, says Chris Sautter, RFAL director for reliability.

"His approach, using machine learning, permits the analysis to look at the history of the data output rather than just a single flight. We train the algorithm much like you train your cell phone to understand your voice," Sautter says. "When the particular component we are monitoring sees
vibration signatures that no longer reflect the normal performance of a component, an alert is passed to the maintenance team."

The RFAL algorithm fits easily into the Condition Based Maintenance paradigm that has been adopted across the Dept. of Defense and the commercial aviation sector, Sautter says. "Having this capability and the ability to enhance the maintenance policy of large fleet operators has presented UAH and the Reliability Lab with a host of new clients for our research capabilities."
With severe storms expected, UAH weather researchers gear up to study them

By: Paul Gattis

When you work in a building called SWIRLL, you're kind of always looking forward to days like Tuesday.

Days with the prospect of severe weather, days where tornadoes are not only possible but expected.

And that's why Tuesday is a big day for weather researchers at the University of Alabama in Huntsville.

The new weather research lab at UAH known as SWIRLL – Severe Weather Institute and Radar & Lightning Laboratories – opened in 2014. But Tuesday is the first time the building's facilities have been fully operational and severe storms were expected.

In other words, it seemed like a second opening.

"This is exciting for everyone," said Ryan Wade, a lecturer and researcher at SWIRLL. "We're able to spend time here in the operations center, which is the command and control of everything we can see. We can see where all of our vehicles are in the field. This gives us that opportunity. We're excited.

"There's also a level of anticipation of what's going to happen. But with the excitement comes we have to make sure everyone is as safe as they can be when they go out into the field."

As many as 40 students were mobilizing Tuesday along with UAH faculty to turn the storms into a sort of laboratory. Five students were joining Kevin Knupp, an atmospheric science professor at UAH and the school's tornado expert, in rural Lawrence County near Courtland to collect data as the storms approached.

Another group is stationed at the SWIRLL building monitoring an array of data while another group is joining assistant professor Phillip Bitzer atop Monte Sano to study lightning.

While such preparations are standard at UAH when severe storms are expected, it's also an audition for Vortex Southeast – a national tornado study bringing in weather experts from across the country that will be based from the SWIRLL building starting on March 1.

"We're using this to train all of our students, all of our equipment with how SWIRLL works," Wade said. "And then we're also using this so that we're ready whenever everybody comes from elsewhere – all these government and university research groups – when they come here, we're ready. We're as professional as we can be."
About 25 students attended a late-morning briefing given by doctoral student Tony Lyza, who reviewed the computer models and science of the storms on a giant video screen in a jargon strangely devoid of common terms like "storms" and "tornadoes." Lots of references, though, to abstract things such as "boundary layers," "bulk shear" and "cape."

Students were preparing to join faculty for storms that could linger in north Alabama until 3 a.m. Wednesday.

"This could be an interesting afternoon," Lyza told the students.

For the group in the field in Lawrence County, UAH deployed two pieces of equipment to provide two different perspectives on the storms. One view with conventional radar, another with a laser, Wade said.

"It scans 360 degrees," Wade said of the laser, known as LIDAR (Light Detection And Ranging). "It scans slices, it scans vertical. It's like radar but it's a laser. With the radar, we're able to get the movement and intensity of the precipitation targets. With the LIDAR, because it's such a smaller beam width because it's a laser, we're getting closer to the actual air motion. We're picking up insects and pollen and dust. What the actual true air motion is so we can look and see if the wind shear is rapidly changing as the storm is moving in and if the low-level wind shear is increasing, then we know the storms are moving into a more tornadic environment.

"We pair them up so we're getting the in-storm environment with the radar and we're getting the out-of-storm environment that the storm is moving into with the LIDAR. And we'll be launching weather balloons from that system as well."

Bitzer liked the description that he would be playing with lightning.

"We're looking to get image lightning from two different vantage points," he said. "So maybe up on the mountain and here at UAH. And the idea would be to be able to take these two images and re-construct what lightning looks like three-dimensionally. We'll have two pictures and we'll do triangulation to see what it looks like in another dimension."

In lay terms, he'll be doing that with a super-duper fast camera.

"We can all see lightning," he said. "But once you start going really fast, we're talking about 30-40,000 frames per second. Really, really fast imaging. We actually see different parts of lightning than you can with your naked eye and regular cameras.

"Before the big bright part of lightning, there is something called a leader that comes in - barely faint, typically not visible to the naked eye. There is all these different braches that form when it comes out. It's the really fascinating part of the physics of lightning that we're trying to understand better."
Storms give UAH students hands-on experience

By: Amber Eady and Lauren Bale

Faculty and students with UAH's Severe Weather Institute Radar and Lightning Laboratories or SWRILL are out in the elements Tuesday night, tracking and studying these storms.

The weather balloon was launched early Tuesday afternoon. The purpose of the balloon is to track wind speed and temperature. The balloon went about 10 miles up into the sky. It was tracking wind at speeds of 30 miles per hour.

UAH students are getting hands on experience about how to rack and study storms. Some of the students are testing what they've learned in class for the first time. They plan on staying out there until the storms pass so they think they're in for a long night.

They should be moving into out vicinity maybe in a couple of hours and then as the night proceeds I think the structure of storms will change to squal line type, linear formations instead of the isolated super cells," said Kevin Knupp, UAH Atmospheric Science Professor.

It's going to be a long night for people across the Tennessee Valley as the threat from these storms will continue until early Wednesday morning.

The US National Weather Service Huntsville Alabama say the information received from this sounding will help them with the weather forecast Tuesday afternoon and evening.
UAH SWIRLL preparing to deploy ahead of the storms

By: Will Harkins

UAH students and professors are making preparations to deploy their vehicles and students to study Tuesday's storms.

During weather briefings Monday afternoon, they discussed the likelihood of severe storms and where they would be sending their radar, lidars, and weather balloons. Tuesday's deployment will provide the perfect opportunity to practice deployment before the research project Vortex Southeast arrives in March.

Vortex Southeast is a massive weather research project geared towards studying the unique storms and atmospheric conditions of southern severe weather. UAH will be at the center of the project and the students will be at the forefront of weather research.

Dr. Kevin Knupp, a professor of atmospheric science says "It's a practice but we are getting data also. Data sets that will contribute towards the scientific understanding of these storms."

As for the students, its a chance to get hands on experience with some of the most high tech equipment in the field of meteorology.

"Students play a valuable role in working with instrumentation of all types," according to Knupp. He went on to say "What we have that's unique is a whole spectrum of instruments including soundings, radars, lidars, and others."

This will be the first time SWIRLL's Operation Command Center will be up and running for a full deployment. Vortex Southeast is slated to begin on March 1 and run through the end of April.
UAH professor explains new dating rules

By: Demetria McClenton

February is known as the month of love.

In the 21st century, dating rules aren't the same as your grandparents, thanks to social media.

Dr. Pavica Sheldon, Assistant Professor of Communication Arts at The University of Alabama in Huntsville (UAH), had a student last fall who conducted research on mobile and online dating. The student found that most college students consider starting romantic relationships online to be socially acceptable. But, those who did not use social media for dating thought it was for "desperate" people.

Sheldon said Bryant's findings were consistent with a national online dating survey conducted in 2013, that found 59 percent of Internet users agreed "online dating is a good way to meet people," as opposed to 44 percent in 2005.

"The national study also found that 'online dating allows people to find a better match for themselves than meeting face-to-face'," Sheldon said. Additionally, she noted, only 21 percent of Internet users believed that 'people who use online dating sites are desperate' compared with 29 percent in 2005.

"Clearly, we see attitudes changing about online dating," Sheldon said. "People feel more at ease talking to someone online than face-to-face: nonverbal cues are missing so there is no potential for embarrassment.

In fact, several other studies have found that people want to form impressions in online settings just as much as they do in offline settings.

Even when nonverbal cues are missing, they might use cues that are available, and online users also communicate through private messaging and emailing at a deeper level."

To keep up with the fast-changing dating rules of social media Sheldon goes straight to the source, her students.

"New online dating terminology turns up almost daily," Sheldon said. "For instance, the term "phubbing" means being snubbed by someone who continuously uses their cell phone in the presence of your company.

"It basically means your romantic partner or significant other is phone snubbing you causing cell phone conflict and relationship trouble. Also the latest dating rule is this whole thing called"
"going Facebook official," which means that both partners have to be ready to announce their relationship publicly online."

Sheldon added that breaking up using cell phones has become so common among millennials that there is now a term for it: the "techno-brush off," which means breaking up via e-mail or text message.

"Just talking to my students I have learned so much about social media negatively affecting their relationships: from problems such as friending an old boyfriend or girlfriend, commenting on their photos and statuses - simple jealousy issues - to partner surveillance and conflict due to the relational dialectic of openness vs. closeness.

For example, when one partner discloses too much about the relationship - especially private secrets that the other partner does not want disclosed - this may cause turbulence!"

Sheldon said mobile dating apps like Tinder, Coffee Meets Bagel (CMB), and Hitch have made "hooking up" (also related to "Friends with Benefits FWB") an acceptable form of dating. "Research shows that between 42 and 60 percent of college students engage in FWB relationships. There is a shift to less formal relationship structures. FWB includes a casual sex relationship, normally with a trusted friend. Occasionally, it leads to long-term romantic relationship."

Sheldon offered some safeguards for online dating:

- Don't exchange personal information online.

- Choose a reputable online dating site/app.

- The Internet allows everyone the opportunity to be an amateur detective, conduct your own background check. Google the interested party's name and a history will be displayed online, and don't forget to check social media accounts.

- Check people search websites such as Intelius.

- Do you and your potential "date" have friends in common? If so, talk to the friends - better still make the first outing a double date

- When dating for the first time, tell a friend or family member about the date, meet in a public place and stay sober.
American Shakespeare Center on Tour coming to Huntsville

By: Beth Thames

They're coming next week, just as they've done for 19 years. The American Shakespeare Center on Tour, formerly the Blackfriars Stage Company, will come to town for three performances, all held at the University of Alabama in Huntsville Conference Training Center (the University Center).

The performances are held at 7 p.m. with a pre-show lecture by a UAH English professor at 6 p.m. The professors save time for questions, too, if audience members want a refresher.

The traveling troupe, based out of Staunton, Virginia, has performed in front of a full house each year. The audience is made up of students and people of all ages who remember studying Shakespeare or who are discovering him for the first time.

On Tuesday, "Julius Caesar" will be presented; on Wednesday, the featured play is "The Life of King Henry the Fifth," and on Thursday the players will present Oscar Wilde's "The Importance of Being Earnest," which has been called "a comic masterpiece."

Most of us have lines from Shakespeare stuck in our memory and some had to memorize passages to recite in school. So there's a joy that comes when the players on the stage say the famous lines and dozens of people in the audience whisper along with them. "Cowards die many times before their deaths; the valiant never taste of death but once." (Caesar)

Or, King Henry's "Band of brothers" speech, when Henry inspires his troops by telling them the lifelong honor they will gain by being present at the coming battle at Agincourt.

Though Oscar Wilde is not Shakespeare, he was brilliant and witty. One hundred and twenty years after the first performance of "The Importance of Being Earnest" the audience laughs at "It is awfully hard work doing nothing." (Algernon). Wilde fans can even order a tee shirt with this quotation on the front.

After the plays are over, there's time to meet the cast and shake hands with your favorite actor. This year's plays are sponsored by The Huntsville Literary Association, the UAH Humanities Center, COLSA Corporation, as well as local, state, and national grants.

Tickets are $15 for students, $20 for seniors and HLA members, and $25 for the general public. Tickets can be purchased via the HLA website (PayPal), the UAH English Department (call 256-824-6320) or at The Arts Council. For more information, contact Jeff Nelson (nelsonj@uah.edu)
Dirk Williams turned academics around, returned home to shine

Drew Champlin  dchamplin@al.com

For UAB’s Dirk Williams to come back home again, he had to go far away and around the southeast to get back right.

Williams was a star basketball player for Homewood during his freshman and sophomore year, but his grades suffered. So, he moved to Virginia to be with his father and improved academically at Williamsburg Christian Academy.

A prized prospect, everyone wanted the lean 6-foot-5 wing player who could shoot the lights out and jump out of the gym. But everyone in this case was all the major junior colleges, as Williams wasn’t academically qualified out of high school after getting behind early.

“I had to start over,” Williams said. “I started to realize how important academics were, and I got better and better every year.”

So he went to Tallahassee Community College in the Florida panhandle, got qualified and got recruited by major colleges before choosing UAB prior to his sophomore season. He had been committed to Virginia Tech before a coaching change, but said UAB coach Jerod Haase reminded him a lot of his coach in Williamsburg.

“That’s what made me interested in UAB,” Williams said. “Coming back home, when I hadn’t been here in four or five years, made it more exciting.”

Williams has developed into a key force for the Blazers (20-4, 10-1 Conference USA), who travel to Southern Miss (7-14, 4-6) Thursday night at 7 p.m.

He’s UAB’s fifth-leading scorer at 8.8 points per game despite coming off the bench in all but one of UAB’s 24 games. Williams is the highest leaper on the team and is really Haase’s first instant-offense player off the bench that he’s had in his four years at UAB.

“Physically, he’s so long and athletic that it enables him offensively and defensively to do things that most players can’t do,” Haase said.

“His length in the zone proves to be a true asset. Man-to-man defense, he’s getting better almost on a daily basis and his ability to shoot the basketball and get in transition with his length, he can do things a lot of people can’t do.”

Among Williams’ top games include a team-best 16 points in a recent win at Marshall in what was a battle of the two teams tied for first place in Conference USA, 16 points in a road win at Illinois State, 17 in a home win over UTSA and a season-high 22 points against USC Upstate.

Williams is thriving academically now and where he wants to be - playing a major role on what could be an NCAA Tournament team in his hometown.

But he’s also eager to share his story to young student-athletes and make sure they emphasize the academic part.

“I tell them that’s what’s important,” Williams said. “Grades first.”
Making strides

UAB signs one of C-USA's top classes in anticipation of '17 return

Drew Champlin dchamplin@al.com

UAB went national in securing one of the top classes in Conference USA.

The Blazers announced 18 signees on Wednesday to go along with the December group. UAB's class was ranked 62nd nationally on the 247Sports composite rankings and second in Conference USA behind Marshall.

The Blazers added plenty of offensive firepower, including the state's top two high school quarterbacks in Spanish Fort's Tyler Johnston and Northview's Tyler Marshall:

Some of the higher-ranked February signees include 6-foot-4 junior college receivers Xavier Ubosi and Ronnie Turner, junior college safety Earl Chambers, junior college linebacker Chris Woolbright and junior college running back D.J. Law.

Law made headlines in 2014 when he signed letters of intent to Ole Miss and Utah, but went to East Mississippi Community College.

"Obviously, he was well-liked," UAB head coach Bill Clark said.

The recruits listed above are three-star recruits, but Clark feels like several others are underrated. He was happy to see his recruiting class listed among the top in Conference USA.

"I think it's a pride thing," Clark said. "For us, for validity, it is that good. It's important. We're looking for ways to compete right now. I think it's a feather in the cap."

UAB signed prospects from California and Texas, and from Birmingham with Huffman three-star running back Demetrius Davis.

Clark said the administration supported his staff's efforts to recruit all over the country. Other coaches and analysts did the behind-the-scenes work for UAB, which returns to the gridiron in 2017.

"It was just a constant scouring of everything," Clark said. "Now you get so many calls from recruiting guys. So, we looked at every one of them. Hey I got this, send it to somebody who can look at it. The guys off the field did just as much as the guys on the road."

This spring will be the first glimpse at some key players for the 2017 team, which has no-conference games against Alabama A&M, Coastal Carolina, Ball State and Florida scheduled. The midyear and February signees were signed to make up most of the two-deep in 2017.

"We think we're going to be two deep, we should be two deep by this group," Clark said. "Anybody we add by '17, they'll all have a chance. This group is good enough to do that. We've got to create more depth."

"With all the snaps that's going on now, you're going to play two deep, maybe three deep at every position. Obviously quarterback is the exception."

Clark said the 2017 class will feature more high school signees. Along with Johnston, Marshall and Davis, UAB also signed offensive lineman Jordan Jamison from Lafayette High School in Oxford, Miss. and receiver Raylon Richardson from Lithonia, Ga.

"We've just got to go out and get those relationships going, which I think we will," Clark said.

UAB re-signed four signees from December who didn't make it to school for January - linebackers Clifton Garrett and Craig Kanyangara, athlete Sedarian Cope and receiver Elliott Davis. All four are expected at UAB this summer.

UAB Signees

• Tyler Johnston, QB, 6-2, 212, freshman, Spanish Fort, Ala., Spanish Fort HS
• Donnie Lee, S, 6-2, 215, junior, Little Rock, Ark., Arkansas Baptist CC
• Tyler Marshall, QB, 6-5, 240, freshman, Dothan, Ala., Northview HS
• Raylon Richardson, WR, 6-5, 208, freshman, Miller Grove HS
• Malique Johnson, OL, 6-3, 315, junior, Freeport, Ill., Iowa Western CC
• Andrew Wilson, WR, 5-11, 170, freshman, Athens, Texas, Judson HS
• Michael Wright, DB, 6-4, 250, junior, Houston, Texas, Blinn CC
• Jordan Jamison, OL, 6-7, 320, freshman, Oxford, Miss., Lafayette HS
• Xavier Ubosi, WR, 6-4, 200, junior, Woodland Hills, Calif., Lafayette HS
• Darryl Waters, LB, 6-4, 245, junior, Norfolk, Va., Coffeyville (Kan.) CC
• Marquis Wimberly, WR, 6-2, 200, junior, Upland, Calif., Chaffey CC
• Chris Woolbright, LB, 6-3, 230, junior, Brooklyn, N.Y., Fresno City College
• Tarik Ballard, TE, 6-5, 265, junior, San Jose, Calif., Feather River (Calif.) CC
• Anthony "A.J." Brooks Jr., RB, 5-0, 200, junior, Modesto, Calif., Gavilan College
• Ronnie Turner, WR, 6-4, 187, junior, Salinas, Calif., Hartnell College
• Earl Chambers, S, 6-2, 195, junior, Brooklyn, N.Y., Mercer (Calif.) CC
• DJ Law, S, 5-11, 190, junior, Haines City, Fla., East Mississippi CC
• Demetrius Davis, RB, 5-11, 175, freshman, Birmingham, Ala., Huffman HS
NATIONAL SIGNING DAY

Reborn UAB has something to celebrate

The Associated Press

The UAB Blazers will have just as much to celebrate today as all the programs collecting five-star recruits and gaudy national rankings.

The Blazers are back in the recruiting business, and in a big way.

UAB, which had eliminated football, might end up with a class of up to 45 players by the end of the annual signing day. Coach Bill Clark and his staff are rebuilding almost from scratch.

"These last few weeks are the most important in the history of UAB football," Clark said. "That's easy for me sitting here but just by sheer numbers, you're setting the tone." Indeed, UAB had more than 20 mid-year signees — not all of them have enrolled — and expects to land another 23 on Wednesday. The NCAA cleared the Blazers to sign 20 extra players this offseason to help accelerate their return to a level playing field.

In Clark's debut season, UAB eliminated the football program — along with rifle and bowling — in December 2014 after the Blazers were bowl eligible for the first time in a decade. Then an outpouring of financial and emotional support prompted university President Ray Watts to bring all three sports back last June.

Clark's team will take the field again in 2017, led by a number of the players joining the fold this offseason plus others who have returned or stuck it out.

UAB didn't have the big carrot dangled by other programs. There won't be immediate playing time for any of them.

So Clark shared his vision for the Blazers — including improved facilities and possibly a new stadium — and preached patience. It was no easy sell to teenagers eager to play.

"I think there were guys that got it and then there were guys that 100 percent didn't, but they loved making history and having a chance to come in and be a guy that really has a chance to be a starter," Clark said. "The sitting out a year, we've lost a few guys just on that alone."

The biggest name in this signing class is former Notre Dame running back Greg Bryant, who got a chance to start over much like the program. He spent last season living out of a hotel room in Miami with friends while attending classes at ASA College, playing in only one game.

Initially he wasn't really interested in UAB or even taking the coaches' calls with more prominent programs like Louisville, Auburn and Utah expressing interest. UAB could offer something they couldn't: Early enrollment.

"I bought into that vision of coach Clark's and bringing all these JUCO guys together and bringing the program back, and really make history," said Bryant, who left Notre Dame after he was ruled academically ineligible for the 2015 season.

"Nobody really knows what we do behind the scenes and nobody really knows behind the scenes how many players we've got, how many good players we have. It's all coming together perfectly."

The once-prized prospect wasn't sure he could have afforded to stay in school after starting the fall crammed into a hotel room with four others. The number of roommates dwindled but he was still stuck living out of hotels through the season.

At UAB, he was allowed to enroll in January 2016 instead of having to wait possibly an extra year to get eligible elsewhere.

"Coach Clark, he really did me a favor, because I was living in hotels in Miami," Bryant said. "He said I could come in as soon as the semester was over. Any other school I would have had to wait another semester and probably be enrolled by December. I just bought into what coach Clark was saying and I got in with a 2.0 GPA."

Bryant did not meet NCAA standards for immediate eligibility on the field but can compete after spending an academic year at UAB.

The Blazers have already lined up some 65 players, including about 30 walk-ons. When they return they'll face a full Conference USA schedule and a road game against Florida.

"We want to at least come out there and be competitive," Clark said. "In our mind, that's the only goal, to come out there and have a chance to win."
Reloading

UAB going heavy on junior college prospects, will blend in high school players

Drew Champlin  dchamplin@al.com

Bit by bit, UAB added more pieces of its defensive recruiting puzzle throughout January.

Last weekend, the offensive commitments came flying in.

UAB will sign around 20 players Wednesday, most of them from the junior college ranks. This follows the signing of 21 December prospects. UAB can sign 45 in the 2016 class, though the Blazers could save some scholarships for the summer.

A.J. Brooks is one offensive player who recently committed to the Blazers. The running back from Gavilan College in Gilroy, Calif., switched his verbal from East Tennessee State to UAB.

He first heard from UAB coaches last November, but communication slowed a little bit. Lately, offensive coordinator Les Koenning "started blowing my phone up" and the 6-foot, 200-pound Brooks heard from other UAB staffers as well.

Brooks wants to double major in kinesiology and nursing, and he felt UAB's medical resources sets him up for success.

"It's a great family environment in the heart of the city," Brooks said. "For junior college players, it's a great opportunity and gives us a better window to get better and improve with that third year instead of just the regular two where you only have two years to make your mark."

UAB signees will practice in the fall before the Blazers return to the field in 2017 with a full PBS and Conference USA schedule.

"It gives us a chance to get more acclimated to the area, learn the playbook, get stronger and most of all, get ahead in your studies, which is the most important," Brooks said.

Other offensive skill players UAB expects to sign from the junior college ranks include running back D.J. Law of East Mississippi, receivers Marquis Wimberley (Chaffey College in Calif.), Ronnie Turner (Hartnell in Calif.), Corey Davis (East Mississippi), Andre Wilson (Trinity Valley) and Xavier Ubosi (Pierce in Calif.).

Most of those skill players committed to UAB within the past three days.

Iowa Western offensive lineman Malique Johnson is the only commit for that position in the February group. Tight end Tariq Ballard of Feather River (Calif.) College has also committed.

Junior college projected defensive signees are expected to include defensive backs Garrison Mitchell (Blinn, Texas), Earl Chambers (Merced, Calif.) and Donnie Lee (Arkansas Baptist), linebackers Chris Woolbright (Fresno City) and Darryl Waters (Coffeyville, Kan.) and defensive linemen Michael Wright (Blinn, Texas), Tyler Haddock (Iowa Western) and Kendrick Hair (Pearl River, Miss.).

UAB will sign some high school players, including Alabama's Mr. Football in Spanish Fort quarterback Tyler Johnston, who will have Tommy John surgery on right elbow on Thursday.

Johnston visited renowned orthopedic surgeon Dr. James Andrews in December. An MRI revealed damage to his ulnar collateral ligament in his right elbow. At that time, Johnston had a platelet-rich plasma injection to help promote healing in hopes of ultimately avoiding the surgery.

On Monday, the Johnstons returned to Andrews for the planned checkup.

"Dr. Andrews just looked at it again and said, 'Let's go ahead and get it fixed,'" said Johnston's father. "They were hoping it would be closer to full strength. It wasn't. So they wanted to go ahead and do the surgery."

By having the surgery this week, Johnston should be able to throw again in June and practice with UAB — likely without contact — in August. Tommy John surgery is another turn for ulnar collateral ligament (UCL) reconstruction, and it features a surgical graft procedure in which the ulnar collateral ligament in the medial elbow is replaced with a tendon from elsewhere in the body.

Dothan (Northview) quarterback/tight end Tyler Marshall has also committed, along with Lithonia, Ga., receiver Raylon Richardson and Oxford, Miss., offensive lineman Jordan Jamison.

Huffman athlete Demetrius Davis has UAB as a finalist and will announce his decision on Wednesday.

Three fall signees — Tyler, Texas athlete Sedarian Copeland, Scottsdale (Ariz.) linebacker Craig Kanyangara and North Carolina State transfer receiver Elliott Davis — did not make it to UAB for the spring semester. They are expected to be at UAB for the summer.
Alabama's Avery Johnson making a case for SEC coach of the year

By: Kevin Scarbinsky

The basketball program with the longest current winning streak in the SEC at three straight victories was picked to finish 13th in the 14-team conference. The program with more wins over ranked opponents this season than anyone else in the SEC hasn't taken down four ranked teams in a season in 14 years.

The program that's put itself in position two weeks into February to make a late postseason push hasn't played in the NCAA Tournament in four years and hasn't won a game there in a decade.

Is there any question Alabama's Avery Johnson deserves serious consideration for SEC coach of the year in his first year on the job?

No, there isn't because no one in the league, to this point, has done more with less.

The latest evidence came Wednesday night in a 63-62 upset of No. 15 Texas A&M in Coleman Coliseum. The Aggies joined Wichita State, Notre Dame and South Carolina on the list of ranked teams Alabama has beaten.

How good are those teams?

Wichita State is 18-6 overall and 12-1 to lead the Missouri Valley Conference. Notre Dame is 18-7 and 8-4, a game and a half out of first place in the ACC. South Carolina (21-3, 8-3) is tied for first place in the SEC, and A&M (18-6, 7-4) is tied for fourth.

Alabama, at 14-9 overall and 5-6 in the league, is only three games out of first place with seven games left.

If that doesn't impress you, look at the roster. Notice it's missing the top three scorers from last season, and graduate transfer guard Arthur Edwards is the only newcomer among the top five scorers this season.

Since promising freshman point guard Dazon Ingram was lost for the year to a broken foot in early December, Edwards is the only healthy newcomer who's started a game. That means Johnson and his staff have done a terrific job of developing the players they inherited.

Alabama upset No. 15 Texas A&M Wednesday night

Retin Obasohan is a legitimate All-SEC candidate. The senior guard is the first Alabama player to earn SEC player of the week honors twice in the same season since Kennedy Winston in 2004-05.

Obasohan and sophomore swingman Riley Norris are two of the players getting much closer to their ceilings under Johnson than they did before he arrived.
There's another way to measure how much progress Johnson's made in his first season as the Alabama basketball coach. Two weeks into February, you can suggest the overachieving Crimson Tide is playing its way toward the NCAA Tournament bubble and not get laughed out of the room.

ESPN bracketologist Joe Lunardi lists Alabama today as the second team on his "Next Four Out" list.

Let that reality sink in for a moment.

ESPN's latest daily RPI rankings have Alabama at No. 39, thanks to quality wins over current No. 24 Texas A&M, No. 25 Notre Dame, No. 26 South Carolina and No. 41 Wichita State. According to ESPN, Alabama has only one bad loss to a team ranked outside the top 100 at No. 129 Auburn.

The remaining schedule provides plenty of opportunities for more quality wins: At Florida on Saturday, at LSU next Wednesday and at Kentucky on Feb. 23.

It's not likely this team has enough firepower to win enough games down the stretch to earn an NCAA at-large bid, but who thought it possible the Crimson Tide could take down the teams it has to date?

One thing isn't in dispute. There's an energy and excitement around Alabama basketball that hasn't existed in years. There's a sense that this coaching staff is squeezing virtually every last drop out of the talent on hand - the Tide's 5-1 in one-possession games - and there's an understanding that quality reinforcements are on the way in the recruiting classes to come.

Getting this team into the NIT would be an accomplishment. It also might earn Johnson the SEC coach of the year award. That trophy would be a nice bookend to the hardware he earned as NBA coach of the year.

He'd be the only coach in history with one of each.
From humble beginnings

By: Tommy Deas

Two decades ago, Patrick Murphy was operating on sheer faith in selling University of Alabama softball.

That's all he had.

Murphy, an assistant coach for the startup program at the time, remembers sending out flyers to potential recruits with one theme: Believe without evidence.

There was no history. No stadium. No reason to believe.

But Murphy believed anyway.

"That's how we recruited our first four or five classes," Murphy said, "because we didn't have anything to show them."

The Crimson Tide program enters its 20th season Friday in Orlando against Fordham and Rutgers in the UCF Classic. A lot of evidence has been amassed over the course of two decades—a national championship, five SEC regular-season and five league tournament titles, 17 straight NCAA Tournament appearances and 10 trips to the Women's College World Series.

Murphy, promoted to head coach in the program's third year, has been a part of 968 UA victories, 890 of them with him at the helm. Every team he has coached has made it to the NCAA Tournament.

There's also Rhoads Stadium, which opened in 2000 and has grown to accommodate the largest fan base in college softball. Alabama has led the nation in average or total home attendance—or both—every season since 2008. UA's average attendance last season of 2,771 out drew all but 24 college baseball programs, and its total turnstile tally of 80,357 would have placed it 27th in total baseball attendance.

Alabama is scheduled to play 11 games on the road before its Feb. 24 home opener against Troy.

Haylie McCleney, Alabama's senior All-American center fielder, wasn't yet 2 years old when UA played its first game. She grew up with the sport, and with the program.

"We got lucky," she said. "We never envisioned something like this happening. I'd say it's a dream come true, but we never dreamt something like this was possible.

"It's crazy just to see how the game took off. None of us knew growing up that it would take off and become this big. We were kids that wanted to play and have fun with their friends. I'm not playing at 5 years old because my parents wanted me to get a scholarship, it was all about fun.

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“To watch the game grow as much as it has, I feel like every year – like sixth, seventh grade, hey, the Women’s College World Series is on TV – it started becoming bigger and bigger, then people were talking about it once Facebook got big and then Twitter got big and then Instagram got big. It took off, it just got huge.”

A trajectory like McClaney’s wouldn’t have been possible 20 years ago. The infrastructure for fastpitch softball didn’t exist in Alabama.

“She probably would have played slowpitch and just went to college,” Murphy said.

When Alabama began its fastpitch program, state high schools played slowpitch. For its first three seasons, UA played on the same public-park fields where church coed and youth recreational teams played.

All of the state’s major college programs – Alabama, Auburn, UAB, South Alabama, Jacksonville State and Troy – have played in the NCAA postseason. Alabama and Auburn have been to the World Series. South Alabama, UAB and Jax State have won regionals and played in the super regional round of the postseason.

“It’s a softball state now,” Murphy said. “There’s no way anyone could have predicted that 20 years ago when we were still playing slowpitch.”

Murphy, too, has grown. He’s come from raw assistant coach to coaching Hall of Fame inductee.

“I think everybody’s come a long way, including me,” the 48-year-old coach said. “I’ve learned that you can’t wait for the three-run home run, you’ve got to do something to get it. You might have to steal a base or bunt or drag or get a lefty in there.

“And I also have learned you have to lose a small one to win the big one. There’s no way I would have thought that 20 years ago. It’s a learning process. Sometimes you’ve got to lose to learn a lot more than when you win.”

The SEC has risen from a startup league to become the dominant force in the sport. In both preseason polls, four of the top five teams and five of the top 10 are from the conference.

“I think people thought this could happen,” Murphy said, “but to see that top 10 this year after getting five teams in the World Series (last year), I think people are saying uh-oh. I think it’s here to stay.”

The same can be said for Alabama softball, which has finished ranked in the top 10 in each of the last 11 seasons. In 2016, the Crimson Tide will celebrate its past and look to build on its tradition.

“It’s going to be a fun year,” Murphy said. “This is a huge year for us.”
ALABAMA BASEBALL

Big stars, turnout expected for Tide Alumni Game

By Ben Jones
Sports Writer

The future of the University of Alabama’s baseball program begins when Sewell-Thomas Stadium officially opens on Feb. 19. But before then, players from the past will get a glimpse of what’s ahead.

Alabama baseball is expecting more than 200 former players to arrive this weekend for its Alumni Baseball Game today. The game is part of a weekend with three open scrimmages for fans at the new stadium.

The oldest former player to RSVP is George Howell, 89 years old now. He played for the Crimson Tide from 1949-51 and was part of the program’s first team to reach the College World Series.

“He doesn’t do email, so he sent me a letter,” Alabama coach Mitch Gaspard said.

The youngest will be players who just finished their careers last year, who shared seasons with players on the current roster.

“I can’t wait to meet a lot of the guys that used to play here that I heard about and watched and never got to meet, as well as guys that I played with that are coming back that I haven’t seen in a while,” senior center fielder Georgie Salem said. “I’m really excited to watch them play and play against them, but also just hang out with them.”

Many of those names will be familiar to Alabama baseball fans. Former UA catcher Alex Avila, who has spent seven years in the major leagues and is currently with the Chicago White Sox, will be in town. So will Tommy Hunter, a reliever for the Chicago Cubs. Gaspard also said former UA greats Roberto Vaz and Kent Matthes are expected to attend.

The stadium opens for former players at 10 a.m. today. They can take batting practice until 11:45. Fans who come can take a tour of the new stadium.

The scrimmage, which is open to fans, will begin between noon and 12:30 p.m. The current team will scrimmage against the former players, though all of the pitching will come from Alabama’s current roster. The game is expected to last until 1:45, so fans can venture across the street for the men’s basketball game at Coleman Coliseum at 2 o’clock against Missouri.

“Having 200-plus players back sets up for a pretty fun weekend,” Salem said. “Hopefully we’ll get to learn some cool things from these guys that played and some of them that went to Omaha and had a lot of success. It’s going to be pretty cool for a lot of the guys who are on the team now.”

When reaching out to former players to plan the alumni game, Gaspard said he might find one player from an era who committed to visiting for the game. That would be followed by seven or eight of that player’s teammates when they heard about it.

“I think the stadium as a whole is really going to speak for itself when they get here,” Gaspard said. “I’m as excited about that many alumni coming back, just those guys reconnecting with each other, but also reconnecting with the program for the guys who have been away. ... We feel like that’s one thing the stadium is going to allow us to do is kind of bring that family back together again.”

— Reach Ben Jones at ben@tidesports.com or 205-722-0196.
Tide downs Kentucky in Power of Pink meet

By Sean Landry
Special to The Tuscaloosa News

University of Alabama coach Dana Duckworth is speechless when she thinks about it all. She can’t find the words to capture the sea of pink-clad fans, the hundreds of thousands turning into millions of dollars raised to aid breast cancer treatments, the city impacted, the lives saved. When she thinks about the Power of Pink meet, she just doesn’t know what to say.

“To be able to give back to people that have lost the battle, that have won the battle and that are fighting the battle makes it just...” Duckworth said, trailing off. “The word would be—it’s so much bigger than yourself. It’s very rewarding for everybody.”

Junior Katie Bailey met two-and-a-half year breast cancer survivor Erika Jones just minutes before the start of the Crimson Tide’s 196.775-195.525 win over Kentucky in Friday’s Power of Pink meet. Jones was one of 19 survivors honored by the team during introductions, ranging from 2-month survivor Genovia Grant to 28-and-a-half year survivor Charlotte Riggs.

“In the 30 seconds I had with her, I feel like we already had a connection,” Bailey said of Jones. “In the little time we had, she kind of shared with me what she’s gone through, and it was just amazing. Everything we did tonight was for people just like her.”

On the floor, the fourth-ranked Crimson Tide overcame uncharacteristic falls and deductions on uneven bars, beam and floor from senior Lauren Beers to post a win on every apparatus, including Beers’ own 9.95 on vault, equaling her career best.

The team equalled its season-high on uneven bars, a 49.325, though it posted a season-worst 49.075 on floor and a beam score of 49 only saved by virtue of a 48.325 earlier this season.

“Our fight was evident tonight,” Duckworth said.

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“That was our word of the week and I think it came in handy. I feel like when you look at our performance in general, we started so strong on vault. The scoring tonight was interesting. At some point I was questioning some things, but you’ve got to focus on your performance as a team and you can’t control the scores. Going over to bars and having a mistake and then the team rising to the occasion and the fight following was huge. Those are the kind of experiences that you have at this point in the season because it helps you learn from them.”

Off the floor, the team and the Power of Pink initiative raised $117,300 for the Druid City Hospital Breast Cancer Fund this year, bringing the 12-year total to $1.05 million.
ALABAMA GYMNASTICS

Tide among first behind ‘pink’ initiative

By Sean Landry
Special to The Tuscaloosa News

In 2004, when then-University of Alabama gymnastics coach Sarah Patterson was first inspired to dedicate an entire meet to breast cancer awareness, the ‘pink’ movement was just coming into its own. The pink ribbon first appeared in 1991, when the Susan G. Komen foundation adopted them. By the next year, the color and ribbon had become the official symbol of breast cancer awareness. In the ensuing decade, the color began to define the movement, taking over the month of October, dedicated to breast cancer awareness, but it hadn’t made the jump to sports.

Alabama’s first Power of Pink meet came in February of 2005, against rival Auburn. Starting that season, most of the top gymnastics programs in the nation have held their own Power of Pink meets. In 2006, it made the jump to women’s college basketball, as “Think Pink,” an initiative of the Women’s College Basketball Coaches Association. That same year, the NHL set aside a day for pink sticks and Major League Baseball began its “pink bat” initiative. In 2009, after the urging of an owner’s wife and Zeta Tau Alpha, the same sorority that co-sponsors Alabama’s pink meets, the NFL began its month-long pink campaign. Whether Patterson and the Crimson Tide were a driving force or merely among the first to promote what would become one of the biggest charitable initiatives in the nation, the gymnasts take pride in the legacy of more than a decade of charitable

No. 25 Kentucky at No. 4 Alabama

Where: Coleman Coliseum
When: 7:30 p.m. today
Record: Alabama 2-3, Kentucky 1-3
Radio: 90.7 FM

Alabama gymnast Lauren Beers performs on the floor against Boise State at Coleman Coliseum during last season’s Power of Pink meet. FILE PHOTO

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work.

"I was actually just talking to somebody about this the other day, who didn't know what (Power of Pink) was," senior Lauren Beers said. "I said 'Well, actually, Sarah Patterson started it and it's taken off all over the nation into all sports—even pro sports.' I think it's really cool that I'm able to be a part of something that's grown to that size and magnitude."

The Power of Pink meet has been one of the best-attended meets of the season since that first meet in 2005 and has garnered media attention from national outlets.

Though Patterson has been retired for two Pink meets now, the team hasn't rested satisfied with a decade of work. They know the statistics, they encourage the fundraisers, and for some, it hits close to home.

"It's something where everybody knows somebody that's either had cancer, dealt with breast cancer, is going through it right now," coach Dana Duckworth said. "Think about your own life. You know somebody or you know somebody who knows somebody. We'll have 15,000 people in the arena. In every 8 women will be diagnosed with breast cancer. Go buy a luminary. Come support the gymnastics meet, because you being a part of it as a fan is being a part of the solution."

On the current team, junior Aja Sims' aunt is a 17-year survivor, honored last season in the team's special introductions that allow each gymnast to accompany a breast cancer survivor to the podium. Two years ago, then-gymnast, now student assistant Dominique Pegg's mother was honored, as was a recent UA graduate named Jessica Bailey. For the Crimson Tide, her story serves as a reminder of the real, local work that can be done at this week's Power of Pink meet.

"Jessica Bailey, who we honored two years ago, she was a December 2012 graduate," Duckworth said. "She lost her fight just two weeks ago. You think about...that team, and they stood on the Circle A with a college student who didn't win that battle. Her story can be told to all the women in the stands who are college students, that this breast cancer thing does not discriminate. If you learn about early detection and you learn if your body doesn't feel right, you need to become aware and be your own self-advocate. If Alabama gymnastics can be a part of that, it's an honor."

Introductions for Friday's Power of Pink meet will begin at 7:10 p.m.
Unsung Heroes

By: Matt Zenitz

Kenyan Drake temporarily broke away from the craziness.

While many of his teammates celebrated wildly behind him, Alabama's senior running back shared a long hug around midfield with the Tide's primary orthopedic surgeon, Lyle Cain of the world-renowned Andrews Sports Medicine and Orthopaedic Center.

Alabama head football athletic trainer Jeff Allen was beside them with his left hand on Drake's right arm.

Tide director of behavioral medicine Ginger Gilmore and assistant athletic trainer Jeremy Gsell were there too, looking on from behind Cain before each getting their own hugs from Drake.

It was a special, private moment following the Tide's national championship game win over Clemson, one more meaningful because of everything Drake had overcome to reach that point with the help of those four people and other members of Alabama's medical staff.

Fifteen months after suffering a broken and dislocated ankle that ended his junior season and two months after breaking his right arm against Mississippi State, Drake was one of the stars of the game, returning a kick 95 yards for a touchdown to give the Tide a 38-27 lead midway through the fourth quarter.

A Clemson player caught up to Drake just before the end zone and attempted to push him out of bounds, but Drake dove and reached the ball across the goal line for a critical touchdown with the right arm Cain had to operate on just two months earlier.

'The best medical staff in the country'

Alabama has one of the most talent-rich rosters in college football and is led by one of the greatest and most successful coaches in college football history, Nick Saban.

The Tide also has the benefit of having what Saban said he believes is "the best medical staff in the country."

You would be hard-pressed to find any medical team in the country or even in the NFL doing a better job of getting players back from serious injuries and preventing avoidable injuries altogether.

Drake is one of many recent success stories

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"I think Dr. Cain, Dr. Andrews, that whole group does a fantastic job," Saban said. "They have a great national reputation for what they do with professional athletes. And I think that helps us have the quality people on our medical staff, like Jeff Allen and Ginger and Jeremy and all those guys, not only do they do a great job developing trust with the athletes, but they do a great job with rehab and really just first-class, professional medical attention."

**Rapid recovery time**

In 2012, Minnesota Vikings star running back Adrian Peterson returned to practice eight months after suffering a torn ACL and MCL. He played in every game that season and came up just nine yards short of breaking the NFL single-season rushing record.

That was viewed as groundbreaking. Prior to that, it typically took players at least a year to be able to return to game action and additional time to return to previous form.

Even now, it usually takes at least eight or nine months to return to game action following an ACL injury.

But it's become the norm at Alabama for players to get back in six months or less.

Wide receiver Cam Sims suffered a torn ACL and LCL in late March. He also had a small tibia fracture. Doctors originally told him it would take eight to 12 months to recover, but he was back practicing on a limited basis by mid-August and played in the Tide's first game just more than five months after getting hurt.

There are other examples too, like defensive back Eddie Jackson.

Jackson tore his ACL in April 2014. He cried when he first received the diagnosis from Cain, realizing the severity of the injury and thinking he would miss that entire 2014 season. But Jackson played one day short of five months after suffering the injury.

Even before Peterson, there was former Alabama linebacker Dont'a Hightower in 2010, who was fully cleared medically less than six months after suffering a torn ACL and MCL in addition to a torn meniscus.

"If you look at the history of ACL surgery, the biology is the same," Cain said. "It's not that we're doing anything magic per se with ACLs. I think it's the combination of a lot of factors. Certainly, we have a great team with Jeff Allen and his team and physical therapy, and I think the athletes that coach Saban is recruiting to Tuscaloosa have the ability to grow muscle fast. They're elite athletes, and they have the ability to heal. (Renowned orthopedic surgeon James Andrews) has said many times that, 'If you want to make yourself look good as a surgeon you need to operate on a really elite athlete. They'll make you look good.'"

There is more to it, though.

**The 'Catapult'**
In addition to having people like Cain and Allen who are leaders in their respective fields, Alabama has benefited the last two years from the use of a GPS tracking system from Catapult Sports.

The Catapult system is utilized by 36 colleges, 15 NFL franchises as well as teams in other sports, according to the company's website.

It's been an asset for the Tide with injured players as well as with injury prevention.

A small GPS monitor is attached to every player's shoulder pads for practice. Players will also wear t-shirts with pockets during the summer so the monitors can be used while they go through the team's summer conditioning program.

There are more than 200 data points that can be measured, Allen said. Alabama focuses on four.

1) How many yards does each player run each day?

2) Player load, which Allen said is a "metric that kind of gives you an overall intensity of that particular day."

3) Explosiveness. An explosive movement is moving four or more yards in a second or less. The monitor will keep track of how many times a player does that.

4) Top-end speed in miles per hour.

Allen has a binder full of the numbers from each practice throughout the year.

"Catapult is really, really good for us to give our guys feedback and allow for us to evaluate where a player is," Allen said.

Allen used Drake as an injured player example, referencing last spring as Drake continued to work back from the broken and dislocated ankle.

"I wouldn't call him full-go by any means, but he was going through drills," Allen said. "That was a part of his rehab process was getting back into football-related drills. We were able to look at his Catapult data in the spring and compare it to his pre-injury data and really get a feel for where he was at."

It's also been a resource while analyzing players such as Jackson and Sims returning from ACL injuries.

"The interesting part about that is that all the return-to-play criteria that we've used for athletes coming back from ACL injuries have been pretty archaic," Cain said. "They're basically things like muscle testing — doesn't necessarily mean you're functional, but testing muscle strength — and single-leg hop tests where you see how far you can hop on an injured leg after surgery. Just some basic, pretty rudimentary things that don't really tell you about the function of the athlete."
"This Catapult system, especially when you have data prior to injury for the athlete, we can tell you pretty much exactly what their acceleration was, what their cutting velocity was, what their peak velocity was, all these performance factors that you can measure to tell you that the athlete is back to his prime performance."

Alabama performance analyst Clay Keith is responsible for monitoring GPS numbers during practice, carrying around a computer that shows the Catapult data.

Those numbers are also helpful with avoiding new injuries.

"It's a great way to measure workload and know when a guy is maybe heading toward having an injury," Allen said. "We know the norms for these guys. I know how fast Calvin Ridley generally runs. I know how explosive he is. If he starts to really drop below that, then something's wrong. Or I know, on average, that Calvin may run seven to eight thousand yards in practice. If all of a sudden we go out there and he runs nine to 10 thousand yards and does that consistently for two to three days, 'Hey coach, we've got to be careful with him. We're really overloading him.'

"It gives you a really good objective way of looking at it. One question we constantly deal with is 'Are we tired?' That's a hard question to answer, just subjectively. But with these data points, I can look at it and say, 'Hey coach, we are a little fatigued. Maybe we need to modify it.'"

A healthier team

One of the big factors in Alabama winning 12 straight games on its way to a national championship: Its' overall health.

Some injuries are unavoidable, like wide receiver Robert Foster falling awkwardly against Ole Miss and suffering a season-ending shoulder injury.

But Foster was the only Tide starter to miss more than one game due to an injury.

There were only two other starters that even missed one game — nickel back Minkah Fitzpatrick and right tackle Dominick Jackson.

Allen estimated that soft tissue injuries were down 40 percent from 2014.

That's not all luck.

Allen puts players through movement screening tests four times each year to identify any potential problem areas using the Fusionetics program — once in January after the season, again in April at the end of spring practice and then again in June and August.

"There's a variety of different tests that are on that," Allen said. "For example, they'll have to do a two-legged body weight squat. And during that squat, I'm watching them and have my computer out and it's giving me different questions to look at. Do their knees go in? Does their back arch? And I'm answering yes or no, yes or no all the way down.

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RECRUITING

Tide staff garners recruiting honors

ANDREW BONE

The University of Alabama’s recruiting class finished No. 1 for the seventh time in nine years on National Signing Day last Wednesday. Nick Saban and his coaching staff closed very strong after some questioned for months if the class would finish on par with the previous top classes. Alabama was outside the top 10 in the Rivals.com national team rankings heading into Wednesday, but there was high optimism the class would make an incredible run with several uncommitted players favoring the Crimson Tide. Alabama added 10 signees on signing day.

Alabama offensive line coach Mario Cristobal was the Rivals.com National Recruiter of the Year in 2015. Alabama defensive line coach Bo Davis was named the Rivals.com SEC Recruiter of the Year in 2016. Clemson’s Brent Venables was the National Recruiter of the Year.

“Alabama rallied to sign the No. 1 class for the seventh time in the last nine years, and Davis is getting a lot of credit for the Crimson Tide’s success in 2016,” said Rivals.com recruiting analyst, Josh Helmlholdt. “Alabama’s defensive line coach landed the biggest prize on signing day with five-star Ben Davis.”

Bo Davis also had notable success in neighboring Mississippi, signing three of the Magnolia State’s top 12 prospects despite heavy competition from in-state schools and other SEC programs.

“Alabama outside linebackers coach Tosh Lupoi was also named a top 25 recruiter by Rivals.com for his efforts last year. Lupoi is known as one of the best recruiters on Nick Saban’s staff, and he delivered again in 2016 en route to another No. 1 ranked overall class,” Helmlholdt said. “Lupoi’s biggest pull..."
came on National Signing Day when he convinced five-star Washington, D.C., native Terrell Hall to sign with the Crimson Tide. He went back out to the East Coast to grab four-star Trevon Diggs, then landed the No. 1 running back in 2016, (B.J.) Emmons, and assisted Mario Cristobal on five-star offensive tackle Jonah Williams.”

two-star offensive tackle from Washington High School in Pensacola, Fla.

Alabama has a great jump-start on next year’s class, but lost a commitment last week in Netori Johnson, Rivals100 offensive guard from Cedar Grove High School in Ellenwood, Ga.

Alabama has seen its fair share of players flip their commitments. Heisman Trophy winner Derrick Henry decommitted from Georgia after a longtime commitment and signed with the Crimson Tide. Alabama signee Shyheim Carter was an Alabama commitment before he decommitted prior to the start of fall practice. Alabama 2015 signee Daylon Charlot did the same.

Alabama is still waiting to see what might transpire with Demetris Robertson, five-star athlete from Savannah Christian School in Georgia, who would be part of the current signing class. The former Alabama commitment opted not to sign his letter of intent last Wednesday. He is considering a visit to Alabama this week.

TideSports.com is keeping close tabs for breaking news of a new signee who might join the 2016 class, including a possible graduate transfer. Stay tuned for the latest on any 2017 commitments taking other visits this spring.

— Andrew Bone is the senior recruiting analyst for TideSports.com. Follow him on Twitter @AndrewBone.
"And then it gives me a score for that. And then I do a one-legged squat, and there's a variety of about seven or eight different tests in this Fusionetics program. Score every one of them and then you get an assessment at the end for your injury risk."

You will get one of three colors.

Green is normal.

Yellow means you are at a higher injury risk than green.

Red means you are at an extreme risk for injury.

Based on the score, an individualized program will be set up for the player with the help of strength and conditioning coach Scott Cochran to correct any movement deficiencies or problem areas.

Said Saban: "I think using the catapult system and using some of the functional movement tests on guys before they ever get injured, all these things contribute to workload, not overuse with players so they can stay healthier for longer and can sustain for longer."

Something else that director of performance nutrition Amy Bragg and the medical staff pay a lot of attention to? Vitamin D levels.

"There's been a lot of studies that show that low Vitamin D levels really can pre-dispose you to injuries, especially soft issue injuries," Allen said, "and we know for a fact that Vitamin D promotes healing. So there's a lot of unanswered questions about it out there, but we know enough about it to know that it's a very important vitamin in the healing process and one that we put a lot of emphasis on."

'The results speak for themselves'

After losing in bowl games each of the previous two seasons, one of the goals for Alabama last year, Allen said, was to "be stronger at the end of the year and to be at our best at the end of the year."

It was.

Rebounding from an early loss to Ole Miss that dropped its record to 2-1, the Tide won nine straight games to advance to the SEC championship game before beating Florida in the SEC title game to clinch a spot in the College Football Playoff semifinals.

A 38-0 win over Michigan State in the semifinals set up a national title game matchup with Clemson, which Alabama won, allowing Drake, Cain, Allen and the other two members of the Tide medical staff to have that special moment on the field inside University of Phoenix Stadium.
"I really felt like we were our best at the end of the year," Allen said. "Certainly in that Michigan State game, that team that came out that night, we were as recovered and as fresh as we had been all year, and it made me so proud to watch those guys, and I think their hard work showed that night for sure.

"Coach (Saban) really put a big emphasis on being at our best at the end of the year, and they really bought into it, and I think the results speak for themselves."
ALABAMA FOOTBALL

Freshman QB has already contributed

Hurts enrolled early to help Tide win championship

By Aaron Sutliff
Sports Writer

Imagine stepping out of high school and into a position of importance for the best college football team in the country. Imagine stepping out from behind a high school offensive line and into oncoming traffic of a fearsome collegiate front seven considered the best in the nation.

That’s what Channelview, Texas, quarterback Jalen Hurts did. He waved goodbye to his status of big man on campus and welcomed the role of University of Alabama true freshman.

When Hurts was given the role of Clemson’s Deshaun Watson as a scout-team member during UA’s national championship preparation, it spoke a measure about the four-star recruit newbie – an early enrollee who joined the Crimson Tide in January – and what the coaching staff thought of his abilities. He’s still a freshman, but his talent is promising.

That he played a role, any role, in helping the Crimson Tide prepare for its national championship game meant a lot to the 6-foot-2, 212-pounder.

See Hurts, C3

Quarterback Jalen Hurts, from Channelview, Texas, speaks to the media on National Signing Day 2016. Hurts enrolled early. STAFF PHOTO/GARY COSBY JR.

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Hurts
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"I feel I had a part in preparation, yes I did. I'm not going to sit here and say all glory goes to me. That's definitely not the case. But I felt like I put a toe in," Hurts said last week on National Signing Day.

"It felt good knowing that I was getting after it against the No. 1 defense in the country. It also felt good to know that I helped in preparation for winning the national title, that I had a little something to do with that. It was a great experience."

His curriculum vitae is as expected for any student-athlete recruited by a program that's captured four of the last seven national championships.

Passing for 2,384 yards, rushing for another 1,391 and accounting for 51 total touchdowns (26 passing and 25 rushing) during his senior season, Hurts was one of the top players in the fertile grounds of Texas high school football. He picked Alabama in the summer and stuck by his word, enrolling for the spring 2016 semester.

One of the main reasons he felt comfortable selecting Alabama was the success former quarterback Blake Sims had under Lane Kiffin's playcalling.

"I honestly felt there wasn't another place out there that compared," he said. "Alabama I feel is on another level in many ways that stood out to me."

Hurts is in the mold of Watson, the quarterback he pretended to be during practice, and an example of what the Crimson Tide offense might resemble should he one day become the starter.

"In high school we ran the spread, ran the ball, threw the ball, threw it down field some," Hurts said. "The offense here is very diverse, kind of based around what the quarterback can do.

"Actually, I didn't (have to run the ball much in high school). I had to as a senior because we didn't have an every-down running back like we did the year before. My junior year I scrambled more than designed runs. As a senior I got a few more quarterback draws and things of that sort."

As a senior HurtsTrade asked which style he prefers, he responded, "I'm going to do whatever coach asks me to do."

He's already made an impression on that coach, too.

"I'm really pleased with the quarterback prospect we have, we saw him in four days of practice," Saban said while wrapping up his 2016 recruiting class.

With Jake Coker gone and Alec Morris transferred to North Texas, that leaves UA with Hurts, redshirt freshman Blake Barnett, Cooper Bateman and David Cornwell all competing for the starting job this fall.

Competition doesn't shake Hurts. It's one of the main reasons he's in Tuscaloosa.

"What got me here was the program," he said. "You come to Alabama you have to compete every day in everything you do. Every day here is an evaluation... you're being evaluated. I have no problem with that.

"Everything is about competition. You come here, you're going to do what's best for the team. That's being the best player."

—Reach Aaron Suttles at aaron@tidesports.com or at 205-722-0229.
Davis aims for accolades, and mom knows the way

The party’s over. Now, the work begins.
The pep rally of a National Signing Day announcement was winding down when new Alabama linebacker spoke about the next step.
The nation’s No. 15 recruit is set to begin that transition to a Crimson Tide freshman with his own tall goals.
"I want to be a freshman All-American, be a team leader always and run around and make plays," Davis said. "I’m going to be coachable. I know I don’t know everything yet so I will just continue grinding, stay humble and just work hard."

Work ethic was a theme when Davis and his parents looked to the future. Yes, he’s a gifted athlete with prototypical size (6-foot-4, 240 pounds). And he has the pedigree as the son of Alabama’s career tackles leader Wayne Davis.
But nobody in the Davis house thinks the next generation will be handed anything because of the past.
"Like I said to each coach, I’m not asking them to promise me he’s going to play," said Faye Davis, Ben’s mother. "I know he’s going to have to work so we taught him how to work. So as a result of that, he’s going to have to earn whatever. We don’t want anyone handing us anything or handing him anything. He’s going to have to work and that’s what he’s going to do."

Of course there will be comparisons to his father, who made 327 tackles at Alabama. A middle linebacker who started as a freshman in 1983 through 1986, Wayne Davis was listed at 6-foot-3 ½ and 210 pounds as a newcomer. His son already has 30 pounds on that.
"I want Ben to be better than I was," Wayne Davis said. "I would think any parent would — to achieve more and to be more successful to be even more mature in college than I was."

Challenging that 30-year-old tackling record might not be the easiest task given the structure of Alabama’s defense. But it’s a place middle linebackers have flourished under Nick Saban. The graduation of two-year starting Reggie Ragland creates some opportunity for the next wave that also includes five-star outside linebacker Lyndell "Mack" Wilson.

"This is a position where we’ve had lots of guys in the past contribute as freshmen — Rolando McClain did, Dont’a Hightower did, CJ Mosely did, I think Nico Johnson did," Saban said.
"And we didn’t have a lot of depth at that position this year, so I think how quickly these guys can learn and grow and develop at that position is important because I think they both have the kind of athletic ability and critical factors at that position that we’re looking for."

It starts with pre-enrollment training and then summer conditioning before practices begin in the August heat. Mom knows the path Ben must take.
"I’m looking forward to seeing him work, to earn his own place," Faye Davis said. "Because even though his daddy was the leading tackler there, he has a goal to shoot for to beat him. And our younger son said he’s going to be better than Ben."
"So what more can you ask for?"
Alabama native revolutionizes AHSAA region, area alignments

By: Joey Chandler

MONTGOMERY -- A computer program created by Alabama native Cody Kirkpatrick revolutionized the way the AHSAA maps out its new region and area alignments during each reclassification period.

Color coded push pins plotted out on a separate map for each classification and sport have become a way of the past since Kirkpatrick began using his program in the fall of 2009.

During his graduate school days at the University of Alabama in Huntsville, Kirkpatrick, a lecturer in Atmospheric Sciences at Indiana University, approached the AHSAA about creating a program to help take the guess work out of the alignment process.

"Cody has been a valuable asset to us in a lot of ways," AHSAA Director of Communications Ron Ingram said. "From my standpoint, we would send him the school numbers and breakdown, and we could give him (multiple) scenarios."

Inspired by the code that Jeff Sagarin uses for his USA Today sports ratings, Kirkpatrick created a program that does classification. He said he has met with Sagarin a few times and has been given tips on how to write the code.

"From there, it was born, and there is no looking back now. There is no way you would want to do this any other way than electronically," Kirkpatrick, a Hackleburg High School graduate, said. "It takes out any opportunity to gerrymander or ask questions, because it is strictly based on travel and grouping those schools to minimize the amount of travel they have to do within the rules the board sets up.

"This time some of the restraints were no six team areas in basketball, because that is a competitive imbalance, so there is nothing more than five schools. Then there is the football limitations of how many schools can be in a region. You've got all of these parameters and limitations to how flexible you can be, but once you program those and once you set those all up, the map really creates itself, because there are only a few ways you can draw it. Once you know what the limitations are, the process is basically the staff and the board determine how many schools they want in each class, so 32 in Class 7A for example, and where the cutoff for each of those classes falls determines who gets placed on each of the maps. From there, it is how the computer decides to cut the region boundaries to sort of group everybody together in regions, areas or section, whatever you want to call it."

Kirkpatrick creates maps to plot out both football regions and basketball areas. All other sports use the basketball area map as a starting point to help determine the area or sectional alignments.

"We are not to the point yet where every sport is done by scratch," Kirkpatrick said. "Basketball is the leader for the other sports, and then you have different sports like golf, track and field and
wrestling where you have fewer schools that have teams so they have to be done in a completely sort of different way."

Seventy-two schools, including seven in West Alabama, changed classifications for the 2016-17 and 2017-18 school years, making a new look at which alignments allow the least amount of travel time for all teams involved a necessity.

"Every class below 7A, there is 10 or 15 new schools on that map every year, so there can be some pretty big changes in a lot of places. It is new every time. Every map is new every single time," Kirkpatrick said. "Class 7A only had Huffman (moving up) and Hazel Green (moving down) change, but it is still a new map, because until you put those dots on there and until you've got attendance numbers and you plot the map, you don't know what it is going to look like. It's a little bit like Christmas morning when you get to see those maps for the first time."
ALABAMA FOOTBALL

Next in line?

Emmons hopes to join list of great Alabama running backs

By Paul Schenkel
The Morganton Herald

B.J. Emmons said last July that this one would stick when he verbally committed to play football at Alabama.

Seven months later, the Freedom High School player made it official by signing his national letter of intent. Burke County's greatest prep running back will play for the defending national champion Crimson Tide.

Emmons (6-foot, 215 pounds) had college scholarship offers pouring in before his junior season even started. He verbally committed to Georgia in December 2014 but changed his mind and settled on Alabama last summer shortly after receiving the offer.

"I didn't take visits anywhere else after my verbal commitment (to Alabama)," he noted Wednesday on National Signing Day. "The offer from Alabama was a blessing. Since I committed, I've been fully committed. "I took my time with (the decision). Just to play in their program, that's exciting, knowing that I'll be in the system, doing the workouts with the best players in the country. Knowing what they've done and what I think I can bring to their team, that's probably what I'm the most excited about.

"I'm ready to put my name out there and do some work."

Emmons chose Bama offers from Georgia as well as Tennessee, Florida, Charlotte, NC State, North Carolina, Virginia Tech and West Virginia.

Emmons' career rushing yardage total (6,573, with 101 total touchdowns in 36 games) ranks 15th best in state history according to the North Carolina High School Athletic Association online record book. After ranking sixth in the state in rushing yards and second in rushing TDs as a junior, he was third in

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Freedom High School running back B.J. Emmons signed with Alabama on Wednesday. He has 6,573 career rushing yards and 101 touchdowns in 36 games. PHOTO/ MORGANTON HERALD

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yards (2,417) and tied for fifth in TDS (36) in the same categories this year according to MaxPreps.

He is the nation's top running back in 2016 according to ESPN and Rivals, and both rank him No. 33 in the class regardless of position.

As a senior, Emmons averaged 12.3 yards per carry and added two punt return touchdowns, a kickoff return touchdown, an interception return for a touchdown and finished the year with 123 receiving yards and a touchdown. He also punted, kicked off and played extensively on defense this season, finishing with 77 tackles (four for loss).

Emmons totaled 46 touchdowns covering 40 or more yards in his prep career and ran for at least 200 yards in 16 games and at least 300 in four games.

With him leading the way, Freedom currently has program-record streaks of 25 straight in-county wins, 20 straight conference wins, 20 straight road win and three straight league crowns.

Emmons is part of a 25-member Tide recruiting class ranked No. 1 in the nation and highlighted by a pair of five-star linebackers as well as two five-star offensive linemen.

In Tuscaloosa, Emmons follows the backfield likes of Mark Ingram, Trent Richardson, Eddie Lacy and Derrick Henry, two of which won the Heisman Trophy and all of whom enjoyed national titles at Bama in addition to NFL careers (minus Henry who figures to be drafted in May). Emmons won titles at Oak Hill, Table Rock and Freedom and wants to do the same at the next level.

He knows what it will take to get there.

"I thank God for waking me up every morning and giving me the ability to do what I've been doing," Emmons said. "My mom and grandma have always had my back. I'd like to thank my attorney, Rob Denton, too. I've been through some stuff, and God put him in my life for a reason. (I also want to thank principal Mike) Swan for hiring the right coaching staff.

"All my friends and teammates have always supported me and know what I can do. The records I broke are thanks to my offensive line. Every time I broke a record, I always looked for what's the next one. It's been fun. Football is what I do, and I'm very thankful for what has happened...."

"I'm not satisfied though, and I'm going to Alabama to work hard and earn my spot."
ALABAMA FOOTBALL

Backfield loaded with talent, no experience

By Aaron Suttles
Sports Writer

Of the 548 rushing attempts by running backs in 2015, UA returns just 76 or 13.9 percent, and nearly, if not all, of those carries came after the offense had the game well in hand.

Sophomore-to-be Damien Harris led the way with 46 carries for 157 yards (3.4 yards per carry) and one touchdown, which includes a 41-yard rush.

His sophomore classmate, Bo Scarbrough, comes with his own sort of mythology thanks to his size, build and speed. Yet he carried the ball only 18 times during his freshman season for a total of 104 yards (5.8 yards per carry) and one touchdown with a long rush of 24 yards.

To address the lack of relative experience at running back, Saban doesn't rule out recruiting a graduate transfer player to help along the less-experienced backs.

"Well, I think we're always looking for good players," Saban said. "I'm pleased (with the running

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BACKFIELD

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backs in the 2016 recruiting class), but we're always looking for good players. And it seems with these graduate transfers, just looking at the history of it, there seems like there are more skill guys, receivers, running backs that do that type of things.

"So we'll probably be on the lookout for the next best player we can find, whether it's somebody that didn't sign on signing day or someone who is out there looking for an opportunity."

Two running backs that fit that description are Stanford's Barry Sanders Jr. and Michigan's Derrick Green.

Both were recruited out of high school by Alabama, both graduate this spring and both have expressed interest in transferring.

Green, rated as a five-star rusher out of high school, was buried on the Wolverines' depth chart in 2015 as a junior. He compiled 157 yards on 47 rushes in 2015 after a promising sophomore season that was derailed by a shoulder injury in which he rushed for 471 yards on 82 carries in six games.

Sanders Jr. is on schedule to graduate in June. During his three-year career he has rushed for 701 yards and four touchdowns on 117 carries, serving as a backup to Heisman Trophy finalist Christian McCaffrey this past season.

Then there are Emmons and Jacobs, but relying heavily upon freshmen is never big on any coach's wish list, especially freshmen that don't arrive on campus until the summer. Jacobs was only truly discovered as a potential recruit after Alabama's national championship win.

"He played a lot of, I guess people would be able to relate to wildcat quarterback ... but he's got really good quickness, he's got great speed, he's got good hands. Just very, very impressive to the point that we go up and see him, and (UA assistant coach) Burton (Burns) calls back and says, we thought something was wrong with the guy, maybe he's too small or whatever, and he said 'No, this is a pretty good looking guy and I watched him practice basketball and he's very athletic and very explosive,' and I said, 'Well there's got to be something wrong with the guy.'"

"I know quite a few people offered him late. We were in need, we were searching. We wanted to make sure that we got two running backs.

"We only had a had a couple/three guys on scholarship and that's the least we ever had at that position, and nobody coming back that has significant experience."

-- Reach Aaron Suttles at aaron@tidesports.com or at 205-722-0229.
SEEING STARS

Big five-star additions push Tide to top-ranked signing class

By Aaron Suttles
Sports Writer

Wearing the smile of a contented man, Nick Saban looked downright joyful Wednesday afternoon following another top recruiting haul.

It was probably hard to be anything but in the aftermath of Saban’s No. 1 2016 recruiting class, his seventh such feat in the last nine seasons.

It didn’t appear to be in the cards for another top-ranked class at the start of the day when UA ranked 12th in the rivals.com rankings, and at one point on National Signing Day it was as low as 14th.

But a signing day haul of three five-star defenders in linebackers Ben Davis and Mack Wilson and defensive end Terrell Hall plus some four-star defensive backs in Shyheim Carter and Jared Mayden pushed the Tide to the top.

Now, Saban will be the first to tell you that outside recruiting rankings don’t matter to him, but those rankings are somewhat objective proof that the man entering his 10th season in Tuscaloosa is perhaps the greatest recruiter the game has ever seen.

“I always seem to answer questions about rankings and ratings and I say this every year: Every coach stands up and says ‘We got the players we wanted and the players we needed, we had a great recruiting class,’ all that kind of stuff, but I think it’s more important that we get players who are committed to doing the things that they need to do to develop in your program and to grow and develop in your program, personally, academically, and athletically,” Saban said.

“Because these guys have never played college football before, and that’s something that they’re going to have to grow and develop into.”

The class consisted of five five-star recruits (the next closest program, Clemson and Georgia, both had three five stars), 10 four stars and nine three stars and addressed several areas of need, including offensive line, linebacker and the secondary.

“I’m really pleased that we got five quality offensive linemen in this class,” Saban said. “I think we got two good runners, which certainly we need.

“Defensively, I think we got a great group of linebackers. Really good cover people in the secondary. We got some really good down guys with some really good size. We probably would have liked to have added a defensive end, edge rusher type of guy to that group, but again, you don’t get everything that you want all the time. We’re really pleased with the players that we got.”

Florida State finished second in the rankings with Ohio State, Michigan, Clemson, LSU, Ole Miss, Southern California, Auburn and Georgia rounding out the top 10.

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Saban, Malzahn have won recruiting battles, but Saban turns that into titles

Kevin Scarbinsky  kscarbinsky@al.com

Not much changed in Tuscaloosa, where they should just go ahead and combine National Signing Day and Groundhog Day. Not Groundhog Day the day but Groundhog Day the movie.

Every year on the first Wednesday in February, Alabama reels in the No. 1 recruiting class, and the rest of the country sees Nick Saban's shadow.

This No. 1 class may be even a little more special than usual. It came with ace talent scout Kirby Smart not just working in Georgia but for Georgia.

As persuasive as Smart can be, five-star linebackers Ben Davis and Lyndell Wilson weren't moved to cross the state line with him.

No one with a single functioning brain cell was surprised.

There may have been some eyebrows raised and jaws dropped by the work done by Gus Malzahn and company at Auburn. For the fourth time in his four years as head coach, the Tigers put together a top-10 class.

But even Malzahn himself said this class is different.

It came after a disappointing 7-6 season. It came after defensive coordinator Javier Will Muschamp left to become the South Carolina head coach and took Travaris Robinson and Lance Thompson with him.

It happened in large part because of the efforts of two legacies on the coaching staff. Dameyune Craig gets to tutor maybe the best wide receiver class in America, led by Nate Craig-Myers. Rodney Garner gets to coach up maybe the best defensive line class in the country, highlighted by Derrick Brown.

The Tigers didn't just shore up two positions of need. It appears they brought in players who may have an immediate impact on both sides of the ball at a time when significant improvement is required.

Malzahn was so excited about the defensive line signees, he said, "I really think we're building the foundation for a top-10 defense."

Top 10? Auburn hasn't finished higher than No. 48 in scoring defense (2013) or No. 64 in total defense (2014) under Malzahn. A top-10 defense would be a reason to roll Toomer's Corner.

The optimism is understandable and maybe a little necessary, but unlike Saban at Alabama, Malzahn hasn't turned his consistent top-10 recruiting classes into consistent top-10 teams. The issues have tended to lean more toward player development than player procurement.

No matter how good the new defensive linemen are, it may not matter if the offense doesn't rebound from its worst season under Malzahn. No matter how good the new wideouts are, it won't matter if no one can get them the ball.

So it all comes down to quarterback.

Auburn signed two, but only Jucos transfer John Franklin III is already on campus. Malzahn said, "He's going to get the chance to win the job."

The Tigers need more.

They need someone not just to win the job, but to get the job done.

If that man emerges, there should be enough talent around him to end a two-year trend on the scoreboard and give Malzahn a shot at a fifth straight top-10 class.
Saban about results not perception

At last, Nick Saban and the most difficult-to-please element of the University of Alabama football fan base have found common ground, or so it seems.

Three of the four major recruiting services, including Rivals, have rated the 2016 UA recruiting class as No. 1 in the country. The sole outlier, ESPN, ranked Florida State ahead of the Crimson Tide which, if nothing else, vexed Alabama fans and the SEC Bias crowd equally. UA addressed many needs. It made substantial inroads back into Mississippi, prime recruiting territory that had yielded very little to Saban and his staff in the past three years. It claimed the consensus No. 1 and No. 2 in-state prospects, Ben Davis of Gordo and Mack Wilson of Montgomery. Saban, like his demanding fans, didn’t seem displeased.

Inevitably, though, there is a position or two that continues to be a little thinner than you’d like, a player or two that slipped away at the end. Not even Alabama, national champion and perennial rulers of the recruiting world, is immune from that.

“You don’t always get everything you want,” Saban said.

When he says that, he probably means something slightly different than many fans do. Certainly, the fans want a No. 1 class but many want that class to materialize in a certain way. They want great players, certainly. But they want commitments to be unwavering, which is an increasingly archaic idea. They want the endorphin rush of a late surprise. And they especially want to obtain signatures that somehow upset the fans of rival teams — Auburn, of course, and LSU and Tennessee and, particularly true in this cycle, Ole Miss.

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Miss. So even as Alabama was accumulating five-star talent on Wednesday, players like Wilson and Davis and Terrell Hall out of Washington, D.C., there wasn't that explosive commitment that would allow a fan to wield power in water-cooler conversation. There was no T.J. Yeldon or Cyrus Kouandjio-type recruitment, no Rashan Evans or Reuben Foster to fuel offseason banter.

Those scenarios, like recruiting rankings themselves, fall into the vast realm of "perception," which sometimes grows so large that it overshadows the very purpose of recruiting, which is to improve your roster. Sometimes, perception does matter, if it goes hand-in-hand with talent and the "speculation," as Saban calls it, is somewhat accurate. The benchmark 2008 class at Alabama — Julio Jones, Mark Ingram, Marcell Dareus and others — not only caused the talent level to skyrocket, but it also announced to the world just how UA intended to recruit. It bolstered the team but it was also manna for a fan base starved for success.

These days, though, are a little different.

"We're not interested in perception," Saban said on Wednesday. "Perception doesn't win games around here, but good players do."

So when Saban paraphrases Mick Jagger, saying you can't always get what you want (Saban was dabbing on the recruiting trail, after all, so a musical metaphor isn't out of place), he's not talking about a "big boom."

He's talking about players. He's talking about needing one more wide receiver, which he mentioned specifically. Saban also mentioned an edge pass-rusher and while he didn't mention another defensive tackle, you know he was thinking it because that is what college coaches always think.

For the most part, things went well, though. Several players got their day in the sun — including a couple of unexpected ones like running back Josh Jacobs, who didn't land on Saban's radar until after the national championship game. It was, all in all, another Signing Day in Tuscaloosa — a No. 1 class followed quickly by introspection on how it could have been better. That's the attitude that makes the whole system work the way it does.

— Reach Cecil Hurt at cecil@tidesports.com or 205-722-0225.
Don't call UA's national title haul a 'Sweet 16'

Kentucky High School Athletic Association owns rights to phrase

Kent Faulk kfaulk@al.com

Immediately after the University of Alabama's football team won the National Championship on Jan. 11, merchandise commemorating the victory began flying off store shelves.

But despite the university's claims that it is the 16th national football championship for the program, one obvious phrase — "Sweet 16" or "Sweet Sixteen" — describing the fete isn't included on officially licensed T-shirts, caps and trinkets.

Why?

One University of Alabama official over the licensing of merchandise didn't respond to AL.com regarding that question, but an NCAA spokesperson did.

"The NCAA licenses the trademark Sweet 16 from the Kentucky High School Athletic Association with the understanding that it will only be used in conjunction with our Division I Men's and Women's Basketball Championships," Meghan Durham, assistant director of public and media relations at the NCAA, wrote in an email.

SEE SWEET 16, A5
SWEET 16
FROM A1

"The NCAA does not review or approve College Football Playoff championship merchandise as the CFP is a separate organization, and the NCAA was not contacted regarding any request to use 'Sweet 16' on merchandise related to University of Alabama's national championship," Durham stated.

The Kentucky High School Athletic Association notes its ownership of the trademark and sub-license to the NCAA on its website.

Chad Collins, general counsel for the Kentucky High School Athletic Association, said they registered the trademark in 1988 because of the association's annual basketball tournament. But the phrase was in use by the association well before 1960, he said.

The vast majority of that state's high school sports are divided into 16 regions in Kentucky, Collins explained.

"It has been that way for the vast majority of our (nearly 100-year) history," he said.

A group or company wanting to use the trademark will contact the association from time to time, Collins said.

"We don't routinely give that right away," he said.

Collins said the association was not contacted by the University of Alabama or any company regarding a request to use the phrase on merchandise before or after January's championship.

The Kentucky High School Athletic Association monitors the use of the trademark and has issued cease-and-desist letters to groups or companies using the trademark for commercial purposes, Collins said.

After the Los Angeles Lakers won its 16th NBA championship in 2010, the high school athletic association had to send cease-and-desist letters to several companies or groups for using the phrase without permission, he said.

"We monitor the use of the phrase and enforce the proper use of the mark in any instance we feel is an issue," Collins said.

The Kentucky High School Athletic Association gets money for the licensed use of Sweet 16 on athletic merchandise. Collins said he didn't know how much money the trademark was bringing into the association each year, but added it is "significant enough" for us to pay attorneys to register it and enforce its use.

What about using "Sweet 16" related to materials for teen birthday parties?

Collins said the phrase's use in those situations does not infringe on the association's trademarks because the association's trademarks are for use related to athletics — whether it's basketball, football or some other sport.
Ken Stabler had CTE

Researchers found disease widespread through brain of former Bama QB

Jimmy Golen  The Associated Press

BOSTON — Former Oakland Raiders quarterback Ken Stabler, the late NFL MVP and Super Bowl winner who is a finalist for the Pro Football Hall of Fame, has been diagnosed with the brain disease CTE, Boston University researchers said Wednesday.

Stabler, who died of colon cancer at 69 in July, had Stage 3 chronic traumatic encephalopathy, Dr. Ann McKee told The Associated Press. McKee said the disease was widespread throughout his brain, with "quite severe" damage to the regions involving learning, memory and regulation of emotion.

"We've now found CTE in former NFL players who played every position except kicker," said McKee, a professor of neurology at Boston University. "While we know on average that certain positions experience more repetitive head impacts and are more likely at greater risk for CTE, no position is immune."

The diagnosis was first reported by The New York Times.

The disease, which can be diagnosed only after death, is linked to repeated brain trauma and associated with symptoms such as memory loss, depression and progressive dementia. CTE has been found in the brains of dozens of former football players.

According to Chris Nowinski, the founder of the Concussion Legacy Foundation, Stabler told his family he wanted to have his brain studied after learning that former NFL linebacker Junior Seau had been diagnosed with the disease. In 2012, Seau shot himself in the chest at the age of 43.

"What is interesting about Ken Stabler is that he anticipated his diagnosis years in advance," Nowinski wrote in an email to the AP. "And even though he's a football icon, he began actively distancing himself from (the) game in his final years, expressing hope that his grandsons would choose not to play."

McKee said the extent of the damage to Stabler's brain was surprising because he was relatively young when he died and because he was a quarterback and thought to be less exposed to repeated head trauma.

"There was no evidence of any other brain disorder to explain the difficulties he experienced during life," McKee said.

The left-handed Stabler, nicknamed "Snake" for his ability to escape from defenders, led Alabama to an undefeated season in 1966. A second-round draft pick by Oakland, he was the NFL's Most Valuable Player in 1974 and led the Raiders to victory in the 1977 Super Bowl.

In all, Stabler threw for 27,938 career yards and had a .661 winning percentage over 15 seasons, which also included stints with the Houston Oilers and New Orleans Saints. He was selected as a finalist for the Hall of Fame by its Seniors Committee; the inductees will be announced Saturday.

Denver Broncos linebacker Brandon Marshall said at a Super Bowl availability Wednesday that the news bothers him.

"You've got to look after yourself because, really, nobody else will," he said, adding that he has heard about players walking away from the game but can't do it himself.

"The game is so much a part of who I am, so I can't give up a big part of me. I just hope the game doesn't one day take away a big part of me," he said. "I mean, Lord willing, it doesn't happen, but say something does happen, I don't think I'm going to regret it because I'll say, 'I did what I wanted to do.'"
NFL

'Snake' to enter Hall of Fame

By Jerry McDonald
San Jose Mercury News (TNS)

SAN FRANCISCO — Ken Stabler wasn't around to see it, but the late Raiders quarterback was named to the Pro Football Hall of Fame on Saturday night at the NFL Honors show at Bill Graham Civic Auditorium.

Stabler, who died in July due to complications of colon cancer at age 69, was one of two senior nominees along with former Washington and Detroit offensive lineman Dick Stanfel.

It was revealed by the quarterback's family to the New York Times during the week that Stabler was also suffering from Stage 3 chronic traumatic encephalopathy, or CTE, a form of repetitive brain trauma.

Stabler, who was quarterback at the University of Alabama from

SEE SNAKE, 06
1965-67, was a finalist three times in 1990, 1991 and 2003 but never made the final cut.

As a senior nominee, for players who have been retired for 25 or more years, Stabler needed 80 percent voter approval to be enshrined and wasn’t in the discussion along with contemporary candidates.

Nicknamed “Snake” for a winding touchdown run while in high school in Foley, Ala., Stabler was a second-round pick by the Raiders in the 1968 NFL draft.

After winning the starting job from Daryle Lamonica in 1973, Stabler was 69-26-1. A Raider from 1970 to 1979, Stabler was the author of such iconic plays as the “Sea of Hands” touchdown pass to Clarence Davis in the playoffs against the Miami Dolphins in 1974 and the “Holy Roller” intentional fumble against the San Diego Chargers in 1978.

The NFL’s Most Valuable Player in 1974, Stabler is the 25th Raiders player to be inducted in the Hall of Fame.

In the Raiders’ first Super Bowl championship - Super Bowl IX - Stabler completed 12 of 19 passes for 180 yards and one touchdown in a 32-14 win over the Minnesota Vikings in Pasadena on Jan. 9, 1977.

The performance so moved worldly Raiders radio announcer Bill King that he exclaimed “Jascha Heifetz never played the violin with more dexterity than Kenny Stabler is playing the Minnesota defense.”

Stabler, whose hard-living, fun-loving lifestyle resonated with Raiders fans, particularly in the East Bay, was at his best in the clutch.

“I’ve often said, if I had one drive to win a game to this day, I would pick Kenny,” former Raiders coach John Madden said at the time of Stabler’s death. “Snake was a lot cooler than I was. He was a perfect quarterback and a perfect Raider. When you think about Kenny, you think about the Raiders.”

Stabler also played for the Houston Oilers from 1980-81 and the New Orleans Saints from 1982-84, retiring at age 39.

For his career, Stabler completed 59.8 percent of his passes for 27,398 yards with 194 touchdowns and 222 interceptions, a touchdown-to-interception ratio which probably helped keep him out of the Hall of Fame.
Jimmy Bank has done it all in his 30 years as a major league traveling secretary.

By Becky Hopf
Special to The Tuscaloosa News

His was, arguably, one of the most demanding jobs in Major League Baseball. And when he retired in 2012, he was not a part of his vocabulary.

When you are the traveling secretary for a professional baseball team, particularly for one of the most storied clubs, making things happen, no matter how many hoops one has to jump through to make it happen, is job one.

Jimmy Bank did just that. And so adept at it, in 2012, Bank was named Major League Baseball’s Traveling Secretary of the Year for his work with the Chicago Cubs.

“I tell people, it’s like being a road manager for an extremely large rock band,” said Bank, whose retirement has returned, with his wife, Carla, to Tuscaloosa where he spent part of his childhood. “You handle all of the travel. Initially, we traveled a lot commercial. Now it’s all charter. You handle all the planes, hotels, buses, trucks for baggage and equipment, players’ meals. If a player needs his wife picked up, you arrange it. If a player’s family member needs a flight, you arrange it. If somebody needs an extra room at the hotel, a different flight back, you book it. You’re sort of like a glorified concierge but you’re also, especially in the old days, a liaison between the players and the front office.

“The word ‘no’ didn’t exist. Traveling secretaries always get it done.”

Bank estimates, during his career, that at least a million tickets passed through his hands.

The son of the late Bert Bank, a retired Major who survived the Bataan Death March and 33 months of captivity during World War II and returned home to Tuscaloosa to become a state senator and radio pioneer, Jimmy Bank was exposed to some of sports’ biggest movers and shakers early on in his childhood. His father befriended legendary football coach, the late Paul “Bear” Bryant, in high school and college at the University of Alabama, an association that led to the formation of the Alabama football radio network. His father introduced him to a fraternity of famous sports friends that included Birmingham native and University of Alabama basketball coach Adolph Rupp, baseball’s Dizzy Dean and George Steinbrenner, and the Chicago Bears’ Red Grange, just to name a few.

It was Finley who gave Jimmy Bank his leap into professional sports, first selling programs and doing promotions for the Memphis Pros, who later became the Memphis Tans of the American Basketball Association, and then to baseball’s Oakland A’s.

His career in Major League Baseball spanned four years with Oakland, from 1973-76, 10 years with the Milwaukee Brewers, from 1983-92, and 20 years with the Chicago Cubs, from 1993-2012. Mixed in was a six-year stint in Tuscaloosa where he worked in radio, including calling Alabama basketball.

While high-profile teams like Alabama drew the occasional celebrity to the sidelines at Bryant-Denny Stadium, imagine the draw a professional baseball club yields. During his tenure, Bank not only met the gamut in his role, but he, like his father, forged genuine friendships with sports and pop-culture stars.

Among those was Stanley Burrell. The Oakland, Calif., native tagged along with his brother, Louis, a bat boy for the A’s. Bank enlisted Stanley, then about 12, to help out at games. Reggie Jackson and the players said the kid bore a striking resemblance to Hank Aaron, so they nicknamed him “Hammer.” The name stuck. That kid grew up to be rapper M.C. Hammer.

Debbie Fields, of Mrs. Fields Cookies fame, was a ball girl for the A’s. Gary Sinise, the Academy Award nominee for his role as Lt. Dan in “Forest Gump,” was a huge Cubs fan who became a friend as did musician John Fogerty, whose 1985 hit “Centerfield” is a baseball anthem. He’s been backstage at the Grammy’s with Dwight Yoakam, sharing the Green Room with B.B. King, Glenn Close, John Stamos, Paula Abdul, Patrick Swayne, Natalie Cole and Michael Bolton, and once shot the breeze with Willie Mays who wanted to talk about Bear Bryant. And he’s met Presidents Nixon, Clinton and both Bushes.

“Growing up, I always said there were two people I wanted to meet or see in person: a president and a Beatle. I haven’t met a Beatle, but I did meet a president,” Bank said, though he has come close. He spotted Paul McCartney on stage at the Grammy’s.

Oh, and there was the time he kicked Rock Hudson out of the A’s press box during the 1974 World Series. The A’s were playing the Los Angeles Dodgers. Hudson and a friend were in the press box and started cheering for LA, breaking the long-standing code of press box being neutral. No cheering, Banks had the Hollywood heart throbb shown to the door.

But baseball was at the heart of it all. “I call my son on his birthday. I’m a parent. That goes a long way. He was so good to my son.”

Bank used his role for good, too. When the team went on the road, he’d collect hotel soaps and toiletries from players and staff and donate them, on behalf of the Cubs, to a food pantry.

When the April 2011 tornado devastated Tuscaloosa, he stood before the Cubs team and called them for donations. Kids all over Tuscaloosa are wearing Cubs shirts and jerseys, compliments of players and staff who raised their own closets and walked the pick-up in Tuscaloosa’s recovery.

Stopping away from that life has not been hard—he’s no longer on call 24-7. But there are aspects he misses.

“I don’t miss the job. But I do miss some of the people. My job allowed me to meet people and make friends all over the country. I miss a lot of my favorite restaurants. I don’t miss the work.”

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Harper’s Super Bowl experience is welcome bonus for Panthers

By Laura Owens
Special to The Tuscaloosa News

Roman Harper’s 10 years of NFL experience show in different ways. One is how he’s a general on the field for his Carolina Panthers defense. Another way is that his hair is already at least half-gray, if not more. But his experience in a Super Bowl game is especially critical for the Panthers as they prepare to face the Denver Broncos today in Super Bowl 50.

Harper, a safety at Alabama from 2002-05, is in his second season with the Panthers, Harper is putting to use the knowledge he gained in his Super Bowl XLIV victory in 2009 with New Orleans to help prepare his teammates for what they’ll be facing against the Broncos.

“He’s a Hall of Fame quarterback for a reason, and he deserves all the success,” Harper said. “Just knowing that right there, we’re going to have our hands full, and we’ve got to be ready to go.”

Harper’s NFL career started in 2006 when he was drafted by the Saints. He stayed with them for eight years before signing with the Panthers. The transition, he said, didn’t take long.

“When I found out I was coming here, I was really excited to be in the same division, to see some of these guys,” he said. “I knew we had an opportunity to be good because we had a good, young quarterback, and I knew they played great defense here. I wanted to go somewhere where they played great defense and be a part of that.”

Harper was a hero in the Crimson Tide’s game against Tennessee in 2005, which Alabama won 6-3. Tennessee’s Arian Foster was running full speed for the end zone with five minutes left in a game where both offenses struggled. But in from the left ran Harper, knocking the ball out with his helmet and forcing a touchback that enshrined him into Alabama football lore.

SEE HARPER, C3
HARPER
From Page C1

down the field and kicked the winning field goal with under 20 seconds left.

"I just think I'm forgotten," Harper said. "I made one play, one huge play in my career, and they love me forever there. It's crazy. I'm just glad I can actually say I was a part of that because I go back, and that's all they talk about."

The Nick Saban era has given Alabama fans a lot to enjoy, but Harper was at Alabama during a time when the Crimson Tide was suffering under NCAA sanctions.

His freshman year, 2002, was the last under Dennis Franchione when the Tide enjoyed a 10-3 record. Then Harper finished his Alabama career under Mike Shula with a 20-17 record.

Even though those years were hard for Alabama fans to watch, Harper is grateful those were the years he played for the Tide.

"I enjoyed my years at the Capstone, and I don't regret anything: the timing or when I was there, whatever we went through," he said. "It made me who I am today, and it allowed me to have the success I've been able to have in the NFL."

As it turns out, Alabama wasn't the last time Harper got to work with Shula as he's the Panthers' offensive coordinator.

"Seeing him in throughout the years in the league, he would always talk to me," Harper said.

"When he was a quarterback coach here, and then became the offensive coordinator, and I was on the other side, we'd always talk. It's really cool being here with Coach Shula. I love him to death, and he's helped me be the man I am today."

While Harper himself will happily hand out a "Roll Tide" to the Alabama faithful, he's found that Alabama fans still hold him in high esteem as well.

"It's great, it's all about being a part of something special," he said. "All my teammates laugh at me because everywhere you go, you've got somebody, some random person yelling at me like, 'Roman, Roll Tide!' and I'll tell you, we're everywhere. Literally everywhere."

While Harper represents the Joe Kines defensive era, Panthers teammate Kevin Norwood enjoys having another Alabama guy on the roster.

"It's more of a 'This is what we did when I was there,' and how things have changed," Norwood said.

"We don't get into details. We talk about the fun times."

Norwood's fun times included three national championships, and while he likes to give Harper a hard time about having those, Harper said he feels like they're still his own, too.

"Even though I didn't win a national championship, I still claim them because it's all one school, it's one family, one love," Harper said. "...All of our blood is crimson."

He enjoys watching Alabama play now, and has seen a shift in the fans' expectations.

"It's crazy because you look at Alabama fans now, and if it's not a blowout, they're stressing," Harper said. "It's so much pressure on the team. I'm like, 'People, every game's not going to be a blowout, you're not just going to kill people, and it's OK to lose.' It's part of it, and playing the hard schedule they do, and great players all around the country now, it's really cool to just say I went to the University of Alabama."
Super Bowl win today would complete checklist for Mathis

By Cameron Wolfe
Special to The Tuscaloosa News

When Denver Broncos guard Evan Mathis began ninth grade at Homewood High School, he started a journal. He had his whole life mapped out.

He wanted to make the NFL, play 10 or more years and win a Super Bowl. Twenty years later, Mathis has already achieved two of three and is on the brink of achieving the third.

"The only thing that didn't go that way was me saying I was going to play baseball and football at (the University of) Alabama," Mathis said. "Then I was going to go to professional wrestling after football. I don't think I want to do that anymore."

Mathis' plan was always clear in his head, but the road wasn't clearly paved. When he arrived at Homewood, his head coach, Bob Newton, saw a 260-pound freshman with a lot of potential but a lot to learn. Mathis had to wait until his sophomore year to become a starter and it wasn't until his senior year when he truly started to shine.

"I thought he was going to be a player when I first saw him," Newton said. "Sometimes the bigger kids aren't the most aggressive ones, but he got over it. He got even better when he

Super Bowl 50

Carolina vs. Denver
When: 5:30 p.m. today
Where: Levi's Stadium, Santa Clara, California
Records: Carolina 17-1, Denver 14-4
TV: CBS got to college."

Mathis helped Homewood win the Class 5A state championship his senior year and signed with Alabama, where he became a three-year starter.

Mathis earned first-team All-SEC honors in 2004, his senior year. That catapulted him into becoming a third-round NFL Draft pick of the Carolina Panthers, who just happen to be his opponent in his first Super Bowl appearance today.

The veteran guard brushes off any notion that there was extra motivation playing against the team that drafted and subsequently gave up on him. He's totally focused on the special opportunity he's had in Denver, which signed him in August to be the starting left guard.

Mathis spent the best four years of his career in Philadelphia, where he became an All-Pro and one of the best guards in the league. Last June

SEE MATHIS, C3

See next page
the Eagles released him during a contract dispute. Soon after Mathis signed with the Broncos.

"I felt really good about it when I signed here and once I got here I saw the culture, the character that the organization, coaching staff and players are all about and I felt better and better about my decision," Mathis said.

Now, he'll be playing in his first Super Bowl. Mathis' strength got him into football, but it's something deeper that kept Mathis in the NFL as a starting guard at age 34.


"We're real proud of him. He's making the hometown boys out here real proud of him."

Mathis is loyal to his Alabama roots and said he knows friends and family back home will be cheering him on today.

Newton texts him weekly to wish him luck or give him some motivation, such as earlier this season when Mathis was battling hamstring and ankle injuries.

The Broncos inserted rookie guard Max Garcia to replace Mathis at the time. Mathis was a healthy scratch against Pittsburgh in the regular-season matchup.

Newton told him his time would come soon. Once Mathis got healthy, he got his starting job back.

He'll be a huge component for a Broncos offense as it tries to protect quarterback Peyton Manning against the Panthers' physical front.

"Somebody asked me the other day who I'm going for and I said I'm going for Evan. I got more invested in him than anybody," Newton said.
You surprised Mike Shula's become a Super Bowl coach? Ray Perkins isn't

A cornerback for the Denver Broncos, Aqib Talib, called him "a football genius."

A wide receiver for his own Carolina Panthers, Jerricho Cotchery, took that thought and ran with it.

"He wouldn't want anybody to call him a genius," Cotchery said, "but he's brilliant."

Mike Shula, a brilliant football genius?

You won't get any argument from Ray Perkins.

The rest of the football world now knows Shula as the offensive coordinator for the top-scoring team in the NFL, the NFC champion Panthers. He's the man who unleashed Cam Newton on a defenseless world, and he's preparing a game plan for his first Super Bowl.

Perkins couldn't be happier for one of his proteges, but then he understood Shula's football intellect earlier than most.

They spent four years together at Alabama as head coach and quarterback from 1983-86, with Shula the starter for the last three of those seasons. Perkins volunteered a compliment for his old quarterback as close to perfect as Carolina's 17-1 record.

"I don't know that Mike Shula made a bad decision playing quarterback for us at Alabama," Perkins said. "I can't remember a time when I thought he made a bad decision."

If you know anything about the demanding Perkins, you know he would've noticed and remembered in vivid detail.

Some of us have marveled at the incredibly productive working relationship between the bubbly Newton and the stoic Shula, a mixed Auburn-Alabama marriage that's succeeded beyond our wildest imaginations.

Not Perkins. He sees it as the natural byproduct of Newton's special gifts - "there's no ceiling there," Perkins said - and Shula's ability to mesh with his quarterback to develop an offense around those gifts.

"Mike is a master at working with whoever," Perkins said. "He doesn't mind asking and he doesn't mind listening to whatever views Cam Newton has. That's how I worked with Mike. Can we do this? Can we do that?"

There appears to be little that Newton can't do, but he didn't become an MVP-in-waiting until this, his fifth year in the NFL. Shula was the Carolina quarterbacks coach for Newton's first two seasons, then was promoted to offensive coordinator.
Ever since, Newton and the Carolina offense have done nothing but get better and better.

It's been nice to see Shula start to get some of the credit he deserves. He was criticized beyond fact and reason as the Alabama head coach, a job he wasn't fully prepared to handle but wasn't afraid to take at one of the most difficult times in modern Crimson Tide history.

He didn't bear the same burden Perkins did when he succeeded Bear Bryant in Tuscaloosa, but Shula had to recruit and coach through the stifling NCAA sanctions the program received before he answered Mama's call in 2003.

Despite the adversity, Shula handled his tenure as the head coach at his alma mater with dignity. Almost a decade after his November 2006 departure to make way for Nick Saban, Shula's one of the top coordinators in the NFL. It seems only a matter of time before he gets another head coaching opportunity.

"I definitely see that in his future," Perkins said. "I think he's going to be a great head coach. I don't have any question."

OK. Next question. College or NFL? Perkins can't say for sure, even though he and Shula stay in touch, but guesses "his best spot (as a head coach) would be in the pros."

Except for his four years as the Alabama head coach, Shula's entire coaching career has been spent in the NFL, where his dad became one of the giants of the profession. But Don Shula isn't the only one in the family whose name resonates at that level.

Perkins, as a former NFL player, assistant and head coach himself, still has a lot of connections there. He said Mike Shula "has got a great reputation around the league."

So while the whole world will be watching Newton work Sunday against the Broncos, Perkins will be watching, cheering for the Panthers and thinking of Shula calling the plays up in the booth.


That's what makes it easier for both sides of the aisle in this state to cheer for Carolina.
Program attracts student nurses to DCH

Shelton students get experience at hospitals

By Angel Coker
Staff Writer

Becky Smith inserted a cotton swab into the mouth of SimMan 3G, a medical manikin, to practice a throat swab on Friday in the DCH Health System’s Quest Center at the Lewis & Faye Manderson Cancer Center.

On Saturday night, the second-semester Shelton State Community College nursing student worked her first 12-hour shift in the emergency department, no longer practicing, but working hands-on with patients.

Smith is one of 27 nursing students from area colleges to be hired as a multi-skilled technician at DCH system hospitals as part of the first cohort of the Link Program, a DCH nursing innovative program that offers nursing students an opportunity to gain a year’s experience as a registered nurse before graduation.

“I think it’s just a way that DCH is going to give us good hands-on experience and expose us to things that we’ll already be ready for when we come out of nursing school,” she said. “We won’t be on a big learning curve when we get out. We’ll already know the ABCs and ins and outs.”

Jutta Beams, assistant vice president of Patient Care Services at DCH Regional Medical Center, said the students will give direct patient care like giving baths, taking vital signs and measuring intake and output during their shifts.

She said her favorite thing about the program is that it will help students transition from nursing school to actual patient care.

“They will do a lot of hands-on care. They will actually get to do and see what they’ve learned in school,” Beams said. “It is much easier to understand what you’re learning in school when applying it to a patient.”

Program participants can learn patient care hands-on for 24 hours once every two weekends for six months in two departments of their choosing: intensive care, medical/surgery, maternal child, psych, rehab, perioperative and procedural areas, and emergency.

At the end of the six months, the students must turn in their grades from school, and if they meet the requirements, they will get ready to retire.

“It helps us plan for our future,” she said. “We hope they will stay with us to be an RN.”

The program is a win-win, Royer said.

DCH can attract more nurses, and the students can earn money, gain experience and can graduate nursing school with a

SEE NURSES, B12
one-year experience credit pay rate if hired by DCH.

Royer said the program also helps students learn about different areas of nursing and helps them narrow their career path because they will have the opportunity to work with various patient populations and clinical units.

In school, nursing students do clinicals at a nursing home, so they don't get the opportunity to discover other options, she said.

"I think the best part is being able to go to all the different units. Some have a hard time (choosing a unit) because you don't get to experience it in school. I get to witness what every different role in the hospital does," said Emily Walters, a second-semester nursing student at Shelton who worked her first 12-hour shift in the maternal child department a week before Smith.

"I definitely feel like the students who get to do this are definitely set apart from the rest," Walters said.
Title IX Investigations Are a Total Mess

By: Clay Travis

Let's get this out of the way early: anyone with a functional brain is in favor of equal treatment under the law and everyone is against rape. Just like everyone is against murder and assault and any other crime that injures another human being.

Now that this is out of the way, let's ask a big question that never gets asked: why are universities responsible for investigating rape accusations? The answer is because they're required to conduct investigations under the auspices of Title IX. It's a well intentioned application of federal law -- premised on the idea that sexual assault on campus is a problem that needs to be treated seriously -- but it creates as many, if not more, problems than it actually remedies. Because it sets up two different simultaneous investigations with different standards of proof and different consequences while also creating two divergent potential outcomes.

Let me explain.

If a murder happened on campus every single person who has ever been to college anywhere would find it ludicrous if a university was conducting a simultaneous campus murder investigation alongside police, right? Any time there's a serious allegation of a crime, campus cops call the real cops and let them investigate. That's because campus cops are equipped to give out parking tickets and respond to noise complaints, they aren't there to solve murders or bank robberies or kidnappings.

If a serious crime happens on campus just about everyone would say that it's the job of local police to investigate that crime. That's because we understand that conducting criminal investigations is time consuming, difficult, and freighted with the obligations to implement that investigation consistent with applicable state and federal law. No college or university has an adequate investigatory staff to determine who committed a murder and assess guilt or innocence. Moreover, the very idea of a college conducting a hearing based on whether a murder happened and applying its own standard of proof and rules of evidence and confrontation rules in that case is laughable.

So why is Title IX being applied to require colleges to conduct investigations into sexual assault?

I ask this question because athletics have become intertwined with sexual assault in the news a great deal over the past couple of years: the Jameis Winston case at Florida State, the Baylor rape cases, the Treon Harris case at Florida, the Vanderbilt rape case, and the recent lawsuit filed against the University of Tennessee alleging wrongdoing in a variety of sexual assault cases. Given that Baylor and Florida State recently settled cases for substantial sums of money, you can bet plaintiff lawyers -- sensing a big payday -- are going to commence filing these cases at a rapid rate.
All of these cases that I cited above are similar in that they involve female students alleging sexual assault by male football players. But how are they alike and how are they different and how do they implicate current criminal law when it comes to sexual assault?

Before we begin a discussion of all these cases, let's analyze what's at stake here. At its most basic level, criminal charges are brought when an investigator believes he or she has a reasonable probability of obtaining a conviction of a defendant beyond a reasonable doubt. You're all familiar with the phrase, "beyond a reasonable doubt." But it's a term of art. What exactly does "beyond a reasonable doubt mean?" What is "reasonable doubt?" It differs for every juror. For you, it might mean that it represents 99.9% guilt, for another person it might mean 95%. Most of you probably can't even put reasonable doubt in percentage terms, you just know it when you see it. Regardless, it's a high standard. That standard is high because we believe that no innocent person should ever be found guilty of a crime he or she didn't commit.

I've said and written this before, but if you get charged with a crime and have the money to afford decent legal representation, you probably did it. That is, you might beat the charges, but the odds are, you're guilty.

Our criminal justice system is not perfect -- no system is -- but if you're charged with a crime there's a well-established process that has been designed and refined over hundreds of years of court cases. We've balanced the rights of the accused and the rights of the alleged victims. There is due process. No one is found guilty without the opportunity to defend him or herself. Everyone understands the rules and how they will be applied. Moreover, the investigators who are charged with determining whether or not they believe a crime occurred are responsible for conducting their investigation within the bounds of the Constitution and state and federal law.

That's why the criminal court system is the absolute best place for all allegations of campus crime. Police should be investigating alleged sexual assaults just like they're investigating a campus murder or kidnapping or bank robbery. These are all real crimes where both the alleged victim and the accused have due process and the protections of our court system.

But campus rape investigations aren't like criminal investigations, the standard for guilt or innocence is much lower, it's a simple preponderance of the evidence standard. That is, if it's one iota more than 50% likely that a hearing officer finds you guilty of an offense, then you're guilty of the offense and subject to campus discipline.

So the easy explanation here is the burden to prove sexual assault on campus is much lower than it is in the criminal justice system. And unlike in courts where we've spent hundreds of years refining our criminal court processes (which can still lead to improper results) most colleges are just beginning to implement their Title IX policies. The result is a hodgepodge of different methods of hearings across the country, accusers and victims may or may not be able to cross-examine each other, rules of evidence may or may not apply, hearsay may or may not be admissible, appeals may or may not be fairly granted. It's a total crap shoot, and unlike in the criminal court system, there is no consistency.
As a result Title IX investigations are a recipe for disaster. This most frequently arises in those cases in which a police investigation occurs and no charges are filed. That’s because if criminal charges are brought then students are kicked out of school pending the outcome of their trials. But what if criminal charges aren’t brought? A campus investigation can still take place under Title IX. And a student can still be kicked out of a school based on the lower preponderance of the evidence standard even though he’s been cleared by a thorough criminal investigation.

What’s more, schools don’t have DNA testing or subpoena power over non-students, or access to scads of evidence that police departments can ensure are utilized to conduct a fair and impartial investigation. It’s almost entirely a he said she said examination—which side’s story is more believable?

That’s a total mess.

Put simply, schools aren’t any better equipped to conduct rape investigations than they are to conduct murder, kidnapping or bank robbery investigations.

With this background, let’s discuss what happened in all five of these most recent campus cases:

1. Baylor’s case is the most egregious example of what a school can do wrong.

In the Baylor case, the school conducted its own Title IX investigation and cleared Sam Ukwuachu, a football player, of rape. That is, they found it more likely than not that he did not commit the crime. Then the local district attorney took the case to trial and got a conviction beyond a reasonable doubt.

Here, Baylor’s Title IX investigation was so flawed that it found it less than 50% likely a player committed a rape and then a jury found it beyond a reasonable doubt that he did commit the crime.

How is this possible?

The school conducted a shoddy investigation.

You can read my column about the case here.

2. The Jameis Winston case is the second worst example of how to handle alleged sexual assaults on campus.

The Tallahassee police department failed to conduct an investigation and FSU actively hindered a student’s pursuit of justice. When the police department finally got around to conducting their investigation -- nearly a year later -- the evidence was lost and Jameis had retained a high profile attorney to protect his interests. (That attorney worked for free, by the way, providing hundreds of thousands of dollars in pro bono legal counsel).

When she eventually got a Title IX hearing at the school the hearing officer determined -- and I’m not making this up -- that each side was equally believable. That is, the person hearing the
case found it 50% likely that Jameis committed a rape and 50% likely that he didn't. So he chose not to make any decision at all, rendering the entire case moot.

FSU has since settled this case for nearly a million dollars, acknowledging a variety of flaws in its Title IX policies.

But the biggest issue in this case wasn't FSU's Title IX investigation, it was the Tallahassee police department's flawed investigation. The Tallahassee police department failed the victim.

3. Vanderbilt, Tennessee, and Florida actually handled these cases as well as could be expected.

All three schools immediately suspended all accused players from the team, before any charges were filed. That's the policy I've advocated for a long time, immediate suspension pending the outcome of a police investigation. (This isn't flawless since it could lead to an entirely innocent person being suspended from team activities, but I believe that 100% false accusations are incredibly rare). When authorities didn't charge Florida quarterback Treon Harris with a crime, Florida allowed him back on the team. (Any subsequent Title IX investigation must have cleared him as well, although I don't recall that being publicized.)

At Vanderbilt, upon discovering video suggesting a sexual assault may have occurred, Vanderbilt police notified Nashville police and allowed them to investigate. Vanderbilt suspended and kicked all four players out of school before any charges were filed. Those four players were subsequently charged with crimes -- two were convicted and then earned a retrial based on an improper juror. Since the students were kicked out of school and charged with crimes, there was no point in a Title IX investigation.

Tennessee allowed a police investigation to take place and also suspended all players, two of whom still await trial. Interestingly, the lawsuit against Tennessee alleges that its Title IX policies are flawed because:

"The plaintiffs say that UT's administrative hearing process, which is utilized by public universities across the state, is unfair because it provides students accused of sexual assault the right to attorneys and to confront their accusers through cross-examination and an evidentiary hearing in front of an administrative law judge."

How is that remotely unfair?

If you were charged with a sexual assault you didn't believe you'd committed on campus wouldn't you want your lawyer to be able to cross examine your accuser? Remarkably, many Title IX hearings don't allow the alleged attacker to cross examine his accuser. How is that remotely fair? You can get accused of a campus crime and not be able to defend yourself at all?

In examining these five situations, the criminal justice system did its job in all locations except for Tallahassee. The political pressure should be brought to bear there, where the police failed.

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The Title IX investigation clearly failed at Baylor, where the police were able to get a conviction and the school, for whatever reason, was incompetent.

My argument is pretty simple -- instead of requiring schools to conduct Title IX investigations they aren't prepared to adequately undertake, shouldn't schools -- and victim advocates -- ensure that police are adequately investigating alleged sexual assaults on campus instead? If we don't expect campus police officers to investigate murders, bank robberies or kidnappings, why should we expect them to investigate rapes?

It just makes no sense.
Deficit Threatens Stability of University of California, Berkeley, Official Says

By: Anemona Hartocollis

The chancellor of the University of California, Berkeley, said Wednesday that the university had a “substantial and growing” deficit that could threaten its long-term stability and that it needed to reduce expenses and raise revenues to maintain its position as a premier public institution.

The announcement comes against the backdrop of a long-running political dispute between Gov. Jerry Brown and Janet Napolitano, the president of the University of California, over funding for the university system. Much of the dispute has centered on how much tuition is appropriate for a public university to charge, and also on whether out-of-state and foreign students are squeezing out California residents, changing the mission of what a public university should be.

Last March, Ms. Napolitano announced a one-year cap for this school year on out-of-state and foreign students at the University of California, Los Angeles and Berkeley. About 25 percent of all Berkeley undergraduates this year are from other states and countries, up from 16 percent in 2011-12, the university said.

But Ms. Napolitano said at the time that the system needed more money, whether through state aid or tuition increases. Out-of-state and international students pay higher rates than California residents.

In a budget deal in May, Mr. Brown agreed to provide millions of dollars more to the university system, in exchange for a tuition freeze for in-state students until 2017-18. Out-of-state tuition was allowed to increase.

In Wednesday’s announcement, the chancellor, Nicholas B. Dirks, said he was forming a committee to develop proposals to address the $150 million deficit, or about 6 percent of Berkeley’s $2.4 billion budget, including looking at reducing staff, particularly in administration, and using online courses, real estate and branding to bring in new revenue.

Ms. Napolitano said in a statement on Wednesday that she supported the plan, while Mr. Brown declined to comment on it.

A spokesman for the state’s Department of Finance said the governor had committed to nearly $3.4 billion in additional funding for the entire university system over five years.

Mr. Dirks said the fundamental math was still bad. Even with the increases across the state, the greatly reduced level of state support for Berkeley “is here to stay,” he said in a telephone press conference. “There might be a little movement up, a little movement down. It’s not as volatile as the stock market.”

He said Berkeley had become increasingly dependent on tuition and fees, now accounting for nearly 30 percent of total campus revenues, while state funding had dropped to about 13 percent of the budget. It was roughly half in the 1980s, Berkeley officials said.
The chancellor compared Berkeley’s problems to those faced by many public universities that had lost state funding since the 2008 recession, though Berkeley’s position appears to be more secure than those of some other flagship state universities.

“What we are engaged in here is a fundamental defense of the concept of the public university, a concept that we must reinvent in order to preserve,” Mr. Dirks said.

But there is a sharp debate over whether the system’s elite campuses, Berkeley and U.C.L.A., are taking too many high-paying out-of-state and international students at the expense of a growing population of lower-paying California residents who want to go to state universities.

Of the 10 University of California campuses, Berkeley and U.C.L.A. are the most in demand among out-of-state and foreign students.

Out-of-state undergraduate students pay $38,140 in tuition and fees a year, roughly triple the amount paid by residents, $13,432, the university said.

The chancellor said that some academic departments could be restructured or combined — a move that would probably face resistance from faculty members — and that the committee would seek ways to address a spending gap in intercollegiate athletics. He also said the university would work to increase alumni donations. The changes will be phased in beginning in July, Mr. Dirks said.
Confronting racial divide, Missouri’s interim president finds anger, finger-pointing

By: Staff

The University of Missouri remains deeply divided over racial issues that came to the fore three months ago, and the system’s new leader says that his efforts to move forward are complicated by anger and distrust that persist across the state. Michael A. Middleton, a veteran civil-rights lawyer and retired deputy chancellor at Missouri’s Columbia campus, the flagship, was tapped in November to serve as the system’s interim president after Missouri’s two top officials resigned amid student protests. The protest movement, fueled by a graduate student’s hunger strike and a boycott by the Mizzou football team, drew national attention and fed into concerns about racial intolerance in Missouri. The net effect, Mr. Middleton said on Monday in an interview at The Chronicle’s office, was to cast Missourians as racist, leaving many people embarrassed, hurt, and upset.