JANUARY 5, 2016

ARTICLES OF INTEREST

FOR SPECIFIC NEWS STORIES, SEE THE FOLLOWING PAGE NUMBERS:

NEWS ABOUT

STATE ISSUES 2

UA CAMPUS ISSUES 17

UAB CAMPUS ISSUES 51

UAH CAMPUS ISSUES 65

SPORTS 71

NATIONAL NEWS 84
Lawmakers consider gas tax increase

Meetings will take public's temperature on idea for revenue

The Associated Press

Alabama lawmakers might soon debate an increase in the state's gasoline tax to pay for road and bridge construction. If passed, it would be the first raise in the state gas tax since 1992.

The Alabama Legislature's Joint Transportation Committee will hold five meetings around the state in January to discuss the possibility and take the public's temperature on the idea. "We are going to have to make a decision on what we want. ... If we want to widen some of these roads, fix bridges, do some major work, we have some revenue," said Rep. Mac McCutcheon, chairman of the committee.

"We've got roads that were built for 20,000 cars a day that are carrying twice that today," McCutcheon, R-Capshaw, said.

A bill introduced by McCutcheon in the most recent special session would have raised the tax by 5 cents per gallon and then adjust the tax up or down another 2 cents each year, depending on consumer prices and other factors. But the bill never got a floor vote.

McCutcheon said he is still working on the proposal for the session that begins Feb. 2. One change, he said, will be a cap on the amount of tax that can be added through indexing.

Sonny Brasfield, executive director of the Association of County Commissions of Alabama, said the price of road construction and repairs has increased while improvements in automobile fuel efficiency have caused tax collections, which help pay for the work, to stagnate.

"We're selling about the same amount of gas that we were in 1992," Brasfield said.

The association has started a website and campaign called Drive Alabama to discuss the need for additional money for road maintenance and construction.

"A third of our bridges are more than 50 years old," Brasfield said.

Alabama Gov. Robert Bentley said he anticipates a legislative effort to at least index the gasoline tax so it will increase over time.

"I think the people accept a tax if it is earmarked specifically for a project like a road," Bentley said.

Joint Transportation Committee meeting

What: Public hearing on state and west region's infrastructure needs

When: 10 a.m.-noon

Thursday

Where: Northport City Hall;
3500 McFarland Blvd.

More information: Call 205-391-0562
MAKING A STATEMENT

Stan Pate says he was the one behind anti-Trump skywriting at Rose Parade

By Jason Morton
Staff Writer

Tuscaloosa real estate developer Stan Pate says he's tired of Donald Trump. So, on Friday, he sent a message that caused quite a stir.

With funding from a newly formed political action committee — a super PAC, as Pate described it — the local businessman hired skywriters to plaster the skies above Pasadena, Calif., criticizing the outspoken Republican presidential candidate.

"Donald Trump spews hate — not policy. And hate is not presidential," Pate said. "It embarrasses me as an American."

Pate funded banners to be flown above the sites of this year's Cotton Bowl in Arlington, Texas; the Sugar Bowl in New Orleans; and the Orange Bowl in Miami, Fla.

But he saved the most visible messages for the Rose Bowl, where he attempted to time the sky-written messages to appear

See next page
PATE
From Page A1

after the 127th Rose Parade.

Multiple airplanes were
used to skywrite messages
like “America is great,
Trump is disgusting” and
“Anybody but Trump.” The
skywriter’s tagline was “anybody but Trump,
us,” a website belonging to
Pate’s super PAC, “We the
People Foundation,” and
the website features a link
to Time magazine’s list of
Trump’s top 10 failures.

Pate said his goal behind
the messages was not just to
openly and publicly criticize
Trump, but to also galva-
nize the American people
to stand against the polarizing
candidate.

“The people who care
about the country, they
don’t have a billion dollars
in their pocket like Donald
Trump, but they have
money that they worked
hard for,” Pate said. “My net
worth is millions and I’m not
ashamed of it – I’m proud of
it. I worked hard.

“But differently than
Trump, I believe America
is great and America has
afforded me the opportunity
to do that.”

Pate, 57, was not born into
his riches. Rather, after his
father died just before his
10th birthday and an abusive
mother led to his removal
from his parental home, Pate
bounced between foster
homes and “the street,” as
he described it.

But he relied on the public
school system – the teachers
at Tuscaloosa County
High School “saved me, quite
frankly,” he said – and grad-
uated from the University
of Alabama with a degree in
chemical engineering.

His fortune, though, came
from real estate develop-
ment, particularly in the
West Alabama and South-
eastern U.S.

And now, he says he is
using his wealth to take a
stand.

Pate said he will likely
support any of the other
Republican candidates
except for Trump, should
they earn the party’s nomi-
nation. But he will stand
alongside Democratic party
front-runner Hillary Clin-
ton should the Republicans
nominate Trump as their
candidate.

He said he’s met a number
of the Republican candi-
dates – former Florida Gov.
Jeb Bush has flown in Pate’s
company jet; he’s met pri-
vately with U.S. Sen. Marco
Rubio and contributed to his
campaign.

Pate also had positive
things to say about Republi-
can candidates John Kasich,
the Ohio governor (“He has
proven and demonstrated
that he understands gov-
ernment,” Pate said) and
former Hewlett-Packard
CEO Carly Fiorina (“This
is a smart, smart, smart
woman,” Pate said. “She
gets it.”)

But Pate realizes these
Republicans will not “get
down into the gutter” with
Trump, he said, so he’s will-
ing to say what they will not.

Pate castigated Trump’s
statements about Muslims
and immigrants and said the
billionaire has no ground to
stand upon when he draws
former President Bill Clin-
ton’s spousal failings into
question as ammunition
against Hillary Clinton.

“He talks in terms of
absolute,” Pate said of
Trump, “but there’s a more
meaningful conversation to
be had. Not just about Mus-
lins, but about immigration,
period.

“It really bothers me. He’s
bating and he’s dividing.”

And Pate said the sky-
writing funding through the
“We The People Founda-
tion” super PAC is just the
beginning. He’ll have more
messages for Trump should
he continue to lead in the
polls and is willing to keep
hammering as long as people
are listening.

“You can’t complain if
you’re not willing to par-
ticipate,” Pate said. “Donald
Trump as leader of the free
world would be a disaster.”

“I think he doesn’t see
that everyone has a vote –
whether you have $1 or $1
million – and I’d suggest to
Trump that he tighten his
saddle.”

–Reach Jason Morton
et Jason.morton@tus-
caloosanews.com or
205-722-0700.
Magazine names Alabama top state

Mercedes, Google, projects cited

By Jason Morton
Staff Writer

Mercedes-Benz U.S. International's plans to expand its Tuscaloosa County plant led a magazine focusing on corporate and business relocations and expansions to name Alabama its 2015 State of the Year.

Gov. Robert Bentley said Wednesday that Business Facilities magazine chose Alabama after the state landed several economic development projects, including Polaris Industries, Google and others.

This is the first time Alabama has been chosen for the highest award from a publication that considers itself "the leading source of intelligence on corporate expansion and relocation since 1968," according to its website.

"This has been an extremely successful year for economic development in Alabama, and Business Facilities' ranking is fantastic news," Bentley said in a news release. "Our chief focus continues to revolve around creating jobs and new opportunities for residents across the state.

"I believe we are well-positioned to do that thanks to the state's skilled workforce, great job-training programs, and a business environment that promotes growth."

According to the governor's office, Business Facilities looked at the top five economic development projects in terms of job creation and capital investment between Oct. 1, 2014, and Nov. 1, 2015, during its evaluation of the states.

Alabama's award was announced Wednesday on the publication's website and will be featured in a cover story in the bi-monthly magazine's January/February issue.

"The Crimson Tide has brought in a bevy of big-ticket projects that have provided a solid foundation for future growth," said Business Facilities editor-in-chief Jack Rogers in a prepared statement. "With Mercedes-Benz and Airbus anchoring its top-tier positions in automotive and aerospace manufacturing, an expanding high-tech hub and forward-thinking leadership in 21st-century workforce training, Alabama has put together a winning combination that's tough to beat."

SEE TOP STATE, B3

See next page
In addition to Polaris and Google, other Alabama projects highlighted by Business Facilities included:

- Mercedes' plans to invest $1.3 billion to expand its Tuscaloosa County assembly plant and prepare it for the production of next-generation SUVs. The project will add 300 jobs; many of them highly paid engineering positions.

- Auto supplier Kamtek's $530 million project to expand its Birmingham facility and add a new aluminum casting line, creating 350 jobs.

- Yorozu's plans to open a plant to produce auto suspension parts in Jasper, generating 300 new jobs.

"Alabama's economic team will continue to work tirelessly to bring companies such as Google and Polaris to the state, and our support system will help these firms achieve success," Alabama Secretary of Commerce Greg Canfield said. "Our ability to attract companies of this caliber makes a strong statement about doing business in Alabama.

"With the new 'Made in Alabama' incentives platform prioritized by Gov. Bentley and the Alabama Legislature and a streamlined approach to workforce development, now centered in commerce, we will enhance the state's competitiveness in 2016 and beyond."

Business Facilities is a "full-service media brand specializing in the site selection marketplace, with a bi-monthly magazine, e-mail newsletters and an online news portal," its website said.

It is owned by New Jersey-based Group C Media.
Ethics Commission vice chair resigns after late filing of disclosure statement

By: Mike Cason

The vice chair of the Alabama Ethics Commission resigned Sunday after being almost eight months late in submitting a complete disclosure form required by the state ethics law.

Ethics Commission Executive Director Tom Albritton said Virginia Larkin Martin resigned on Sunday after he asked her to step down. The resignation was first reported by the Alabama Political Reporter blog.

Ethics Commission members are required to file an annual Statement of Economic Interests disclosing sources of income, debts, real estate holdings and other information.

Elected officials, political candidates and some public employees are required to submit the same forms, which are due April 30 and are posted on the Ethics Commission website for public disclosure.

Martin filed her Statement of Economic Interests in mid-April, ahead of the deadline, but it was incomplete, Albritton said.

Albritton said Martin listed all sources of income but not the amounts of income in specific ranges, as required.

Because Martin's statement was not complete, it was not posted on the Ethics Commission website.

Albritton said he discussed the situation with Martin when it came to his attention about a week ago.

Albritton said Martin sought guidance from the commission on how to make her statement comply with the law. He said he told her she had to include all the required information.

Martin submitted the completed form on Saturday. It is now posted on the website.

"She had previously offered to resign and did so on the 27th after fully complying with the disclosure requirements," Albritton said. "Her resignation was appropriate under the circumstances given her position on the Commission and she recognized that as much as anyone."

Martin was not available for comment.

Martin manages her family's farm operations in Lawrence County, according to her bio on the Ethics Commission website.

See next page

It's up to Gov. Robert Bentley to appoint a replacement to complete Martin's term, which runs until Aug. 31, 2018.

The Ethics Commission is a five-member appointed board that reviews investigations of possible violations of the ethics act and issues opinions on the ethics law.
Alabama’s kingmaker

For the Republican Party, U.S. Sen. Jeff Sessions is rising force

JOHN SHARP
JSHARP@AL.COM

Donald Trump isn’t one to embrace sitting politicians — let alone, seek their consultation on policy matters.

But the real estate mogul and GOP front runner for president wasn’t shy about embracing U.S. Sen. Jeff Sessions during a during a rally in August at Ladd-Peebles Stadium. Trump also <br>asked for Sessions’ help in crafting his immigration proposal.

Ted Cruz — the GOP candidate polling closest to Trump — attempted to trump Trump when he proclaimed during a rally Saturday in Daphne that Sessions would make a good addition to his cabinet as chief of Homeland Security. The crowd roared its approval.

And in recent weeks, a political advertisement in support of U.S. Sen. Richard Shelby’s re-election touted an endorsement that Sessions gave to him.

“He is definitely Alabama’s most popular politician,” said William Stewart, professor emeritus of political sciences at the University of Alabama, who takes the sentiment a bit further: “I would rank Jeff Sessions as one of the most popular Alabama politicians of all time.”

The 68-year-old Mobile resident and former state attorney general — first elected to the Senate in 1996 — is the toast of the GOP during the campaign season in reddest-of-red Alabama. He’s even become something of a conservative darling on the national media scene.

His right-leaning views on gun control, immigration, health care, gay rights and marijuana legalization earn praise from talk show hosts such as Laura Ingraham and Rush Limbaugh, who recently opined: “Is Sessions the only real conservative left in Congress?”

Candidates are angling for Sessions’ favor, and with good reason. Quin Hillyer, a conservative columnist from Mobile, goes so far as to say that Sessions’ endorsement in the state’s GOP presidential primary would almost guarantee victory for that candidate.

Hillyer said: “If he endorses, literally think it’s worth at least a six-point bump in the polls overnight.”

Hillyer pointed out, however, that Sessions hasn’t offered public endorsement in past presidential primaries.

‘The scholar’

Sessions, for his part, said that he hasn’t endorsed anyone and downplayed any notion that he’d consider a cabinet post in a GOP administration.

But Sessions did speak favorably Saturday about Cruz’s role in opposing a 2013 immigration reform bill that failed to pass Congress.

It’s immigration — perhaps the most highly publicized issue thus far in the GOP’s 2016 brawl — that has propelled Sessions’ to the fore.

Sessions has been a leading critic of U.S. immigration policy as one of Congress’ top border hawkers long before Trump talked of building a wall on the U.S. border with Mexico.

“He was certainly one of the key people opposing the ‘Gang of Eight’ bill back in 2013,” said Ira Mehlman, spokesman with the Federation for American Immigration Reform. The “Gang of Eight,” included, among others, GOP presidential hopeful Marco Rubio of Florida.

The federation — better known as FAIR — calls for tighter border security, an end to illegal border-crossing and a national debate about immigration objectives.

“He seems to be among a small group of members of Congress who stand on the interest of the American people,” added Mehlman.

Jonathan Gray, a consultant for Shelby’s re-election campaign, said Sessions’ conservative stance on immigration dates back to when the Alabama Legislature took up the issue and approved a law that allowed police to hold those who have entered the U.S. illegally without bond. Much of that controversial law in 2011 has since been invalidated by federal courts.

“It got on Jeff’s radar and he’s focused on it,” Gray said. “If you want the conservative platform on immigration, he’s the scholar. He knows the ins and outs of the loopholes.”

Brent Buchanan, a Republican campaign strategist and political consultant based out of Montgomery, said Sessions’ position stretches back even further, to 2007, when President George W. Bush floated amnesty for illegal immigrants who had been in the U.S. for years. “He was one of the folks pushing back on that,” Buchanan said.

Buchanan said he believes Sessions’ outspokenness is politically doable — and sustainable — because of geography: Alabama voters are among the most conservative in the country. “If he were from Missouri, he may not have the latitude to talk like he does,” Buchanan said. “But because he’s from a very red state, he has to.”

Steven Taylor, a political science professor at Troy University, said Sessions is enjoying attention because he has the anti-immigration reform “bona fides.” Said Taylor, “I think it is less that Sessions himself is more popular, per se, than it is that an issue associated with Sessions has resonated at the moment.”

‘Moved past’

Sessions is no favorite among the state’s leading Democrats.

“He can put forth some anti-immigration rhetoric and appeal to the emotions,” said Nancy Worley, chairwoman of the Alabama Democratic Party. “They are putting up emotional rhetoric such as testing people’s religious views before coming into the country or building a wall ... something that is so out of line for what our country is about.”

It’s unclear what kind of objections that Democrats might offer if a Republican wins the White House in 2016 and appoints Sessions to the Cabinet or some other high-ranking post.

One past incident could certainly arise.

Sessions, in 1986, became only the second nominee to the federal courts in 48 years to be rejected by the Senate Judiciary Committee. He was opposed by the NAACP and other groups for allegedly making racist comments. Sessions denied the claims or said that his opponents had twisted his words.

“I would like to say that Senator Sessions has moved past all of that,” Stewart said. “Regrettably, however, in our information age I don’t believe that it is ever possible for one to move beyond his or her sins of omission or commission.”


Observed Stewart: “I don’t say that Senator Sessions’ words/actions in the distant past would be an insuperable barrier to his future advancement.”

He continued, “I don’t recall any Alabama senator in my long lifetime who has been as popular as Jeff Sessions. It is hard to believe that ... he was rejected as a federal district judge. I imagine he would agree that was the best thing that ever happened to him.”
Leader wants high pay raise for teachers

By: Kim Chandler

The Republican leader of the state Senate says he will push legislation to raise Alabama teacher pay to the highest in the Southeast, but such raises could come with changes to tenure and using student test scores to evaluate teacher performance.

Senate President Pro Tem Del Marsh, R-Anniston, said the education bill will be a top priority for him in the upcoming session.

“We want to find a way to bring our starting teacher salaries to the highest in the Southeast. I think to do that, you are going to have to bring in certain accountability that the taxpayers are going to require if you are going to pay them the most,” Marsh said in an interview about the upcoming session.

Marsh said details are still under discussion.

He said one option could be offering teachers a choice between a tenure track — that includes the old pay scale and traditional job protections — and a non-tenure track with a higher pay scale.

One early draft of the legislation, circulated to get input from education groups, would make “growth in student achievement” during the school year — measured by standardized test scores — eventually count for 45 percent of a teacher’s performance evaluation. The state Department of Education will develop the evaluation model to determine if teachers meet, exceed or fall below expectations, according to the bill draft.

Marsh emphasized the legislation was still being formed and he was trying to get input from various groups.

“The tricky part is coming up with a formula that gives proper weight to different aspects — whether it is off of test scores, what is the actual student achievement levels. ... We think we can come up with a formula that’s fair that we can use,” Marsh said.

Teacher groups have traditionally expressed concern over attempts to tie pay to test scores, arguing that gauging what is going on in a classroom is a complex undertaking.

Sheila Remington, president of the Alabama Education Association, said the group was monitoring the proposal. She said she would be cautious about any evaluation or pay structure that put too much emphasis on test scores.

“There are some students that are fantastic but that freeze up on a test,” she said.
Sen. Quinton Ross, D-Montgomery, a former high school principal, said he was likewise concerned about a system that put more emphasis on "teaching to the test."

"That's just a portion of what is taking place inside a school. ... Education is about dealing with the whole child," Ross said.

Marsh said he hoped to have a bill finalized by the first week of the session that begins Feb. 2.

The minimum starting salary for a new teacher, with less than three years of experience, was $36,867 for a teacher with a bachelor's degree and $42,395 for a teacher with a master's degree, according to numbers from the Alabama Department of Education.

"It's going to be a big commitment for this state going forward, but I think it is one worth pursuing," Marsh said.
DEFENSE TECHNOLOGY

CRAMER JOINS BOARD

Former Alabama Congressman Bud Cramer has joined the board of directors at Radiance Technologies, which has its headquarters in Huntsville's Cummings Research Park.

Cramer, who retired in 2008 after serving nine terms in the U.S. House of Representatives representing Huntsville and north Alabama, is now working as a lobbyist in Washington.

"We could not be more proud to have Congressman Cramer joining the Radiance team," said William "Bill" Bailey Jr., president of Radiance Technologies. "His experience in Washington and his insight will be a tremendous asset for our customers and our future growth."

Our ultimate customer is the warfighter and the end users of the technology and the products we create, and adding Bud to our team will bring a new understanding of how we can better meet their needs in today's rapidly changing environment."

Radiance has 12 corporate facilities and 15 project offices across 14 states and two foreign countries serving the Department of Defense, NASA and national intelligence agencies.

"Radiance Technologies has grown over the last 15 years to become one of the most respected aerospace and defense technology firms in the country, and I am proud to join their team," Cramer said in the announcement. "Our nation's defense, intelligence and space programs are facing enormous challenges and to meet those we must provide them with cutting-edge solutions and technology that works."

Paul Gattis
Lawmaker plans lottery bill

Voters turned down state lottery 16 years ago

By Kim Chandler
The Associated Press

MONTGOMERY — In 1999, Alabama voted down the idea of creating a state lottery. Sixteen years later, some Alabama legislators say it's time to reconsider the idea.

Rep. Alan Harper, R-Northport, said he will introduce a lottery bill in the upcoming legislative session to put the idea to a public vote again.

"People have constantly asked us, 'When are you going to let us vote on a lottery?' Harper said. 'I think it's time the people had their say.'

Former Alabama Gov. Don Siegelman proposed a Georgia-style lottery to fund college scholarships and prekindergarten programs. Voters rejected the referendum.

Republican legislators in 1999 brought some of the staunchest opposition to Siegelman's lottery bill during the debate. Republicans now hold majorities in both chambers of the Alabama Legislature and have never embraced gambling as a caucus. However, some Republicans appear to be warming to the idea, particularly after GOP legislators have faced difficulties putting together a state general fund budget without tax increases.

House Ways and Means General Fund Committee Chairman Steve Clouse, R-Ozark, said he favors the idea, if the money goes to the general fund.

"If you are going to do

See next page
Bentley won’t put a lottery on his legislative agenda, but said that it could provide a solution to the state’s perpetual general fund woes.

“I think that a lottery, certainly if it were a clean lottery, all designated for the general fund is something that hopefully the legislature will consider. That could be a long-term funding source for the general fund,” Bentley said this month.

Not all lawmakers are convinced.

Sen. Trip Pittman, chairman of the Senate general fund budget committee, said he was doubtful the idea would get serious consideration.

“I’m not sure gambling is the way we go in Alabama,” said Senate Rules Chairman Jabo Waggoner, R-Vestavia Hills.

Senate President Pro Tem Del Marsh said he will no longer sponsor legislation that would have called for a public vote on a lottery and full-blown casinos.

“There are probably a higher percentage of people that were open to the lottery than full-blown gambling. But it was never really tested so I don’t know if there is even really support for that. But we’ll see,” Marsh, R-Anniston, said.

Chip Hill, executive director of the Alabama Jobs Foundation, a group formed to support Marsh’s bill, said lawmakers should consider both.

“The Alabama Jobs Foundation will not support a standalone lottery referendum because a lottery alone will not create the jobs or economic impact we need to fix our long-term budget problems,” Hill said.
Despite low return, RSA pays $370,000 in bonuses

CEO David Bronner says incentives necessary to retain talent

RSA CEO David Bronner, who started the incentive pay program in 2002, said the bonuses enable him to retain strong performers in a competitive profession.

The RSA earned only a 1 percent return on its $22 billion in investments for the year that ended Sept. 30, below its long-range target of 8 percent. But Bronner said the bonuses are based on performance relative to the market.

"If your market went up, you've got to do better than the market," Bronner said. "If the market went down, you've got to do better than the market going down.

"It has nothing do with the 8 percent stuff." The benchmarks that determine the bonuses are spelled out in reports to the boards that govern the Teachers' Retirement System and Employees' Retirement System. The boards approved the bonuses this month.

State Treasurer Young Boomer, who sits on both boards, said the incentive program is "fair and reasonable." Incentive compensation is an essential component of overall compensation for the investment staff," Boomer said in an email. "It allows RSA to attract and retain personnel with the expertise required to manage its portfolio."

RSA bonuses, Page 4
All 14 employees earn bonus

RSA bonuses
Continued from Page 1

As for the 1 percent earnings for the year, Bronner said a stock market dip in September brought down the year-end number. Stocks comprise about 60 percent of RSA’s investments.

Bronner noted that, even at 1 percent, the RSA ranked in the top 12 percent among 70 public pension funds ranked by State Street Investment Analytics for the fiscal year that ended Sept. 30.

“They deserve (bonuses) because they beat everybody in the country who didn’t make 1 percent, who lost money,” Bronner said.

In all, the RSA has paid $3.15 million in bonuses over the 14 years of the incentive compensation program. Bronner said the program has helped him build a strong team.

“I think we’ve got probably our best staff we’ve ever had,” he said.

A legislative committee is studying the state pension system and might recommend changes during the legislative session that begins Feb. 2.

The Joint Committee on Alabama Public Pensions has already passed a resolution saying it will not do anything to reduce the monthly benefit for current retirees and employees or to divert retirement funds for other purposes.

But lawmakers do have concerns.

The system was 100 percent funded in 2001, but liabilities have grown faster than assets almost every year since, according to The Pew Charitable Trusts, which is compiling information for the joint committee.

The RSA is now 67 percent funded, with assets of about $31 billion and liabilities of about $46 billion.

Rep. Jim Patterson, R-Meridianville, who sponsored the resolution creating the joint committee, said the incentive pay sounds like a good policy to keep good employees.

But Patterson said the RSA’s earnings performance over the last 20 years falls short of what it needs to be sustainable long-term.

Taxpayers are ultimately on the hook if the system can’t meet its obligations.

They already contributed about $1 billion a year, a number that rose dramatically during the 2000s but has leveled off since.

The bonuses paid to investment analysts and directors ranged from $3,371 to $51,199.

All 14 eligible employees received a bonus. But Bronner said bonuses are not guaranteed, even during years when the markets and RSA’s overall returns are strong.

For example, four did not get bonuses in fiscal year 2014, when the RSA earned 12 percent returns.

“Each person is graded totally in their area on numbers,” Bronner said. “Numbers only, no personality, no nothing else.”

Bronner, who has run the RSA since 1973, said he learned from experience that he could not keep his best people without offering incentives.

A 2007 survey by the CFA Institute reported the median annual pay for equity portfolio managers was $456,000, including a $200,000 bonus.

The median pay for fixed income portfolio managers was $250,000, including a $100,000 bonus, according to the survey.

The lucrative opportunities made it hard to keep good people before he started the incentive program, Bronner said.

“They’ll stay awhile and then start getting hungry for the real big dollars and they leave me,” Bronner said. “So we came up with a method.”

CFA stands for chartered financial analyst.

To become a CFA, a person must complete three levels of study and pass a six-hour exam for each level.

According to the RSA, there are 178 CFAs registered in Alabama. RSA employs 12 of them.

Bronner said the RSA saves millions every year by using in-house investment analysts. Few reported that Alabama’s costs are low relative to the nationwide average.

RSA bonuses paid in fiscal year 2015, and salary in parentheses:

- Julie Barranco, director of fixed income, public securities: $47,268 ($226,886)
- Marc Green, director of investments: $43,696 ($268,899).
- Jeff Silverman, equity analyst: $33,391 ($60,440)
- Steve Lambdin, assistant director of equities: $36,500 ($172,266)
- Lance Lachney, portfolio manager, fixed income analyst: $34,232 ($191,044)
- Michael McNair, equity analyst: $31,468 ($134,968)
- Nick Prillaman, portfolio manager, fixed income analyst: $28,096 ($134,968)
- Kevin Gamble, equity analyst: $24,817 ($186,271)
- Adam Rogers, equity analyst: $18,895 ($141,784)
- Catherine Ray, cash management: $4,333 ($45,501)
- Hunter Bronson, equity analyst: $4,278 ($128,440)
- Allan Carr, portfolio manager, equity analyst: $4,107 ($191,044)
- Bobby Long, portfolio manager, equity analyst: $3,371 ($134,968)
Inside the infamous 2013 University of Alabama drug raid still haunting many students

By: Connor Sheets

James Blackwood was fast asleep when they raided his dormitory in the early-morning hours of Feb. 19, 2013, barely a month into his second semester at the University of Alabama.

He says he awoke at about 3:00 a.m. to loud, persistent pounding on the front door of his on-campus suite, and that a police officer broke down the door right as he got to it wearing nothing but a pair of boxers.

"As I'm opening the door they're kicking it in. It just goes 'wham' and hits me right in the face, in the nose," Blackwood said. "I went to the ground and then immediately I see this guy standing over me with this bulletproof vest on and an M4 assault rifle in my face."

Officers representing multiple law enforcement agencies proceeded to search the apartment on a warrant to arrest a roommate of his they suspected of being a drug dealer. They found a marijuana grinder and a small amount of pot in Blackwood's room and arrested the scruffy-haired student, giving him a minute to throw on some clothes before they handcuffed him.

He was led out of his on-campus residence hall, Ridgecrest South, and into the back of a long white van. The scene mirrored the stories of nearly a dozen other current and former UA students who spoke with AL.com over the past two months about their arrests that unprecedented day, stories which are substantiated by police accounts included in the resulting court documents.

"There were people being herded out of the dorms into these police vans, dozens of kids, dozens of us," said Blackwood, who was eventually charged with one count each of possession of marijuana and possession of paraphernalia. "We're all being funneled out. They'll file out like five or six of us and walk us in lines to the vans like Gestapo or something."

'The raid of 2013'

When it was all said and done, 61 students and 13 non-students were arrested in on-campus dorms and off-campus houses and apartment buildings across the city of Tuscaloosa over the course of several hours that chilly February morning. Members of multiple fraternities were arrested and charged with minor drug offenses, and officers busted at least one Sigma Alpha Epsilon (SAE) brother inside the fraternity's house on University Boulevard during the operation.

The raid, led by the West Alabama Narcotics Task Force, has had life-changing repercussions for many of the students who were taken to the Tuscaloosa County jail that day. It also generated significant controversy over the priorities and practices of Tuscaloosa's various local law enforcement agencies.
Authorities in the college town have repeatedly come under criticism in recent years for employing what many perceive to be heavy-handed tactics, most recently following an incident last month that led to three Tuscaloosa Police Department officers being suspended after video emerged of them using a Taser and baton on students while responding to an on-campus noise complaint. For many, the winter 2013 drug raid only provided fuel for the police vs. students narrative.

Capt. Wayne Robertson, commander of the narcotics task force – to which representatives of multiple local law enforcement agencies including the Tuscaloosa Police Department are assigned – declined to discuss the raid for this story. He referred inquiries to Lt. Teena Richardson, a spokeswoman for the Tuscaloosa Police Department, who defended the operation in brief remarks via telephone earlier this month.

"There's controversy because it was University of Alabama students. If it wasn't University of Alabama students there wouldn't have been any controversy," Richardson said. "In a drug investigation you go where the investigation takes you and that's as much as I can tell you about that."

In the end, the charges against Blackwood didn't stick, and he was never convicted of any crime. Neither were many of the other students arrested that chilly February morning in a crackdown that is still known on campus as "the raid of 2013."

But the fallout continues to plague many of them to this day, and numerous UA students told AL.com it forever changed the relationship between the student body and the police.

'Very proud'

Local law enforcement touted the raid as a major success that resulted in the arrests of a "record" number of accused drug offenders while going a long way toward cleaning up drug crime in Tuscaloosa.

"It's a record number because of the number of individuals we've arrested, obviously, but it also shows the dedication and new leadership that we have in that particular unit," Tuscaloosa Police Chief Steven Anderson said during a press conference held the day of the raid. "We have a leader now that's in that unit and he's very bold and he's aggressive and he knows what the problems are that we're facing in our community. He's dedicated himself to addressing those issues, and I'm very proud of that."

Most of the 61 students arrested during the raid eventually had to pay thousands of dollars in fines, court costs and lawyer's fees, were forced to take months of compulsory drug education courses and drug tests and landed in varying degrees of trouble with the university, all despite the fact that many were never convicted of a crime. Many dropped out of school, took a semester or two off or transferred to another university in the wake of the raid.
Judy Bonner, who was president of the university at the time, sent a statement to UA students, faculty and staff on the day of the sweep, explaining what had taken place and responding on behalf of the university.

"The students who were arrested will be referred to Judicial Affairs," Bonner wrote. "Once judicial reviews are completed, students will receive sanctions up to and including expulsion. UA has a zero tolerance policy when it comes to the sale or distribution of drugs, on or off campus, and we will continue to vigorously enforce that policy."

Samuel Major was a sophomore majoring in business at Alabama when he was arrested that morning on two charges of selling marijuana within three miles of a school, and one charge each of marijuana possession and paraphernalia possession. He admits that he sold small quantities of weed to friends, but says that theraid and its aftermath were so disruptive and traumatic that he eventually dropped out of school and returned home to Florida.

"I've come to terms with it, but I ended up leaving school ... I'm actually just getting my real estate license now. I'm pretty well off right now," he told AL.com via telephone from Florida earlier this month. "It's defined me, I guess; it's made me a better person, I suppose. I learned that bad things happen to good people. I was being stupid at the time and I was 19, but I wasn't a bad person. I wasn't selling cocaine or anything."

Despite the fact that Major accepted a plea deal and received only two years of unsupervised probation as punishment in the end, he — like all the other students AL.com spoke with about the raid — said his arrest still caused a major upheaval in his life.

He said he paid more than $20,000 in lawyer and court fees associated with his case, had to take multiple flights between Florida and Alabama to appear in court and paid UA about $40,000 in out-of-state tuition toward a degree he would never end up receiving.

'They didn't know anything'

The University of Alabama declined to facilitate an interview with an administrator or other representative who could speak with AL.com about the Feb. 19, 2013 raid and school officials' opinions on it. But multiple students arrested that day said in interviews that they were told by administrators that the school was upset that the task force targeted students for low-level marijuana offenses and that the drug unit did not work closely enough with the school during the lead-up to the busts.

Chris Bryant, a spokesman for the University of Alabama, declined to answer a series of detailed questions about the raid and the university's take on it, instead emailing a short written statement four weeks after he responded to the first in a series of AL.com inquiries about this story.

"In response to your questions about actions taken by the West Alabama Narcotics Task Force nearly three years ago: We will continue to cooperate with local law enforcement agencies to help ensure the safety and well-being of our campus and community," the statement read.
"UAPD has representation on the task force. Students who choose to violate the law and our Student Code of Conduct will be subject to appropriate and timely disciplinary actions."

Jonathan Cross, chief deputy district attorney for Tuscaloosa County, declined to comment on the investigation and prosecution of the people arrested in the raid.

"A few of those cases are still pending and at this time I can't make any comment," Cross said earlier this month. "There's an ongoing investigation."

But a number of students who were held for more than a day in the "Pink Room" – a bare-bones holding cell in the Tuscaloosa County jail often used to hold drunks overnight as they sober up – after the raid are still angered by the way they were treated. So are many of their parents.

"I never dreamed this would happen. That raid was just awful. It was ridiculous, that could really ruin kids' lives," the mother of a student who transferred to another school after being arrested in his dorm room that morning told AL.com.

"They just came down the hall and said 'you gotta open up the door.' Of course these kids were freshmen; they didn't know anything. [My son] had never been around pot, he went to a small private school and he was sheltered. He should've never let the cops in his room in the first place."

Local authorities see things differently. During the press conference held just hours after the 2013 raid, Anderson, the Tuscaloosa police chief, responded to the opinion held by many students and parents that marijuana is a benign drug that college students often experiment with, and that police should target harder drugs and violent crime and be more lenient with English majors passing bongs around their dorm rooms.

"I know a lot of people consider [marijuana] to be a harmless drug. It's still illegal to possess it, distribute and traffic it in the state of Alabama. Therefore, it's against the law and we're going to enforce the law no matter how harmless people think it is," Anderson said at the time, according to the Tuscaloosa News. "We want to send a clear message that it's not going to be tolerated and if we discover who you are, we are going to come after you."

Robertson, the commander of the West Alabama Narcotics Task Force, echoed those sentiments in an interview with Alabama Dateline earlier this month, explaining that the unit is dedicated to fighting marijuana use and distribution.

"We deal mostly with marijuana," he said. "Being a college town, we are going to see more of marijuana than we'll see of anything."

'They milk you dry'
Of the 11 Alabama colleges and universities that enroll the most students, UA had the most drug arrests between 2005 and 2010 with a total of 308, according to a 2011 Birmingham News analysis of crime data reported by the schools over that six-year period.

Between 2012 and 2014 alone, UA reported 261 drug law violations, according to the university's 2015 Annual Campus Security and Fire Safety Report. Over that same three-year period, the small, private liberal arts school Birmingham Southern College reported a total of zero such violations.

Meanwhile, the narcotics task force – which is made up of officers from the Tuscaloosa, Northport and University of Alabama police departments, as well as representatives of the offices of the Tuscaloosa County sheriff and district attorney – has flourished in recent years, seizing millions of dollars, a significant percentage of which is ultimately diverted back to the unit.

Court documents reveal that at least $9,498 was seized from people arrested during the February 19, 2013 raid alone, AL.com reported six months after it went down. Officers seized cash from at least 12 of the people arrested during the raid, in amounts ranging from $290 to more than $2,300, the court records show.

As for the impact on students, a total of $8,636 was taken from 10 students that morning, and there were likely other seizures from students that were not recorded in open court documents. Exact figures cannot be calculated because access to the court records of nine of the people arrested was blocked, probably because they were granted youthful offender status, a representative of the Tuscaloosa district attorney's office told AL.com in August 2013.

In recent years, there have been more arrests for marijuana in Tuscaloosa than in the much larger city of Birmingham. There were 1,089 arrests for marijuana possession in Tuscaloosa last year, while Birmingham saw just 901, according to crime statistics reported by local law enforcement agencies.

The task force's reach has grown in recent years, and so has its impact on the local community. In 2014, the task force seized $861,131 in cash and drugs with a total street value of more than $1.1 million – including 90 pounds of marijuana – while making more than 1,677 arrests on 3,121 drug charges in the process, AL.com reported in January. The number of charges resulting from the task force's efforts has increased every year since 2008, a phenomenon Robertson has attributed in part to the University of Alabama's steadily rising student population.

In January, he described the seizures as vital to the task force's continued success, as nearly $300,000 of the money the unit seized in 2014 was funneled back to its operations.

"That is one of our missions, to seize drug dealers' assets and it's one way to hurt them, by taking things from them that they earned from the proceeds of drug sales," Robertson said at the time. "Most of these monies are spent on equipment, vehicles for agents, undercover
operations, office equipment, etc. That money is very important, and it saves taxpayers a lot of money each year."

Robertson replaced former task force commander Jeffrey Snyder in 2012 as the unit headed for the lowest point in its history of more than four decades. In March 2013 – one month after the so-called "raid of 2013" – federal prosecutors charged Snyder with stealing at least $125,000 in seized funds from the task force.

Snyder pleaded guilty to stealing the cash in June 2013 and was sentenced that December to a year and a day in federal prison and ordered to pay the task force $125,000 in restitution. The public's perception of the unit has never recovered.

Multiple students who spoke with AL.com said they see the raid and many other anti-drug police efforts as little more than cash generators for local law enforcement agencies.

"When you get caught up in the system it just becomes so obvious how it's just focused on how much money they can get out of you," Blackwood said, echoing the sentiments of multiple other UA students who spoke to AL.com anonymously. "They milk you dry. It's so sad."

Meanwhile, anger continues to simmer among those arrested during the February 2013 raid and many outside observers over the way the West Alabama Narcotics Task Force got the information it used to obtain warrants to make many of the arrests. Specifically, the unit used multiple UA students as confidential informants, convincing them to gather incriminating information on other students in return for leniency.

This exclusive report on drug culture on university campuses is the second in an ongoing AL.com series. Look for other stories in the coming days. The next installment focuses on the West Alabama Narcotics Task Force's use of University of Alabama students as confidential informants.
How cops turn University of Alabama students into drug snitches

By: Connor Sheets

Ryan never imagined he would one day be a snitch.

The soft-spoken University of Alabama student was watching a movie with a couple of friends at his off-campus house in Tuscaloosa one evening in late 2012 when a team of plainclothes West Alabama Narcotics Task Force officers knocked on his door.

They were there to serve a warrant to search his home, as he had been outed as a drug dealer by a friend and fellow UA student the task force had "turned" and used as a confidential informant. Little did Ryan know, he would soon be turning on his own friends at the university.

Ryan had fallen victim to the controversial and relatively new police tactic of recruiting college students accused of minor drug offenses to execute risky operations like wearing audio recording devices to undercover drug buys and turning in their suppliers.

Experts and critics say the practice amounts to a legal and ethical black hole where law enforcement agencies skirt and sometimes break the law in order to boost their arrest numbers by taking advantage of naive youngsters, all under the aegis of the War on Drugs.

But police say that it is a vital and highly effective tool in the ongoing effort to combat drug abuse on campuses and streets across the nation.

Ryan – who spoke with AL.com on condition of anonymity because he promised the task force he would never tell anyone about his activities as an informant – watched as officers proceeded to search his apartment, eventually finding about a quarter-ounce of pot and two or three marijuana pipes. He says they then handcuffed him to his dining room table and threatened and intimidated him until he agreed to work as an undercover drug informant for the task force in exchange for not arresting him.

"It was a lot of threats, just trying to scare me, and I was 19 at the time and I had never even had a speeding ticket," he told AL.com at a bar in Birmingham, where he asked to meet in order to avoid being overheard in Tuscaloosa discussing his informant work. "They were yelling at me and saying if I didn't help them they were going to screw me and my friends over. I had to get, like, four or five people for them."

A 'broken' system

Law enforcement agencies across the United States have used confidential informants to help solve crimes for generations. Studies show that to this day the vast majority of drug cases are built on the backs of confidential informants.
But the deployment of the practice on college campuses – which has emerged publicly as a widespread tactic over the past decade – has come under heavy fire in recent years in the wake of multiple high-profile deaths of students who had served as confidential drug informants.

Controversy over the practice was reigned this year after a BuzzFeed investigation into the use of University of Mississippi students as confidential informants preceded the institution of reforms of a local drug task force and the resignation of the officer at its helm.

Experts and advocates say that deploying students to conduct undercover drug buys and other high-risk operations invites violence, breeds distrust between students and the police that are tasked with protecting them and often oversteps important legal and ethical boundaries.

One of the key accusations commonly levied by critics of the practice is that it violates or comes perilously close to violating students' rights to counsel, due process and other constitutional and legal protections. Law enforcement advocates counter that people who have not been arrested and are simply being questioned by police do not have to be Mirandized and that they have fewer rights than an arrested individual.

Betty Aldworth, executive director of the Washington, D.C.-based national advocacy group Students for Sensible Drug Policy, rejects that argument. She believes that students are often not aware of their rights when interacting with law enforcement, and that police perpetrate a "gross violation of [students'] rights" when they exploit that vulnerability by misleading and intimidating them until they agree to be informants.

"The problem is that when they are in that situation, they don't understand that they have a right to a lawyer, that they don't have to talk to police – whether or not they are under arrest," Aldworth said in a telephone interview with AL.com.

"The entire confidential informant system is broken in that sense, and especially when it comes to young people, because police assume, often correctly, that young people are going to be too terrified to assert their rights, if they even know them in the first place."

Capt. Wayne Robertson, commander of the West Alabama Narcotics Task Force, declined to comment on the issue of his unit's use of students as confidential informants, referring inquiries to Lt. Teena Richardson, a spokeswoman for the Tuscaloosa Police Department.

The task force – which is made up of officers from the Tuscaloosa, Northport and University of Alabama police departments and representatives of the offices of the Tuscaloosa County sheriff and district attorney – is based at the headquarters of the Tuscaloosa Police Department, which plays a key role in the unit's operations.

"We don't tell how our informant program works," Richardson said during a brief phone interview earlier this month. "Confidential informants are essential to investigations to obtain
information that can't be obtained anywhere else ... Even the information that comes from a confidential informant, you still have to verify and confirm that the information is reliable."

Chris Bryant, a spokesman for the University of Alabama, declined to comment on the use of UA students as confidential informants or to facilitate an interview with a school administrator or official about the topic, instead providing a short statement via email.

"Like all universities, UA is concerned about the national problem of substance abuse, and we will continue to cooperate with local law enforcement agencies to help ensure the safety and well-being of our campus and community," the statement read in part. "One of our top priorities at The University of Alabama is the safety and well-being of our students."

'A scene in the movies'

Going undercover to gather incriminating information about the "four or five people" the task force demanded Ryan "get" would prove to be a risky task with far-reaching repercussions that follow him to this day.

He became known at UA as a snitch, and was threatened and ostracized by a number of students caught up in an infamous Feb. 19, 2013 drug raid – an operation of unprecedented scope for the task force, which arrested 61 students and 13 non-students across Tuscaloosa that day.

Several of those students told AL.com that they and others believe they were only on the unit's radar because Ryan "narc-ed." They spread word that he may have turned on them, and Ryan said his reputation has never recovered.

"It was stupid. It was just, like, minor weed stuff and I felt horrible about it. They made me buy, like, small amounts of weed from people," he said. "I had to meet them first – the police – and they would follow you and make sure you did everything right. It was just like a scene in the movies."

Ryan explained that task force officers would wire him up to record audio and then send him into the homes and cars of fellow students, most of whom were friends and acquaintances whose names he offered up as part of his arrangement with the drug unit.

He would purchase a gram of marijuana from them and then take the pot to the police, who would confiscate it with the intention of using it and the audio recordings as evidence against the students who sold to him.

A couple months later, Ryan recognized some of the people he had exposed to police scrutiny among the names of those who were arrested in the Feb. 19, 2013 raid.

"I hated doing it. It's not me. I wouldn't do it again," he said. "It's not worth all the shit. I'd rather have to get my record cleared and pay a fine and get in trouble than do all that."
'The only way'

Though officials were unwilling to discuss the task force's undercover drug informant program, the direct link between information obtained by undercover student informants and subsequent arrests is detailed repeatedly in court documents.

"On February 4th and 6th, 2013, a confidential informant working with the West Alabama Narcotics Task Force purchased marijuana from [a UA student in] Tuscaloosa, Alabama," a complaint filed with the Circuit Court of Tuscaloosa County states. "On February [19th], 2013, agents executed a search warrant on [the student] at his residence, and seized marijuana and digital scales."

And the task force has spoken in the past about the importance of its confidential informant program. Robertson's predecessor at the helm of the narcotics task force, Capt. Jeff Snyder, called informants "the lifeblood of what we do" in 2004, the Tuscaloosa News reported at the time.

Robertson spoke about the unit's confidential informant program in June, though he did not specifically address the use of college students in undercover operations.

"The only way I can reach the top is through people [the task force arrests]," Robertson said, according to the Tuscaloosa News. "And the only thing that could make this guy cooperate is the fear of losing something."

The task force spent nearly $50,000 in funds obtained via civil asset seizure to pay confidential informants and execute controlled drug deals in pursuit of drug investigations in 2014, according to documents obtained by AL.com earlier this year.

Robertson confirmed that the drug unit pays informants during an interview with Alabama Dateline earlier this month.

"A big part of our budget comes from paying them, but it's worth it," he said. "We have to start at street level, and what we do is we give people an opportunity to help themselves, and not only help themselves but to help the community."

'Target on your back'

Scott had just cracked a second tallboy can of beer when several West Alabama Narcotics Task Force officers arrived on his doorstep in Tuscaloosa in the winter of 2008/2009. The fifth-year UA student had been buying an ounce of weed at a time and typically just sold it to his friends, charging them enough to cover his personal pot habit.

The officers told Scott – who spoke to AL.com on the condition of anonymity – that they knew he was a drug dealer. He says he later found out that a fellow student he had been introduced to by his brother was working as a confidential informant when he bought small

See next page
amounts of marijuana from him on two occasions. The police had given the informant money to purchase the pot with, and they linked the bills to Scott. Now they were ready to arrest him for distribution.

"What they did is they sat me down on my couch and the [officer] says 'we've heard you've been buying pounds' and they were positive that I was a big fish. That's an unheard of amount for me so I said 'no, I have a guy who can get me an ounce but I don't know where to get a pound,'" Scott told AL.com earlier this month.

"They said 'we think you're lying.' They just tried to pile on. They said 'we have enough on you for you to go to jail for five to seven years.' Then they said if I cooperate with them they can take it all off my record."

Scott considered his options and eventually told the police he was not willing to snitch. He was immediately arrested and ended up facing six drug charges, including multiple counts of marijuana distribution.

He ended up avoiding a jail sentence and his record was expunged earlier this year after he finished many months of drug education courses, spent more than $10,000 in fees and successfully completed a lengthy diversion program.

But Scott continues to be plagued by the fallout from the experience, which made it nearly impossible for him to find a job. And he remains fiercely critical of the student informant system that he says nearly destroyed five years of his life.

"You're sort of deputizing kids who are, like, 19, and putting them in a high-risk situation," he said. "When you think about the kind of people you'd have to turn on that aren't your friends, they're the type of people you wouldn't want to associate with, and then you've got a target on your back for the rest of your life. We're figuring out in the real world that the arrests are much, much worse than the effects of the actual drugs."

'You can't trust anybody'

The level of confidence and trust UA students have both in law enforcement agencies and in one another has been severely strained by the narcotics task force's use of students as confidential informants, according to multiple students who spoke with AL.com for this story.

Jacob, an Alabama student who agreed to be interviewed on condition of anonymity, was arrested on multiple marijuana charges during the Feb. 19, 2013 raid based on information obtained via the use of a student informant wearing a wire. He believes the student informant program is out of control.

Many UA students live in fear that their friends will narc on them, Jacob says, and he has largely isolated himself from the school's social scene, refusing to go to most parties or bars in order to avoid potential interactions with law enforcement.

See next page
"It still happens now with the turning. Since they got a couple people to turn, those people that they collect from those turned people, they ask them to turn. It's just growing," Jacob said while sitting on his front porch two blocks from the UA campus. "It's ridiculous; you can't trust anybody. They're creating just this big culture of people turning on each other."

He also believes that convincing college students to inform on one another generates unnecessary anger and resentment. He and several other students arrested in the 2013 raid were raging mad at the student they believe turned on them.

"Everyone in that holding cell wanted to slash his tires, piss in his gas tank and skin him dry. He had a lot of death threats in that room," Jacob said.

Concerns like these are fueling an escalating national discourse over whether student informant operations are doing more harm than good.

William Dinkin, a former prosecutor and current criminal defense attorney at the Virginia law firm Stone, Cardwell & Dinkin, has experience defending college students who have been propositioned to become confidential informants. He said he believes the practice is deeply flawed and in need of sweeping reforms.

Not only is it dangerous to deploy students in undercover operations, Dinkin says, it may sometimes be illegal.

"At some point, if you've got an informant working really hard and constantly calling people and trying to coerce them to do something they usually wouldn't do, they're getting really close to entrapment," he said via phone. "Why are these guys out there trying to create criminals out of everyday students who are out there experimenting with marijuana or whatever it may be, and in a sense fostering a market?"

'An arrest is an arrest'

There are burgeoning efforts at the national level and in some state legislatures to try to reign in or eliminate the controversial use of college students and other young people as confidential informants. Florida and New Jersey have passed laws restricting the practice, and U.S. Rep. Steve Cohen, a Tennessee Democrat, said earlier this month that he is working on federal legislation to enact similar reforms nationwide.

But observers and experts like Lance Block, a Florida lawyer who has represented the families of five confidential informants who were killed — including three who were college students at the time of their deaths — and who has emerged as perhaps the nation's leading critic of confidential informant operations, say that more needs to be done.

Block believes the problems with informant programs stem largely from the direct link between the number of arrests law enforcement agencies make and the level of government funding and grants they receive.
'There's no distinction between arresting a drug lord or arresting a college student who has a couple of joints. An arrest is an arrest and there's no question that it's important for law enforcement, in order to maintain funding or increase the level of funding for drug enforcement,' Block told AL.com.

"The key thing is statistics drive funding, and the more arrests, the more need for funding -- or at least that's the myth. And police can increase the number of arrests even though they're small-time drug offenders. That's the driving force behind using confidential informants."

Aldworth agrees that law enforcement funding is a key driver of the use of students as informants. But she says that there needs to be greater public awareness of the reach and negative impacts of the practice, no matter why it is being employed.

"I think that parents in particular would be shocked to learn that their children and their children's friends are exposed to this kind of system while they're in college in particular," she said.

"If people understood the massive scale of this system, they would be advocating strongly for controls on law enforcement, but because students are told 'don't talk to anyone,' people just don't know how big this system really is."

*The names of all the students quoted in this story have been changed to help protect their identities. This exclusive report on drug culture on university campuses is the third in an ongoing AL.com series.*
UA should make case for keeping, removing names

John Tyler Morgan rose from a private in the Confederate Army to the rank of general. After the war, he built a successful law practice in Selma. He was a six-term U.S. senator who played a key role in U.S. foreign policy.

He was a champion of the Panama Canal and a promoter of U.S. expansionism, shaping the direction of the nation. He left a lasting imprint on our world.

He was also grand dragon of the Ku Klux Klan in Alabama, an outspoken and unapologetic racist, segregationist and a source of tremendous racial strife. He fought to deny minorities voting rights and was one of the leaders in establishing the "Jim Crow" era.

That's why we agree with the University of Alabama's recent decision to remove Morgan's portrait from Morgan Hall. Robert Olin, dean of the UA College of Arts and Sciences, decided to remove the portrait at the request of the Department of English, which is housed in the building.

This was good news for the group We Are Done, a campus movement that is advocating for more diversity and inclusion at the university, as have similar groups at their respective universities across the nation in recent months.

Among the demands of the UA group is either the removal of names of Klansmen and other white supremacists from campus buildings or the installation of markers to acknowledge the namesakes' history of racism.

Morgan's legacy does not deserve a place of honor at the state's flagship university, and if his portrait should have been removed, why should it remain on the building? But what about Alabama native Hugo Black?

The late U.S. Supreme Court justice and UA graduate, who is honored by the university with an exhibit at the law school and in other ways, was a member of the Klan. Should his name be scrubbed from campus, or for that matter removed from the federal courthouse in Birmingham?

We believe reasonable people would agree that Black's legacy in advancing the cause of civil rights as one of the great American jurists of the 20th century far outweighs his relatively brief membership in the Klan, which he later said was a pragmatic move to win votes in a political career that preceded his appointment to the court.

Many others in our history were similarly pragmatic. No doubt, Morgan, Black and others honored at UA, such as former governor and Ku Klux Klan leader Bibb Graves, played key roles in shaping the university and the state, even the nation.

We should not forget who they were and what they did. History is important, though parts of it are ugly and hard to reconcile. Those who, in the name of perpetuating the ugly parts should not be honored.

But evaluating the relative merits of their legacies is a subjective exercise. We believe the university should move circumspectly, though with all deliberate speed, to address these various memorials on a case-by-case basis, and should openly make the case for keeping, removing or mitigating them.
The best college in every state

By: Emmie Martin

The US boasts some of the best colleges in the world. But they aren't limited to just the Ivy League — every state has institutions to be proud of.

Niche, a company that researches and compiles information on schools, lets users sort by state, so we took a look at the highest-ranked college in each one. To determine its rankings, Niche considers the academic strength, campus quality, caliber of professors, and quality of student reviews for more than 1,500 schools across the country.

ALABAMA: University of Alabama
The University of Alabama/Facebook
Location: Tuscaloosa
Overall: A
Academics: A-
Acceptance rate: 57%
"Academics are a top priority and the classes are hard, but depending on your major the professors make sure you enjoy it!" one freshman exclaimed.
School spirit runs deep at Bama as well.
"We have the Roll Tide spirit," another freshman said. "Everybody is extremely friendly and the classes are very unique."

ALASKA: University of Alaska Fairbanks
University of Alaska Fairbanks/Facebook
Location: Fairbanks
Overall: B
Academics: B+
Acceptance rate: 74%
"There are a lot of classes to choose from," a student reported. "The professors are very helpful." The temperature gets drastically cold, but students say it becomes something to bond over.
"The community is wonderful!" one junior said. "It gets a little cold, but that's what makes it fun. We have cool clubs, such as the -40 and -50 degree clubs."

ARIZONA: Arizona State University
Arizona State University/Facebook
Location: Tempe
Overall: A-
Academics: B+
Acceptance rate: 80%
"The variety of the courses offered is vast and there are a lot of unique classes that enable you to really customize your general classes to something that you'll enjoy," one student commented. "A majority of the professors are well educated in their fields and easy to talk to. Most class sizes are surprisingly small."
Arkansas: University of Arkansas
Facebook/University of Arkansas
Location: Fayetteville
Overall: A
Academics: B+
Acceptance rate: 59%
"I'm not going to worry about finding a job after college," one student said. "The name of University of Arkansas is respected all over the place. I have great resources at my disposal to find jobs and prepare for interviews. Internships are stressed here and prepared for."

California: Stanford University
Linda A Cicero/Stanford University/Facebook
Location: Palo Alto
Overall: A+
Academics: A+
Acceptance rate: 6%
"Stanford is truly the most amazing place in the world," one sophomore commented. "Before my freshman year I never felt like I really had a home, but I have finally found one at the Farm. The academics are amazing and the people are even better."

Colorado: Colorado College
Colorado College/Facebook
Location: Colorado Springs
Overall: A
Academics: A+
Acceptance rate: 22%
"My professors are engaging, my classes are interesting, and the campus is beautiful," a freshman said. "Everyone has some sort of hidden talent that surprises you, people are fit and care about being in touch with the outdoors, and are generally fun to be around. My peers are smart and can be engaged both intellectually and physically, and are generally nice and outgoing people."

Connecticut: Yale University
Mara Lavitt/Yale University/Facebook
Location: New Haven
Overall: A+
Academics: A+
Acceptance rate: 7%
"There is a LOT of work, but the student body is fantastic. It's truly a community," one student said.
Yale's unique community also helps prepare students for the real world.
"What drew me to Yale was the close knit community and the welcoming and inclusive social space," one junior said. "I have friends from all walks of life and love to interact with people from all different backgrounds. I truly feel that I have grown as an individual as I have become
equipped with the vocabulary to express eloquently just who I am and where I stand on certain issues to my peers."

DELAWARE: University of Delaware
University of Delaware/Facebook
Location: Newark
Overall: A
Academics: A-
Acceptance rate: 65%
"University of Delaware has so many amazing things to offer," one student said. "It's very challenging academically, but has everything needed to stay involved and have an amazing time. The residence halls allow for meeting new people and making quality friendships. The campus is beautiful and allows for entertainment everywhere on-site."

FLORIDA: University of Florida
Facebook/uflorida
Location: Gainesville
Overall: A+
Academics: A
Acceptance rate: 47%
"I love UF because it is full of interesting people from all backgrounds and they're mostly all friendly," one student reported. "The classes are challenging and they make you work hard to earn the grade. There are numerous clubs and organizations you can join. Overall, it's a place where you can discover yourself."

GEORGIA: Emory University
Emory University/Facebook
Location: Atlanta
Overall: A+
Academics: A+
Acceptance rate: 26%
"The teachers are really engaged and the homework is heavy but manageable, depending on your course load, obviously," one freshman said.
Emory also fosters solid friendships.
"The students are what make this such a great place to be," one student said. "Everyone is very kind, friendly, and interesting, coming from a huge variety of backgrounds."

HAWAII: Chaminade University of Honolulu
Chaminade University of Honolulu,HI/Facebook
Location: Honolulu
Overall: B+
Academics: B+
Acceptance rate: 84%
"Everyone you meet has the aloha spirit no matter where they come from," one sophomore said. "It's a nice and small university where everybody gets along. The limit of students in classrooms help promote positive interaction between the instructor and students."

IDAHO: The College of Idaho
The College of Idaho/Facebook
Location: Caldwell
Overall: A-
Academics: A-
Acceptance rate: 91%
"This school is fantastic. They value you as an individual while still making you part of their community," one student said. "If you are struggling socially, emotionally, scholastically, or wellness, they are there for you, they notice, and they care. The classes are small, the professors know your name. Your advisors are available and eager to help."
They added: "The diverse curriculum allows you to individualize your education and become knowledgeable and competent in a huge variety of subjects, and allows a broad spectrum of interests to flourish."

ILLINOIS: University of Chicago
Facebook/uchicago
Location: Chicago
Overall: A+
Academics: A+
Acceptance rate: 9%
"I loved my experience at UChicago. It is one of the very few places where there is an emphasis on learning for the sake of learning," a recent graduate said. "The community as a whole fosters curiosity."

INDIANA: University of Notre Dame
Jared Wickerham/Getty Images
Location: South Bend
Overall: A+
Academics: A+
Acceptance rate: 22%
"Although there is a very rigorous workload, especially for science and math, engineering, or architecture, if you can get in here you can probably handle it," a sophomore said. "There is a great community atmosphere fostered by the dorm system and excessive pride for Fighting Irish sports. Almost everyone who goes here loves it, and this carries over with an excellent alumni network after you graduate."

IOWA: Grinnell College
Facebook/grinnellcollegealumni
Location: Grinnell
Overall: A+
Academics: A+
Acceptance rate: 35%
"Students are provided with great resources and opportunities on campus," one sophomore said. "Professors are always there to help and students can go to other members of the Grinnell community for academic guidance."

KANSAS: University of Kansas
The University of Kansas/Facebook
Location: Lawrence
Overall: A
Academics: B+
Acceptance rate: 92%
"If given the opportunity to choose all over again, I would absolutely still pick KU," one student reported. "The classes, in my experience, have been appropriately challenging while still being fun and enjoyable, and the teachers I've had are so supportive to their students and passionate about what they teach."

KENTUCKY: Centre College
Centre College/Facebook
Location: Danville
Overall: A-
Academics: A
Acceptance rate: 69%
"Centre is a challenging school, but it offers an enriching environment for students where they are able to learn from the best professors around," one sophomore said. "The school community is friendly and supportive, always encouraging students to do their best and be their best."

LOUISIANA: Tulane University
Via Flickr
Location: New Orleans
Overall: A
Academics: A+
Acceptance rate: 26%
"Tulane is a great school academically with a wonderful alumni network," one student reported. "We are not an Ivy League, but I would say that a degree from Tulane definitely competes with a degree from most Ivies, and it is up to the individual to distinguish him or herself; there are many opportunities for this at Tulane and in the surrounding areas."

MAINE: Bowdoin College
Bowdoin College/Facebook
Location: Brunswick
Overall: A+
Academics: A+
Acceptance rate: 15%
"Academics are top-notch in terms of the students who are serious about learning and the professors who care about allowing those students to achieve that goal," a sophomore commented.

See next page
Bowdoin also boasts standout professors. "The academics here are both challenging and worthwhile," one freshman said. "The professors are fantastic for the most part; they are approachable and ridiculously smart!"

MARYLAND: Johns Hopkins University
Johns Hopkins University/ Facebook
Location: Baltimore
Overall: A+
Academics: A+
Acceptance rate: 18%
"I am overwhelmingly pleased with the academic life at Hopkins," one freshman noted. "A lot of students complain about the heavy workload, but if you manage your time well it is no problem!" They added: "The professors are all awesome and are very helpful as well. The curriculum they choose are almost always very intestine and engaging."

MASSACHUSETTS: Massachusetts Institute of Technology
Flickr/nasa-jpl
Location: Cambridge
Overall: A+
Academics: A+
Acceptance rate: 8%
"Everyone around me is passionate about some topic," one junior said. "It's inspiring to see what my classmates are up to, whether it's research or startups or personal projects. The atmosphere can be stressful, but the community is incredibly supportive if you reach out for help."

MICHIGAN: University of Michigan at Ann Arbor
REUTERS/Mike Stone
Location: Ann Arbor
Overall: A+
Academics: A+
Acceptance rate: 37%
"There's so much energy all the time," one freshman observed. "Everyone is so proud to be a Michigan wolverine, it's great to be a part of it! There is a lot of challenging school work but in the end, it's worth all the work."

MINNESOTA: Carleton College
Via Wikimedia Commons
Location: Northfield
Overall: A+
Academics: A+
Acceptance rate: 21%
"Carleton is an incredible place to go to school — the people really care about academics, real issues, and each other. There are also literally hundreds of activities to get involved with, so there is pretty much something for everyone," one sophomore noted.

MISSISSIPPI: Mississippi State University

See next page
Hunter Hart/Mississippi State University/Facebook
Location: Starkville
Overall: A
Academics: B+
Acceptance rate: 65%
"The school spirit here is unreal," one student said. "Everyone supports the teams, especially football. There is a great level of diversity for the area. The teachers and professors here all genuinely care for each students' well-being and academic success."

MISSOURI: Washington University in St. Louis
Washington University in St. Louis/Facebook
Location: St. Louis
Overall: A+
Academics: A+
Acceptance rate: 16%
"I love everything about Wash U," one sophomore shared. "The location is amazing, STL has so much to offer. Everyone around is so driven, smart, and kind. The campus, dorms, and food are great. The classes are awesome with exceptional teachers. It can get stressful, but it is so worth it."

MONTANA: Carroll College
Carroll College/Facebook
Location: Helena
Overall: B+
Academics: B+
Acceptance rate: 53%
"One thing that is great about Carroll College is that the professors are very dedicated in assisting the students in every way possible," one junior said. The small size means students receive one-on-one attention from professors.
"I really do love that all my classes are under 40 people, and I get to work directly with the teacher," a freshman said. "It's nice when they know your name and you can ask THEM questions about the homework, not just a lab aid."

NEBRASKA: Creighton University
Creighton University/Facebook
Location: Omaha
Overall: A-
Academics: A-
Acceptance rate: 77%

"What I really enjoy about Creighton is that the students are here to learn and better themselves," one sophomore said. The small size is an advantage to many students.
"Creighton is the perfect size and in a great location," another sophomore commented. "The campus is amazing and the community feeling on campus is what really makes it stand out from
other schools. I like that I am an individual and seen as such at Creighton, instead of just being a number like at bigger schools. The professors are great and truly there to help you succeed."

NEVADA: University of Nevada at Reno
University of Nevada, Reno/Facebook
Location: Reno
Overall: B
Academics: B
Acceptance rate: 84%
"I believe that the University of Nevada at Reno is a great school to go to if you want that 'traditional college' experience for a decent amount of money," one junior noted. "They have brick buildings all over campus, and the whole campus exemplifies a rich history."
Many students love the community they're a part of on campus. "The campus itself feels like home," one freshman said. "We are all very proud to be a part of the Wolf Pack and I wouldn't change it for anything."

NEW HAMPSHIRE: Dartmouth College
Dartmouth
Location: Hanover
Overall: A+
Academics: A+
Acceptance rate: 10%
"Top-notch school with fantastic academics!" one sophomore exclaimed. "Students are smart and driven. Great professors, programs, and lots of opportunities for research. Strong focus on undergrads!"

NEW JERSEY: Princeton University
Princeton University/Facebook
Location: Princeton
Overall: A+
Academics: A+
Acceptance rate: 7%
"It's hard to get much better academic focus than Princeton University," one junior commented. "Because there doesn't exist much of a graduate school (no law, medicine, business schools), all of the professors are there primarily to teach which leads to a fantastic undergraduate experience. Taking classes with professors who are known worldwide for their expertise on a subject is something that you simply can't get very many other places."

NEW MEXICO: New Mexico State University
Facebook/New Mexico State University
Location: Las Cruces
Overall: B-
Academics: B
Acceptance rate: 85%
"This school has everything you need to help you grow and build your future," a senior reported. "However, here you will have to take a proactive approach to ensuring the best education. No

See next page
one is going to hold your hand and teach you everything there is to know about your intended industry in a single semester, or in four years for that matter."

NEW YORK: Columbia University
Columbia University in the City of New York/Facebook
Location: New York, New York
Overall: A+
Academics: A+
Acceptance rate: 7%
"Though school spirit is lacking, as a consequence of relatively weak athletics, having NYC as an extended campus more than makes up for it," a sophomore said. "The academics are top-notch, the student body is amazing, and the professors are renowned. If you are looking for a great education at a top school, look no further than Columbia."

NORTH CAROLINA: Duke University
Duke University/Facebook
Location: Durham
Overall: A+
Academics: A+
Acceptance rate: 13%
"Duke is a really wonderful place with tons of opportunity for anything you might be interested in," one sophomore said. "It has great academics, sports, and social life. It is a lot of work, and can be very stressful, so be prepared to work!"

NORTH DAKOTA: University of Jamestown
University of Jamestown/Facebook
Location: Jamestown
Overall: B
Academics: B
Acceptance rate: 57%
"You can be in as little or as much as you want. We're a pretty involved campus," a junior noted. "The education is top-notch and the professors genuinely care about you, whether you are in their department or not. Our student activities department rocks. There's always an event going on."

OHIO: Ohio State University
Facebook/osu
Location: Columbus
Overall: A+
Academics: A
Acceptance rate: 56%
"The academics at this school are fantastic," one freshman said. "The professors are often friendly and encourage students to come to office hours. The registration process is simple as well. I was able to create my dream schedule without any problems. In terms of study options and areas, there are thousands of locations."

See next page
OKLAHOMA: Oklahoma State University
Oklahoma State University/Facebook
Location: Stillwater
Overall: A
Academics: B+
Acceptance rate: 76%
"My experience at Oklahoma State has been amazing. The atmosphere is the best," a junior said. "You can really feel the spirit of the school. The grounds are beautiful and the buildings are kept clean. The teachers are helpful and the classes are interesting. The best part is football season and basketball season. The school spirit is beyond the average."

OREGON: Willamette University
Willamette University/Facebook
Location: Salem
Overall: A-
Academics: A
Acceptance rate: 58%
"Great school, great community, great opportunities," one junior commented. "I feel safe on campus and I feel that the professors actually desire to give their students the best education possible. It's an open, accepting environment, and nobody needs to feel shunned or unwanted there."

PENNSYLVANIA: University of Pennsylvania
Via Wikimedia Commons
Location: Philadelphia
Overall: A+
Academics: A+
Acceptance rate: 12%
"My Penn experience was excellent — a variety of different academic and extracurricular opportunities, and a great semi-urban feel to the campus," a recent graduate said. "The environment was also extremely competitive and I had to learn to really manage my time and the stress that came with academic and professional deadlines." They added: "The city of Philadelphia is a great place to go to college and the east coast provides a lot of different career opportunities for both internships and full-time jobs."

RHODE ISLAND: Brown University
Brown University/Facebook
Location: Providence
Overall: A+
Academics: A+
Acceptance rate: 9%
"Brown's open curriculum also gives you chances students at other schools do not receive," one freshman said. "Aside from taking required courses towards your major and fulfilling a not-very-intense writing requirement, you can take literally any class you want to take and qualify for. This allows you to really shape a college curriculum that you will love. This allows you to
explore areas that you did not know you liked. Heck, it might even shape the major you eventually choose! All in all, Brown has an outstanding curriculum."

SOUTH CAROLINA: Clemson University
Clemson University/ Facebook
Location: Clemson
Overall: A
Academics: A-
Acceptance rate: 58%
"Clemson is a fantastic school. It's the perfect mix of a larger school without being too large," one junior reported. "The students are friendly and welcoming to all types of people. The professors really care about helping you learn and aren't just research focused."

SOUTH DAKOTA: South Dakota School of Mines & Technology
South Dakota School of Mines and Technology/ Facebook
Location: Rapid City
Overall: B+
Academics: B+
Acceptance rate: 86%
"I love the small and connected feel of South Dakota School of Mines," one junior said. "The people I go to school with are very dedicated to their schoolwork. Each day I am happy to say that I go to a school where I have a close relationship with all of the faculty who each show an earnest commitment for my learning. Within the school, even the professional societies have a close, constructive relationship with the students to help advancement into their fields."

TENNESSEE: Vanderbilt University
Vanderbilt University/ Facebook
Location: Nashville
Overall: A+
Academics: A+
Acceptance rate: 13%
"The academics and research opportunities here are of the highest quality, and I come out of every course with a great deal of knowledge on the subject," one junior noted. "For the most part, professors are very helpful in class and during office hours, especially if you make an effort to reach out to them. The social life here is also great, especially when you consider that everyone here is extremely bright."

TEXAS: Rice University
Tendenci Software/Flickr
Location: Houston
Overall: A+
Academics: A+
Acceptance rate: 17%
"The people here are great and classes are challenging, but manageable, if you're willing to put in the work," one student commented. "I feel like I have so many resources and that there are so many people on campus that would love to help or advise me if I ever needed anything."

See next page
UTAH: Brigham Young University
Facebook/BYU
Location: Provo
Overall: A+
Academics: A
Acceptance rate: 49%
"The school is phenomenal and the atmosphere on campus is unparalleled," one freshman said. "BYU is very competitive to get in, and once you are in the standards are very high." Students love the positivity they encounter at BYU. "The atmosphere here is something you can't find at other colleges," another freshman said. "You feel like you are doing something that matters."

VERMONT: Middlebury College
Middlebury College/Facebook
Location: Middlebury
Overall: A+
Academics: A+
Acceptance rate: 17%
"Professors here are extremely helpful. They are truly here to teach above anything else," one student said. "They go out of their way to not only make sure that you understand, but also to make sure that you're comfortable and happy. Classes are extremely interesting due to the material but also due to the professors teaching them. There are so many different class options and class sizes are small and perfect."

VIRGINIA: University of Virginia
University of Virginia/Facebook
Location: Charlottesville
Overall: A+
Academics: A+
Acceptance rate: 30%
"UVA is the perfect balance. It is a large enough school so you can constantly meet people, but small enough that you're not overwhelmed," one student said. "The campus is totally walkable and in a beautiful location. It can be academically hard, but college should be somewhat a challenge. This is balanced out by the social aspect of the school. The students study hard but go out and party too."

WASHINGTON: University of Washington
Curtis Cronn / Flickr
Location: Seattle
Overall: A+
Academics: A
Acceptance rate: 55%
"It's hard work, and it's going to take dedication, time, and motivation," one junior said. "It's all worth it, though! Professors are reliable, knowledgeable, and know how to inspire you to do your best. It's amazing feeling so [much] a part of something."

See next page
WASHINGTON, DC: Georgetown University
Georgetown University/Facebook
Location: Washington, DC
Overall: A+
Academics: A+
Acceptance rate: 17%
"I have found that my fellow students are thoughtful, confident, and willing to speak their minds and engage in conversations about important issues," one sophomore said. "The professors are dedicated and understanding, and most practice a balance between challenging their students without totally overwhelming them."

WEST VIRGINIA: West Virginia University
Facebook/West Virginia University
Location: Morgantown
Overall: B+
Academics: B-
Acceptance rate: 85%
"The academics offered are wonderful — just because it is considered a party school does not mean it doesn't also give you a workload," one freshman noted. "As long as you adequately study, do your work, and manage your time, you should be okay."

WISCONSIN: University of Wisconsin
Facebook/UWMadison
Location: Madison
Overall: A+
Academics: A
Acceptance rate: 68%
"I'm really enjoying the cool atmosphere and the incredibly nice people. There is a very diverse population here and I meet many new, interesting people every day," one freshman said. "The classes are challenging but enjoyable and I've learned an incredible amount!"

WYOMING: University of Wyoming
University of Wyoming/Facebook
Location: Laramie
Overall: B+
Academics: B
Acceptance rate: 96%
"University of Wyoming has been such a warm welcoming school," one sophomore said. "I enjoy that they really care about the welfare of the students, they surround students with lots of support from counseling, how to be successful in school, helping your needs, emotional needs."
THE FUTURE

UA experts offer predictions for 2016

Annual list of educated guesses includes presidential race, fast food, coal, cyber attacks

By Ed Enoch
Staff Writer

For the 35th year, faculty at the University of Alabama offer educated guesses for the upcoming year ranging from politics to restaurant trends.

In the latest installment, the prognosticators offer predictions for the 2016 general election, coal-fired power, Medicaid in Alabama and the future of aerial delivery drones.

Regulations, cheap natural gas mean no return to coal

Electric utility providers will continue using natural gas to replace coal-fired power generation in 2016 as a result of cheap natural gas and government environmental regulations, predicts Jason Bara, an assistant professor of chemical and biological engineering. "It's the easiest and most cost-effective way to significantly reduce emissions in the near term while utilizing existing infrastructure," he said. "Solar, wind, renewables and, perhaps most importantly, energy efficiency will also play increasingly major roles moving forward. 'Cleaner' coal, in the form of CCUS (carbon capture, utilization and sequestration) technologies are still actively under development, but until unless they are proven and deployed at large scales, coal will be in a prolonged hibernation in the U.S."

Hillary Clinton will be first female president

Richard Forstig, chair of the political science department, predicts former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton will be easily elected in November as the first woman to win the presidency. Donald Trump will make a strong run for the Republican nomination, but eventually the Republican establishment will rally around one candidate, with Marco Rubio being the most likely.

Aerial delivery drones closer to landing on your doorstep

Package delivery by drones will become closer to reality as regulations for the small unmanned aircraft are formalized and testing moves to restricted outdoor areas, according to a prediction by Paul Hubner, associate professor of aerospace engineering and mechanics. "Santa's job security for next year is OK, but in 2017, he will have some competition in delivering small presents in limited areas," Hubner said.

GOP retains control of Congress

Political science professor Stephen Borrell predicts Republicans will retain control of the House and Senate in the 2016 elections, as national security concerns, continued effects of the 2010 redistricting, and relatively low turnout will thwart chances of a Democratic comeback.

Reports of cyber attacks will increase

Cyber attacks worldwide are likely to increase in 2016 as Internet connectivity rates grow, said assistant professor of criminal justice Diana Dolliver. The increasing rates will likely be a combination of an increase in the number of attackers and an improving rate of the reporting of cybercrimes. The new year
More fast casual, less GMO at restaurants

The fast-food industry will continue its transformation toward a “fast casual” atmosphere with improved food quality and increasing “build your own” combo options, predicts Sheena Quizon Gregg, a registered dietitian and assistant director in the department of health promotion and wellness. Formal restaurants will emphasize more authentic ethnic cuisine, and many restaurants will continue to move toward suppliers of non-genetically modified foods.

In-state jobs to increase by 1 percent

Alabama’s economy will grow and total payrolls will increase by about 1 percent, adding as many as 30,000 jobs, predicts Ahmad Ijaz, director of economic forecasting in the Center for Business and Economic Research. Most new jobs will be in accommodation and food services, administrative support, waste management, health care and social assistance-related services.
AT A GLANCE

UA Honors college to expand program

The University of Alabama Honors College is expanding its education outreach program beginning in 2016. Education Outreach pairs Honors College mentors with underprivileged students in the Tuscaloosa County and Tuscaloosa City school systems to provide them with guidance and positive influence.

Some 265 Honors College students participate in three mentoring initiatives: a literacy program for elementary students; a character development program for middle school students; and a science, technology, engineering, arts and math program for pre-kindergarten children.

By the start of the spring 2016 semester, the number of student volunteers is expected to increase to more than 400 as the program adds more schools to its scope and doubles the number of shifts during which mentors work with children. The program is estimated to reach some 1,000 children a week next year.
GUEST COLUMN

UA professor: Han Solo was legally justified to shoot first

With the release of "The Force Awakens" and the return of Harrison Ford to the iconic role of Han Solo now is the time to finally set the record straight: A long time ago, in a galaxy far, far away, Han Solo shot Greedo and he acted in self-defense.

In the original theatrical release of Star Wars: A New Hope, Han Solo shoots and kills the bounty hunter Greedo in a Mos Eisley cantina. George Lucas, the film's director, has said that he was dissatisfied with the scene because Solo shoots Greedo first, making it seem as though he is "a cold-blooded killer." In later editions of the film the scene was edited so that Greedo fires at Solo from point blank range, somehow misses, and then Solo returns fire. That change never sat well with fans of the original film for the simple reason that it was completely unnecessary. Nothing about the original scene suggests that Han Solo is a cold-blooded killer.

Lucas has compared the character of Han Solo to a "cowboy" and "John Wayne." According to Lucas "when you're John Wayne, you don't shoot people — you let them have the first shot," although Rooster Cogburn and the man who shot Liberty Valance might disagree with that sentiment. Even if that were true, the archetypal good guy in Hollywood Westerns that Lucas is describing almost always shoots first. If he didn't he wouldn't be around very long. What he doesn't do is reach for his gun first, he only fires in self-defense; he just happens to be quicker on the draw than the other guy.

In the original version of the film it is obvious that Greedo intends to kill Solo and his decision to shoot first is entirely reasonable. Greedo waits until he sees that Solo is vulnerable before confronting him. Greedo points a blaster at Solo's chest and forces him back to the table where he had been sitting. Then the two of them have the following exchange:

"Going somewhere, Solo?"

"Yes, Greedo, as a matter of fact I was just going to see your boss. Tell Jabba that I've got his money."

"It's too late; you should have paid him when you had the chance. Jabba's put a price on your head so large every bounty hunter in the galaxy will be looking for you. I'm lucky I found you first."

"Yeah, but this time I've got the money."

"If you give it to me, I might forget I found you."

"I don't have it with me. Tell Jabba—"

"Jabba's through with you. He has no time for smugglers who drop their shipments at the first sign of an Imperial cruiser."

"Even if I get boarded sometimes. Do you think I had a choice?"

"You can tell that to Jabba. He may only take your ship."

"Over my dead body..."

"That's the idea. I've been looking forward to this for a long time."

"Yes, I'll bet you have."

Then Solo shoots. During this exchange Solo had surreptitiously unholstered his blaster and had it pointed at Greedo underneath the table. Greedo never saw the shot coming.

Let's assume that the law of self-defense on Tatooine is the same as it is in just about every jurisdiction in the United States: a person is legally permitted to use the amount of force that reasonably appears necessary to defend him or herself against an apparent threat. If deadly force is used in self-defense, then the person must also believe that it was immediately necessary in order to prevent the infliction of serious bodily harm or death. Many jurisdictions also explicitly authorize the use of deadly force in order to prevent what they define as a "forcible felony," crimes such as robbery or kidnapping.

During their brief conversation, which takes place while a blaster is pointed at Solo's chest, Greedo tries to rob him when he demands that he give him the money.

See next page
he owes to Jabba the Hut, threatens to kidnap him by taking him against his will back to Jabba, and then finally decides that he is going to shoot him.

If a person reasonably believes that deadly force is about to be used against them then they have the right to use deadly force in their own defense. They don't have to wait until someone shoots at them; they don't even have to wait until they see the barrel of gun. The scene never needed editing because it is clear that Solo was completely justified in shooting Greedo when he did. In other words, Han legally shot first.

Lucas is right to view Solo as a "cowboy" but that doesn't mean he can't shoot first and still be the good guy. Greedo should have heeded the advice of Tuco from the classic Western "The Good, the Bad and the Ugly": If you are going to shoot, shoot. Don't talk.

John Gross, assistant professor of Clinical Legal Education and Director of the Criminal Defense Clinic at the University of Alabama School of Law.
PNC Foundation awards UA grants

The PNC Foundation has awarded $45,000 in grants to the University of Alabama to support early childhood education in the state and scholarships for UA students.

UA will use PNC's funding to support UA's Child Development Resources programs and for scholarships awarded to students in UA's Culverhouse College of Commerce and the College of Human Environmental Sciences. The foundation is part of the philanthropic and community outreach efforts of PNC Bank.

"The PNC Foundation's ongoing support of the University of Alabama with a giving emphasis on early childhood education makes PNC a wonderful corporate partner with the University," said Bob Pierce, UA vice president for advancement.

Students receiving the PNC Business Honors Scholarship are Chris Fort of Birmingham, Nick Schmitt of Fairhope and Tyler Hohbach of Ozark. The recipient of the PNC Early Childhood Scholarship is Maggie Chavez of Birmingham.

The gift to Child Development Resources will fund training for early childhood educators and community events focused on early childhood education. CDR will expand a previous PNC workshop for child care providers in Tuscaloosa and three nearby counties.
Coordinator chosen for UA program

REACH helps foster-care children at the university

Staff report

The University of Alabama's Office of the Provost has selected Shannon Hubbard to be the new coordinator of Alabama REACH, a program that assists foster-care and other disadvantaged children in attending and succeeding at the university.

Hubbard, formerly the senior social work supervisor at the Tuscaloosa County Department of Human Resources, has bachelor's and master's degrees in social work from UA. Her work for Tuscaloosa County has involved working with foster-care children as well as supervising foster-care resource workers.

Alabama REACH is a comprehensive support program designed to empower current and former foster youth, orphans, emancipated minors and wards of the state of Alabama to pursue higher education and graduate from college.

"The programmatic goal of REACH is to support students who come from alternative living arrangements before pursuing and graduating from college, which can increase the likelihood of their personal and professional success," Hubbard said.

"As REACH scholars continue graduating from college, the hope is that they find stable employment and/or continue their education as well as develop stability and permanency by retaining sufficient income, adequate housing and productive relationships."

The program consists of three components: are REACH Back (future students), REACH Up (current students) and REACH Out (community members), bridging high school to post secondary to community.

For more information, go to http://www.reach.ua.edu.
A champion for UAB football, young man's story inspires hope, courage

One of her sons had already been taken, and now Patricia Alexander's youngest child was close to death.

She sat in silence at UAB Hospital and prayed.

Six months earlier, her middle son, David, died in an automobile accident. Now it was her Timothy, and he was in bad shape. Another car wreck. Paralyzed. Traumatic brain injury. Tracheotomy. Ventilator. And later, a wheelchair.

Those first 48 hours were painful, but they were not the hardest. That would come later, when her son was saved, but wanted to die anyway.

There was so much despair in those early days of learning how to live again. A beautiful rebirth was on the horizon, but getting there was one of the greatest challenges of her mother's life.

Timothy Alexander is one of the most influential people in Birmingham in 2016, and his role in the community is only becoming clearer. June 1 is his birthday.

Just recently graduated from UAB with a master's in communication management, Alexander is a driving force behind political speculation. Some want the 27-year-old to run for public office. Of course, he already seems like a public servant.

But little in the beginning. Alexander worked through last winter and spring to rally support for the return of UAB football. The program was shuttered controversially by the school's president, Ray Watts, who cited lack of financial support for the decision. In the aftermath, Alexander helped start a movement to bring back the team. He organized the student body at UAB, and then he brought together many of Alabama's municipalities for a common cause. He helped collect 15,000 signatures for a petition. For the continuation, and later reinstatement of UAB football.

The civic support mostly was symbolic, of course, but it snowballed into something wonderful. Alexander's work inspired hope, and that led to positive change.

He gave so much of himself in the past year that supporters of UAB football surprised Alexander recently with an early Christmas present, a Ford F-150 truck, brand new and scheduled to be outfitted with the latest digital technology for a driver with special needs.

"Giving him this truck was a pleasure for everyone because he just does the right thing, and his heart is in the right place," said Renee Davis, one of more than a hundred people who donated money for the vehicle. "He puts God first and everything falls into place in his life.

Once paralyzed from the neck down, Alexander has regained the use of his upper body through therapy. He also reports feeling in his legs.

For the longest time, Alexander's goal was to walk again and play football for UAB. Coaches treated Alexander like a player during his years as a student. He trained with the team in the weight room. He attended practices and games. He had his own jersey, No. 67. He graduated as a student-athlete.

He was there for the overtime seasons, and the tearful day UAB's president killed the program.

"I'll never forget when I was sitting in the locker room on December 22, 2014, and I looked up and gazed at the crowd, and my teammates were crying," Alexander said. "I didn't see my teammates running up to coaches. I saw my teammates hugging each other, grown men crying on each other's shoulders."

It turned out, Alexander's time fighting for UAB football began when his teammates could no longer play.

"The night after it happened, I couldn't sleep because I knew this was my football game, this was my opportunity to fight for something bigger than myself," Alexander said.

UAB football is returning to the field in the fall of 2017, and coaches currently are putting together a new program's first recruiting class. The sudden rebirth of UAB football despite opposition from its university's own president and its university system's own Board of Trustees is unprecedented in collegiate athletics.

Not only is football returning to Southern, but it's coming back with more support than ever. A new football operations center is in the works. Clark, the coach, has a five-year contract. Those close to the program say none of it would have been possible without Alexander.

"It was inspirational to watch him," said Lee Miller, a former player and current soccer coach at Chelsea High School. "It was the students saying they wanted it. I mean the students wanted it, and the business community saying they wanted it, and Timmy played a big role in all of that."

New life

Alexander fought so passionately for UAB football because the fellowship he shared with friends and coaches gave him a new life. Before he even attended UAB, though, he had already experienced several life-changing events.

"When I was a junior in high school, the school's football program was closed," Alexander's dad said. "He was a leader in his class, and he was a leader in our family." Alexander's mother, Phyllis, added: "He needed some help." Alexander's father, Paul, Phillips, also "needed some help."

Phillips used to paddle Alexander three times a week.

"Between his mind and his body, we were going to make a connection," Phillips said. "The corporal punishment and structure of high school football helped." He also helped Phillips with his "Spiritual Father." He's been his mentor and guide, "Timothy," said Phillips. "He has helped me with my heart.

There were some "dark days" in the beginning of Timothy's recovery, says his mother, but the family and their church remained strong.

"All we did was help him think," said Bishop Davis. "We're capturing sometimes by the moment, but we can see the future, that makes all the difference."

Inner strength

Lacking the initial test scores to attend a university out of high school, Timothy Alexander first graduated from Wallace State Community College in Hanceville before enrolling at UAB.

Once on campus in Birmingham, Alexander set his mind on3ating the football team. A letter to then-UAB coach Garrick McGee helped.

After reading the letter, McGee called Phillips, the non-nonsense principal at Ethel. "I said, 'Hey, that's Timothy, coach,'" Phillips said. "Look, when coach McGee heard his arms around Timothy, it was at a point in time when Timothy really needed it. Timmy needed UAB at that time more than UAB needed him."

McGee was only at UAB for two seasons, and he left to become the offensive coordinator at Louisville. That a young head coach would resign from UAB to become an assistant at another school speaks to the dysfunction of the program at the time. Perhaps McGee's most important contribution to UAB football was making Alexander part of the team.

McGee cut Alexander no slack in workouts, and when Clark took over the program in 2016 he tested No. If the same way. In the weight room, Alexander became a symbol of inner strength to his teammates. During one poignant moment amid the team's resurrection, the Blazers' strength coach, Zac Woodfin, carried Alexander up to the football field at Legion Field. A large group of players helped Woodfin reach the top. "Close your eyes," said Jim Gannon on Twitter. Gannon, a linebacker, who later became the Georgia Tech head coach, told me he'd never had a valuable player after Watts abolished his school's team.

When Watts killed the football program, Alexander couldn't shake that scene at Legion Field. He made a promise to Clark and to himself to fight for the return of UAB football.

"Everyone here at UAB, I felt like I owed it to them to fight for this one," Alexander said. "And he also gave me the incentive to fight for it." Alexander said that he had lost his "mind" the first time he saw Watts at a recent game. "I'll always remember that. I feel like I've got you, and you never look for anything in return, that you will be beyond measure." Secret Santas

Clark, who is working to carve out a position for Alexander as a character development mentor for current players and a liaison to former student-athletes, helped orchestrate the recent Christmas surprise for Alexander.

During a meeting between the two, UAB's Secret Santas gathered outside the football office with the new Ford F-150 truck. Clark helped Alexander to the parking lot where he was met with a loud, "Surprise! "I'm a man of words, and I was speechless," Alexander said. "I didn't know how to say it, I was stuttering when I was talking, and that has never happened to me at all." A year earlier, it was that same parking lot where Alexander and a former teammate mourned the sudden loss of their football teammate.

"Tim needed to be a part of that program for Tim, and because he was welcomed, that was able to replay that kindness in a way that no one else ever could have done," Alexander said.
Mackin ‘was and is an honorable person’


AL.com sports columnist Kevin Scarbinsky has written an interesting article, including information about Brian Mackin, the former UAB director of athletics. In it are statements and suggestions that there was something sinister about Mackin’s departure, or some shortsightedness. No one should have any such thought.

Brian Mackin gave up a wonderful position with a very large local company, because he wanted to go back to his alma mater where he was a student and a baseball player and to create a greater athletic department, and that included a football team.

Those of us who know him also respect and admire him. From all that we can see or tell, he was a magnificent leader who responded to everyone’s call. He appeared at every event. We all knew he was a victim of the negativeism of the University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa, board of directors.

The sense of that board was never to favor the athletics in Birmingham to the extent that they might compete with the teams in Tuscaloosa.

Perhaps another story would clarify.

When the arena was being completed, there was a shortage of funds and some of the leaders in Birmingham and wealthy contributors gathered together to raise the money to finish the building. There was a clear understanding that the arena would be named for Gene Bartow. Everybody loved Gene, and he earned and justified the naming to the utmost. However, time after time, the Board met and did not name the building.

There were several occasions when there were such opportunities, to no avail. Finally, some of the Board members there, and many of the supporters in Birmingham, got together and prepared a petition to the Board to fulfill its promise. Rather than being embarrassed by the long delay, it came up at the next Board meeting and was approved.

There are some of us who believe that the appointing of the new president by the board to preside over UAB was coupled with an agreement that football would be abandoned. The president did so. Now, the same people who encouraged the hiring of Brian Mackin and who provided the funds to finish the building for Bartow decided that there would be football in Birmingham, and it was overwhelmingly supported by the students and we’re getting ready to have football.

Brian Mackin was and is an honorable person. In fact, he and his family were great supporters of the city of Birmingham and our whole community. The Mackins operated banks, developed buildings, opened residential facilities, and built houses for sale. The history of Birmingham would include a declaration of the value of the Mackin family to those of us who live here.

Karl B. Friedman
Birmingham
Birmingham's promise — and the 2015 payoff

This town was born of geology and industry. Of muscle and sweat and tension and promise. Always promise.

It was magic from its making and boomed with the spectacular flash of a prestidigitator's opening illusion. But like any first act it left its audience wanting more.

More.

When the 1960s came, Birmingham found itself competing with Atlanta for top billing in a changing, turbulent South.

The city expected to always stand on that stage. But the same old tricks didn't play the way they used to.

Atlanta called itself the city too busy to hate. Birmingham said, "We're not that busy."

Atlanta built the greatest airport of the South. Birmingham built defenses of the old ways and the status quo.

Atlanta boomed, and Birmingham busted. And this city — the city of perpetual promise — watched as Jacksonville and Nashville and Charlotte and Memphis stepped into the spotlight, pushing the once-magical city into shadow.

There was Birmingham, wounded by its own hand in the 1960s and slow to recover in the decades that followed.

There was Birmingham, emptying like an old Vaudeville theater as people and businesses beat a path to the suburbs and their shiny malls and safe subdivisions.

The promise seemed broken. It seemed a lie. It seemed through the '90s and into the turn of this new century like the cruelest trick of all, played by the city on the city itself.

As quickly as some called her magic in the first place, others began to call her lost.

And those of us who lived here and loved here and wanted only to be here began to believe that. And that was tragic.

So it's hard not to look back on the year that was 2015 and say ... abracadagum-dabra!

Birmingham nudged its way back into the spotlight. For reasons of inclusion and not separation. The United Nations came to town to discuss human rights for a conversation designed to get the world talking.

Linn Park burst with words of freedom as marriage became legal for all people who want to show love. And while not everyone agreed with the courts that made that possible, the discontent was measured, and for the most part respectful.

Vestavia Hills, which named its school mascot the Rebels in the defiance of 1970s re-segregation, decided on its own that the image of a rebel man was not something that the city should cling to.

And across Birmingham the city's promise began to show itself. Again.

Not that all was perfect. It never is. Crime has been far too high and parts of the city far too violent. The mayor and council too often treated each other as petulant children in a playground, and the council spends money on itself like Wall Street bond dealers before the crash. They even came to physical blows before the year was out.

But the promise is there. In the city if not the government.

It's in UAB faithful, who organized their own Blazer Spring and saved their football team and their coach and their hope for a more sporting day.

It is in cranes and scaffolding, in barricaded streets and the construction and restoration of theaters and condos, of offices and the downtown grocery store this city has sought for decades.

It's in the building of greenways and trails. It's in crowds gathered for international soccer, or the heavyweight championship of the world, or the customary comfort of football at the Magic City Classic and baseball in the heart of the city.

Most of all it is in the people, who are no longer afraid to look at their city with pride and see hope. And promise. And maybe just a little magic.
UAB study to examine social support, intuitive eating impact on older African-American men with diabetes

By: Staff

University of Alabama at Birmingham School of Nursing Assistant Professor Loretta T. Lee, Ph.D., has received a 2015 Deep South Resource Center for Minority Aging pilot grant award to examine the association of social support and intuitive eating with glycemic control in older African-American men with diagnosed type 2 diabetes.

For her study, Lee defines intuitive eating as a learned behavior that helps a person focus on physiological body signals for eating, improving self-image and coping with emotions. Intuitive eating also reduces the focus on cues for eating, such as societal messages and dieting. Glycemic control is the daily management of blood sugar levels, striving for a level as close to normal as possible for a person with diabetes mellitus.

Recent work by Lee's research team has found that many African-American men with diabetes have unhealthy eating practices. They also know that less than 50 percent of African-American men live with a spouse or partner.

Since glycemic control is thought to be determined largely by self-management that includes consuming a healthy diet, Lee and her team want to see whether social support can contribute to a healthier diet and thus to improved intuitive eating practices and better glycemic control.

"We hypothesize that social support, particularly the presence of a spouse or partner, will increase the likelihood that older African-American men with diabetes will adhere to intuitive eating practices," Lee said. "Our second hypothesis is that intuitive eating practices will be associated with lower hemoglobin A1c, a measure of glycemic control, among these older men with diabetes."

The hemoglobin A1c, or glycosylated hemoglobin, is a test that reflects a person's average plasma glucose concentration over prolonged periods (usually two to three months). In this study, members of Lee's focus group, older African-American men with type 2 diabetes who receive care at Cooper Green Mercy Hospital in Birmingham, will be characterized by good control (a hemoglobin A1c level of less than 7 percent), moderate control (a level of 7 to 9.5 percent) and poor control (a level greater than 9.5 percent).

Lee believes this study could help improve the quality of life, not only for older African-American men, but for many others who suffer from type 2 diabetes mellitus as well.

"Type 2 diabetes mellitus is the leading epidemic of the 21st century, affecting millions of people in the United States," Lee said. "Older African-American men are disproportionately affected with diabetes compared to Caucasians, with more men compared to women across all races in the United States being affected."
"Intuitive eating practices, i.e., healthy approaches to eating that include awareness of the physical and emotional sensations experienced while eating or in a food environment, have been shown to help people with chronic diseases. We expect to prove that social support plays a key role in achieving and maintaining those positive intuitive eating practices."
UAB researchers look for relationship between eye movement and the brain to help diagnose and treat concussions

By: Alicia Rohan

Lewis Rand, an active 10-year-old, suffered a mild traumatic brain injury Oct. 20 during soccer practice when he fell, hitting his head on a metal post.

He did not lose consciousness and Lewis did not think anything of the incident so he continued practicing. But as symptoms developed over the following days, Lewis ultimately was referred to Children’s of Alabama, where his concussion fit the criteria to be involved in the ongoing research within the University of Alabama at Birmingham School of Optometry’s Vestibular and Oculomotor Research Clinic, or VORClinic.

His mother, Anne Rand, noticed a change in Lewis’ eating habits, stamina, engagement in his schoolwork and health; he was pale and had clammy skin and headaches. Lewis was not having the more recognizable signs of concussion – blurred vision, seeing double or vomiting. His symptoms were more subtle and hard for a 10-year-old to describe.

Anne took him to their pediatrician, where they performed a series of neurological tests. Lewis passed all the tests.

The next day, Lewis seemed to be feeling better and returned to school, but was sent home within a few hours. Rand called the pediatrician back. Lewis’ pediatrician recognized that he had a mild concussion, recommending that he rest over the weekend.

Lewis’ symptoms continued over the next two weeks; primarily he was having trouble reading and focusing on schoolwork, and he experienced fatigue and headaches. He was referred to Children’s of Alabama’s concussion clinic. “That was the first part of our journey,” Rand said. “During our initial visit, they noticed tracking issues with his eyes.”

Erin Swanson, M.D., recognized Lewis’ eye tracking and convergence issues and identified him as a prime candidate for the VORClinic, a multidisciplinary team of clinicians and scientists focused on concussion research that was introduced in April.

“Many of the children we see have problems with vision or balance, which is a common finding in the course of diagnosing a concussion,” said Drew Davis, M.D., associate professor in the UAB Departments of Pediatrics and Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation. “Depending on the findings during these tests, we refer the patient to the VORClinic, where we are trying to understand more about which elements of vision and balance are impacted by a concussion.

“We currently do not have great biomarkers to identify a concussion,” Davis said. “It is generally diagnosed based on the history, mechanism of injury and complaints by the child. The VORClinic is currently looking for an objective finding related to assessment of vision and balance to help us diagnose concussions and track recovery over time.”
UAB Department of Physical Therapy Associate Professor Jennifer Christy, P.T., Ph.D., and School of Optometry Professor Mark Swanson, O.D., MSPH, are part of the VORClinic team working with concussed and nonconcussed patients in various levels of contact and noncontact sports.

Together, they performed a multitude of exams on Lewis. Some were the traditional tests in a pediatric eye exam: visual acuity, eye coordination and alignment, and ocular health. Balance was also tested by traditional means. Other testing was state-of-the-art and available to only a handful of clinics across the country.

The vestibular-ocular reflex, or VOR, is the body’s way of keeping images seen by the eye still even during body movement, like walking and looking at street signs or running back to throw a football. The clinical research team thinks the VOR may be affected in concussion, leaving the athlete with vague symptoms of headache, nausea and balance issues.

While traditional tests can evaluate the vision system and the vestibular system separately, the VORClinic team hopes to test the vestibular-ocular system as a whole using cutting-edge equipment not available to civilians anywhere else in the state. Exams include the sensory organization test, vestibular evoked myogenic potential (VEMP), and Neuro Kinetics Inc., rotary chair testing.

During the sensory organization test, the athlete stands as still as possible during six sensory conditions as the sensory organization test looks at the postural control biomarker and the sensory system’s contributions to static balance.

While traditional tests can evaluate the vision system and the vestibular system separately, the VORClinic team hopes to test the vestibular-ocular system as a whole using cutting-edge equipment not available to civilians anywhere else in the state.

A 30-minute screening in the NKI rotary chair tests a variety of biomarkers, including angular vestibular ocular reflex via the horizontal semicircular canal and superior vestibular nerve, oculomotor function and utricular pathways. The VEMP test measures activity in the sternocleidomastoid muscle, located in the neck, via electromyography, an evaluation of electrical activity produced by skeletal muscles in response to sounds in the ear. The saccule, a bed of sensory cells located in the inner ear that translates head movements, is the biomarker of interest testing the inferior vestibular nerve, and is related to the vestibulospinal system which contributes to balance.

During this portion of the exam, the athlete sits in a chair in a pitch-black room, testing the movement of the eyes in response to motion and light. The athlete is examined on smooth eye movement by following a moving target, watching light dots as they move across the visual field, eye movements as the chair moves slowly and quickly left to right, and setting a light bar to perceived vertical. The athlete wears goggles with high-speed and high-resolution cameras that capture the most subtle eye movements, so Christy is able to watch the eyes and monitor the corresponding eye movement tracings on her computer monitors.

See next page
Lewis had a normal response to the VEMP test, which showed that his saccule and inferior vestibular nerve were functioning well. He also demonstrated excellent balance during the sensory organization test. While testing Lewis' inner ear and the vestibular pathways, he generated a good vestibular ocular reflex gain. In other words, when his head moved to the left, his eyes moved to the right and vice versa.

However, after looking at Lewis in the NKI rotary chair, Christy found that his smooth pursuits were not moving as smoothly as in a nonconcussed patient. In addition, when he was trying to move his eyes quickly to a target, he was overshooting it more than would be expected.

“Lewis appears to have visual oculomotor pathway issues, suggesting that Lewis might benefit from visual therapy,” Christy said.

The goal of the VORClinic is to inform people that concussions affect the central nervous system, the ability to move the eyes rapidly and gaze stability. All are important functions in playing sports and success within in the classroom. The later research will help develop the evidence needed to treat concussions and to help the athlete successfully return to play safely and return to the classroom efficiently.

“In our research, we hypothesize that athletes who are concussed will have different eye movement than those nonconcussed athletes. We are also looking at the athlete’s sport and concussion history — how long they have been playing and what other sports they are involved in,” Christy said. “We hypothesize that perhaps athletes who have been playing contact sports for a longer period of time may have slower eye movements and may not be moving their eyes as smoothly as athletes who have not experienced contact sports or obvious head trauma. We want to see if the eye can tell us more about the brain.”
The University of Alabama at Birmingham plans to bring its first group of international students recruited through a new partnership with a private global education company to campus this summer as part of starting a joint venture to boost international recruitment.

"We are incredibly pleased to announce this partnership," said UAB President Ray L. Watts in a statement released by the university. "It is a key step in growing our economic impact in the region and a step forward in our initiative to bring the world to UAB. We are proud to be one of the most diverse college campuses in the U.S."

The executive committee of the University of Alabama System board of trustees approved resolutions on Dec. 3 authorizing UAB to enter into a 30-year service agreement with INTO University Partnerships, IUP 2, and a related project to renovate space on the second floor of the Mervyn H. Sterne Library for use as the INTO International Student Center, the hub on campus for the operations of the partnership.

As part of the partnership, UAB plans to bring a small group to campus this summer for English language courses before a larger group of about 150 students arrives in the fall, said UAB Senior Vice
Provost Suzanne Austin. By the fifth year of the partnership, UAB predicts more than 700 international students will have come to campus through the program.

IUP 2 would help recruit international students and manage administration of the new international student center. The company would develop marketing materials, process applications, and provide additional financial, student services and managerial services in the student center, said Amy McGowan, vice president of operations for INTO North America.

The company will be the exclusive provider of marketing and student recruitment services in connection with the new student center and associated programs.

UAB will continue its own recruitment of international students, which has historically been limited in scope, Austin said.

"I think it is a great opportunity for the UAB side to benefit from the expertise and resource that INTO brings," Austin said.

The company has seven partnerships with other U.S. universities and works with 22 universities worldwide.

UAB will provide the educational services, the "Into UAB Programs," including preparatory courses and English language programs for international students.

The university will retain sole control of the admission standards and academic programs and instructional staff.

"We looked very carefully at the curriculum and courses that can meet core for undergrads and one of two courses in the discipline or major they expect to matriculate into," Austin said, using the examples of introductory business or engineering classes. "These students will be taking regular classes with regular students so they begin to have that full academic experience."

As part of the partnership, the existing English Language Institute will be absorbed into the new operations.

"We have brought the folks from the (Institute) in on the conversation from the beginning," Austin said. "They are very excited (and) fully on board."

Students recruited to UAB would enter into a program designed to help them acclimate to life and education in the U.S. while working on core coursework. The pathway programs provide a foundation for the international students, Austin said.

"The more we can prepare them early on when they first get on campus — we know they will be successful academically and socially as they move on to the next stages of their lives," Austin said.

In the program on campus, the international students are surrounded by services, McGowan said.

There will be an accelerated semester pathway program and a two-year pathway program for students who need more time, Austin said.

Undergraduate pathway students would be required to live on campus. Graduate students would be given the option of choosing on- or off-campus housing, Austin said.

The undergraduate and graduate students would be able to matriculate at UAB or at other universities and institutions with which UAB has articulation agreements once the programs are complete.

The students in the program would be classified as out-of-state students. Undergraduates would pay about $23,000 annually and graduate students would pay $24,000, Austin estimated.

The university will be paid for the program delivery and IUP will be paid for the recruitment services. In November, UAB, through the UAB Education Foundation, and IUP formed INTO UAB, a limited liability company in Alabama, as a for-profit venture. As the joint company begins to generate revenue above expenses, the university would receive a 50 percent share of the profits generated by the company.

McGowan predicted the company would likely hire at least 20 employees on the administration side by the fifth year of the partnership based on the needs created by enrollment growth.

UAB, in addition to hiring an academic director for the academic programs, could also add more staff to accommodate the growth, Austin said.

"I think what we have found is there is growth around campus all over because you need to support these students in every aspect," McGowan said.

UAB plans to renovate about 23,100 square feet of the second floor of the Mervyn Sterne Library for use as classrooms and study and administrative space for the partnership between UAB and IUP 2. The $5-million INTO International Student Center project will be funded with UAB funds.

The university hopes to complete the renovations by next fall, Austin said.

As UAB begins planning for the rollout of the pathway programs as part of the new partnership, the possibility of expanding the initiative in the system has also been discussed. UA System Chancellor Robert Witt and his successor, Executive Vice Chancellor Ray Hayes, discussed the partnership with the presidents of the three campuses in mid-November.

The agreement between UAB and IUP 2 was originally on the agenda for the November board meeting before being pulled.

The presidents and system leadership discussed the possibility of agreements for "certain qualified" international students coming to the Tuscaloosa and Huntsville campuses through the UAB program.

"There is certainly a lot of interest, and it is definitely under review at both UA and UAH," system spokeswoman Kellee Reinhart said.
EMPLOYMENT

TOP EMPLOYERS, JOBS

Community Health Systems, Pizza Hut and UAB Medicine were the employers with the most online job postings last month in Alabama.

A new Help Wanted Online report from the state Department of Labor in Montgomery shows the top three businesses collectively had more than 2,300 postings in November.

The analysis by ADOL’s Labor Market Information Division includes job ads from across the state, including Alabama’s free database, www.joblink.alabama.gov. Data is also pulled from other sources, such as traditional job and corporate boards and social media.

The top 20 employers by most online ads were Community Health Systems, 896; Pizza Hut, 802; UAB Medicine, 631; Walmart, 469; ITAC Solutions (staffing company), 428; Target Corporation, 399; University of Alabama, 339; BBVA Compass, 295; Sam’s Club, 292; Lowe’s, 279; University of South Alabama, 276; CVS Health, 252; Dollar General, 247; University of Alabama at Birmingham, 238; Sonic Drive-Ins, 229; WTI Transport, 228; H&R Block, 227; Marriott, 222; Department of Veterans Affairs, 216; and Wells Fargo, 216.

The number of job postings was up 6.51 percent from October, ADOL said.

Heavy- and tractor-trailer truck drivers remained the occupation the most open jobs, with 6,883 online ads, followed by registered nurses (1,687) and supervisors of retail workers (1,665). Retail salesworkers (1,664) and customer service representatives (942) rounded out the top five.

The industries with the highest annual increase in ads were traveler accommodation (up 296 percent), generalized freight trucking (up 261 percent), and electronics and appliance stores (up 235 percent).

“Truck driving jobs continue to dominate this list,” said Fitzgerald Washington, commissioner of the Alabama Department of Labor. “The demand for these jobs outpaces any other by leaps and bounds. Truck driving has an hourly wage of more than $20 an hour. If you're considering a career in this field, I encourage you to come by your local Career Center to find out if you are eligible for training at no cost.”

A listing of Career Centers can be found at www.joblink.alabama.gov.

Lucy Berry
Did Egypt’s Old Kingdom Die—or Simply Fade Away?

By: Andrew Lawler

The end of the great age of pyramid building in Egypt was long thought to be a traumatic collapse that plunged the Nile Valley into a long era of chaos. New research is changing that view.

As world leaders celebrate a new agreement to limit the impact of greenhouse gases on human society, archaeologists have been taking a fresh look at one of the most dramatic instances of a civilization confronted with devastating climate change.

For nearly a millennium, Egypt’s early pharaohs presided over a prosperous and wealthy state that built countless temples and palaces, enormous public works, and the famous Giza pyramids. Much of that prosperity depended on the regular inundations of the Nile River in a country that otherwise would be only desert.

Then, around 2200 B.C., ancient texts suggest that Egypt’s so-called Old Kingdom gave way to a disastrous era of foreign invasions, pestilence, civil war, and famines severe enough to result in cannibalism. In the past decade, climate data revealed that a severe and long-term drought afflicted the region during this same time, providing evidence of an environmental trigger that led to what has long been considered a dark age of Egyptian history.

But a number of Egyptologists argue that the simple story of a drought resulting in an abrupt societal breakdown doesn’t hold water. “The majority view today is that the Old Kingdom did not come to an end all of a sudden,” says Thomas Schneider, professor of Egyptology at the University of British Columbia. Instead, he and others say that climate stress affected different parts of Egypt in different ways—and not always for the worst. “We need to move away from this idea of collapse,” he says.

Much of the 20th-century view of the period between the Old Kingdom’s demise and the start of the Middle Kingdom—what Egyptologists call the First Intermediate Period—is based on a text called the “Admonitions of Ipuwer” that tells the story of a society in turmoil. “Everywhere barley has perished and men are stripped of clothes, spice, and oil,” reads one passage. “Everyone says: ‘There is none.’ The storehouse is empty and its keeper is stretched on the ground.”

Ipuwer laments that instead of an all-powerful and wise pharaoh dominating the land, commoners assert their authority with impudence, and chaos reigns.

But Schneider notes that the earliest known version of this text dates to about 800 years after the events it purports to describe. Yet another text mentions foreign invasions, but this was written six centuries later.

Ancient Egyptians Fascinated with Collapse

Many scholars believe that these texts were part of a genre devoted to upholding the power of Middle Kingdom pharaohs by frightening subjects with stories of the terrible consequences of
life without firm central control—a theme that echoes to today in modern Egypt. "The Egyptians themselves were fascinated by the concept of collapse," says Barry Kemp, an archaeologist at Cambridge University. But the texts, he adds, don't appear to be records of actual events.

There is no doubt that the latter years of the Old Kingdom were marked by economic decline and a breakdown in the centralized system of government, and that changes in the flow of the Nile likely were an important factor. Monumental buildings such as large pyramids and temples, for example, cease to be constructed for about two centuries.

Tomb paintings and inscriptions hint that the environment became more arid toward the end of the Old Kingdom, as some plants disappeared and sand dunes crept close to river settlements. Data drawn from cores in the Nile basin confirm that the climate began to dry around 2200 B.C.

But Schneider argues that the impact of the drought was gradual enough that society adapted without major disruptions. Power slowly devolved from the pharaoh and his capital at Memphis to provincial leaders. Local officials could respond to farming crises faster and more effectively than a distant ruler. "The situation required people to be ingenious," says Schneider, who spoke at the recent American School of Oriental Research meeting in Atlanta.

A Time of Prosperity for Parts of Upper Egypt

There is no sign of civil war during this time in the archaeological record, adds Nadine Moeller, an archaeologist at the University of Chicago. She notes that "there is evidence that the country remained politically unified" long after Pepi II, traditionally considered the last Old Kingdom pharaoh. Schneider notes that the fiscal system remained in operation and that the pharaoh's power was still acknowledged from the Nile Delta to Aswan a century or so after Pepi II—even if that control was nominal.

In Upper Egypt, Moeller has found that the era following the Old Kingdom's decline was a "culturally very dynamic" time in which towns and cities such as Tell Edfu and Dendera expanded and flourished. There may even have been an overall increase in population.

There also is no physical evidence for widespread food shortages. Corinne Duhig, a Cambridge University archaeologist, says that her studies of skeletons from the First Intermediate Period "do not show signs of famine; neither do those from the Old Kingdom." Nor did she find an increase in violent death among the human remains that she examined.

Kemp says there is some evidence of fighting between neighbors in Upper Egypt as power became more decentralized, "but the scale might have been modest." Rather than a collapse, he sees a change in the way people were governed.

And new dating analyses suggest that the interlude between the two kingdoms was perhaps little more than a century—much shorter than Egyptologists once thought, says Schneider. The break between kingdoms, in other words, may have been briefer and less traumatic than previously believed.

See next page
A missing piece to the puzzle of the Old Kingdom’s fall is the lack of information from Lower Egypt, the region closer to the Nile’s mouth that would have been more affected by changes in the annual flood than Upper Egypt. Sarah Parcak, an archaeologist at the University of Alabama at Birmingham, notes that “lack of good settlement data for all of Egypt” makes it difficult to judge the impact of the drought.

Parcak complains that “some Egyptologists don’t seem to like environmental factors causing collapse,” adding that “you cannot argue with hard scientific data.” But she acknowledges that understanding just how that climate change affected a society as large and complex as ancient Egypt remains hard to judge. “We need to think a lot more about the role the environment played in ancient Egypt,” she says. “And we need a lot more data.”
UAH builds STEM stations for Mt. Carmel

By: Gregg Parker

Students from the University of Alabama in Huntsville have volunteered at Mt. Carmel Elementary School to redesign STEM stations (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics).

For the last few years, media specialist Cyndy Dunning at Mt. Carmel has worked with the UAH design team to inspire students to investigate STEM topics and careers.

“This collaborative relationship has been very successful and given me courage and support to create new STEM programs in the library, such as MakerSpace Friday,” which were scheduled on specified Fridays for special sessions in technical study, Dunning said.

The Women in Defense organization sponsors the UAH Design Team.

In fall 2013, a senior design team comprised of six UAH students majoring in mechanical and aerospace engineering built four sound-dampening STEM stations for Mt. Carmel elementary students.

“The purpose of the STEM stations is to provide the elementary school children a quiet and inspirational environment to work on projects, which include digital recording sessions,” Dunning said.

In May 2015, a new team of senior design students, also with majors in mechanical and aerospace engineering, was tasked with improving and upgrading the STEM stations for continued use at Mt. Carmel.

In a recent Spacemaker Friday session, the UAH design team described the engineering design process that they used to improve the stations. The college students also demonstrated the digital recording possibilities within the stations.

Parents of Mt. Carmel students volunteered alongside the UAH team to bring another Friday of STEM enrichment to the elementary students. The college and parent volunteers inspired future generations to pursue STEM careers, Dunning said.
As humanity evolves, technological advances improve our lives

By: James H. "Smokey" Shott

As humans and technology evolve, new ideas, products and improving processes make our lives fuller and easier. We once listened to music on plastic platters. Even as the quality of records improved, progress brought about the reel-to-reel tape machine. That was a great development, but then someone came up with the eight-track tape player, which eventually gave way to the cassette player, and then audio on tape was surpassed by a new technological creation, the compact disc. And now that, too, is about to become old news.

As the years, decades, and centuries pass, human beings evolve in their ability to develop ideas and create devices that improve the quality of their lives.

In 1593, Galileo Galilei invented the first device to measure temperature variations, a rudimentary water thermoscope. In 1612, the Italian inventor Santorio Santorio put a numerical scale on his thermoscope. While neither of these new instruments was very accurate, they represented progress.

In 1654, Ferdinand II, the Grand Duke of Tuscany invented the first enclosed liquid-in-a-glass thermometer, and replaced water with alcohol as the medium to measure temperature changes. This instrument, too, was inaccurate and used no standardized scale, but represented a step forward.

Daniel Gabriel Fahrenheit invented the first modern thermometer, the mercury thermometer with a standardized scale, in 1714. Thermometers continued to evolve since that time, becoming more accurate and more versatile along the way, measuring the temperatures of air and liquids. For most of those 300 years they utilized a liquid to measure temperature, but today digital technology has become the standard.

From their land-bound home, humans learned how to move through the air and into outer space, and now digital thermometers measure temperatures on earth from satellites orbiting many miles above the planet. For 37 years satellite-based instruments have provided the world's most accurate and unbiased temperature data.

And space-based measurements are free from coverage gaps and "siting problems," conditions that plague land-based instruments. A study authored by Anthony Watts and Evan Jones of surfacestations.org, John Nielsen-Gammon of Texas A&M, and John R. Christy of the University of Alabama, Huntsville, show the problems inherent in land-based thermometers that do not affect space-based measurements.

Watts, the lead author of the study, explained: "The majority of weather stations used by NOAA [the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration] to detect climate change temperature signal have been compromised by encroachment of artificial surfaces like concrete, asphalt, and heat sources like air conditioner exhausts." He added: "We also see evidence of this same sort of siting problem around the world at many other official weather stations, suggesting that the same upward bias on trend also manifests itself in the global temperature record."

See next page
The study notes that there are two subsets of weather stations, those that are well sited, and not affected by extraneous effects, and those that are poorly sited, and are affected by extraneous effects. The well sited stations produce readings markedly cooler than those corrupted by extraneous effects, and the study suggests that the results of the well sited stations — the truest measure of environmental temperature — are adjusted upward to more closely match the results of the poorly sited stations, resulting in temperature readings higher than true readings.

Put into plain English, many land-based measurement stations are corrupted by elements that are not a part of the Earth’s natural temperature, and they skew the results upward. Real-world temperatures measured by satellites are consistently cooler than those projected by climate computer model simulations because they are not affected by concrete, asphalt and other things that collect and produce heat that are not a part of the earth’s natural environmental temperature.

And what the satellite-based instruments reveal is stunning. There has been no warming at or in the:

- South Pole for 37 years
- Southern hemisphere for 19 years, 10 months
- Tropics for 19 years, 3 months
- Tropical oceans for 22 years, 11 months
- North Pole for 13 years, 10 months
- Australia for 18 years, 1 month
- United States for 18 years (49 states)
- Globally for 18 years, 6 months

These readings plainly show that contrary to global warming scare stories in the media, the world has not warmed as the models projected. However, warming advocates choose to ignore these measurements, and the reason why is simple: Without a scary story of future catastrophe to promote, they lose power and they lose money, the power to control the masses being the more important.

The worldwide effort to fight climate change is not about fighting climate change; it is about control. But 21st century technology provides evidence that is devastating to the global warming narrative.

The simple truth is that some years are warmer than others; and some years are cooler. Warming and cooling periods may last a few to several years or many decades. Our climate is not static and has never been.
Contrary to the warming advocates' story, satellite-based measurements show that the industrial revolution that set loose the development of so many things that make our lives better has not caused the planet to heat up.

With science, the media and government conspiring to subject people to ideological control over unproven climate change, that progress will be impeded, and the entire world will suffer.
If You Constantly Gripe on Facebook, You're Probably Lonely IRL

By: Stephanie Booth

What drives you to log in to Facebook a BILLION times a day? Is it to play a game? Brag about your kids' report cards? Complain that you had too many Christmas cookies yesterday? Your answer may give some surprising insight about your personality.

New research out of the University of Akron's Wayne College shows that the more you use Facebook to fulfill your goals -- which, in the examples above, would be to kill time, feel like you're raising a great family, and either try to lose weight or convince your neighbors to stop giving you Christmas cookies already --- the more dependent on the social media juggernaut you become.

Dependency isn't the same as an addiction, FYI. But WHY you keep logging in and updating your FB page determines your dependency. And gives some insight into your personality, as well.

For instance:

If you share a lot of positive, uplifting, inspiring posts ...

You have high self-esteem. Are you one to share every last beach pic of your Puerto Vallarta vacay? You're telling the world that you've got confidence.

"Previous studies have found that those with high self-esteem are more optimistic and confident," explains Amber L. Ferris, PhD, an assistant professor of communications at Wayne College, who co-authored the study along with Erin Hollenbaugh, PhD, an assistant professor of communications at Kent State University at Stark. "Therefore," Ferris notes, "they may just have a brighter outlook on life in general, and ... post those optimistic, positive pieces of information on social media."

If you rely on Facebook friends for advice ...

You could have lower self-esteem. (Although an agreeable personality, according to the research!)

When you ask your FB buddies what you should do about your husband's workaholic tendencies or how to host a last-minute holiday dinner for 24, you're relying on their feedback to guide you. AND getting help to better understand yourself, Ferris's research shows.

If you "friend" people you don't know IRL ...

You're an extrovert. "Extroverts tend to be highly social," Ferris says. "Those who scored higher on an extroversion scale were more likely to feel that Facebook helped them to meet new friends."

See next page
You may be lonely. People who use social media to grouse about, well, everything fall into two categories, Ferris explains. "If you're a less reliable and diligent person who is more cooperative and helpful and uses Facebook to meet new people, you tend to post more negative information," she says.

By doing so, you're actually hoping to meet new people, surprisingly enough. Although walking up to a stranger and complaining that the flight attendant on your recent trip was a jerk sounds a little weird, apparently, it works just fine on Facebook.

Category #2 of those with complain-y tendencies (which is our term, not the researchers') are driven by a need to simply feel less lonely, Ferris says. So maybe when other people share how they've also had awful experiences with a certain airline, you feel all warm and cozy and brought into the fold.

Ferris's research didn't look at what it means when you lock down your account with privacy controls. But other studies have, and no surprise:

If you disclose very little information about yourself ...

You're an introvert. According to research out of the University of Alabama Huntsville, shy people spend the most time on FB, but share very little about themselves. (If you're an introvert, you're probably thinking, "Well, of course not. Why would I?!")

Regardless of which category you fall into, cutting back on FB in general might behoove you.

Plenty of recent research has indicated that using the social network can up stress levels, increase anxiety, and negatively affect how you view yourself.

So, maybe instead of posting a pic of your gorgeous holiday centerpiece or complaining how overpriced it was, you could just -- uh -- invite some real friends to actually come over and enjoy it face-to-face?
One more game ...

For the Tide, the real celebration has yet to come

The ball dropped early on New Year's Eve — and landed squarely on Michigan State.

There could be no more dominant ending to 2015 than Alabama's annihilation of the Spartans. But just because the year is over, that doesn't mean the season is complete. The celebration in Texas simply means a chance to finish what Alabama started in the ashes of a loss to Ole Miss and the shadows of skepticism about whether this Crimson Tide team had the same mettle of previous Nick Saban teams.

Now, this Alabama team

Cecil Hurt

See Hurt, C5
is one game away from proving it is just as good as its predecessors — if not better.

The game itself started as the slow-paced slugfest people predicted but even in the scoreless first quarter, the mismatch was becoming obvious. Michigan State, a team that has to run the ball to thrive, and they could not run at all. Defensively, the Spartans sold out to stop Alabama from running so UA went away from the steady pounding of Derrick Henry, who had a light load of just 20 carries, and made play after play in the passing game. Jake Coker had his most memorable game, taking advantage of available opportunities in the short passing game and striking deep (with some stunning throws) when Michigan State left a crease.

"I thought Coker kept the play alive a lot of times when we could have had a sack, and that makes a difference," said Michigan State coach Mark Dantonio. "He was very good back there."

Throw in a special team touchdown by Cyrus Jones and the result was a quick demise for the Spartans, followed by a wake that lasted for the better part of the second half. There were notable moments even as Alabama batted the prone MSU remains around like some curious lion cub whacking on a beach ball until it finally deflates. There was Henry knocking an MSU linebacker for a full mid-air loop with a stiff arm and Dillon Lee making a one-handed interception that delighted his defensive teammates as much as any single play in the game. Those moments didn't affect the outcome, but they did affect the attitude.

Some day, those will be cherished highlights for UA to look back on. For the next 10 days, they will have to be put aside. Michigan State is a good team, but it was a bad matchup for them on Thursday night. Clemson is a better team, less one-dimensional, more of an athletic match for Alabama with the recruiting classes that Dabo Swinney has accumulated. As dominant as Alabama was against Michigan State, Clemson was just that good against Oklahoma, especially in the second half. So, as Saban noted, the 24-hour time limit on celebrating in Arlington began even before the New Year's fireworks started to explode.

"I'm proud as hell of our team for getting where they are," Saban said. "But we've got a game to play. The players learned a lot from what happened last year (against Ohio State.) This team was totally focused on winning the game from the point when we got here."

—Nick Saban

Michigan State linebacker Riley Bullough drives Alabama wide receiver Calvin Ridley out of bounds during the College Football Playoff semifinal game in the Goodyear Cotton Bowl Classic at AT&T Stadium in Arlington, Texas. STAFF PHOTO | GARY COSBY JR.

—Reach Cecil Hurt at cecil@tidesports.com or 205-722-0225.
Tickets for UA-Clemson final at a premium

By Aaron Suttles
Sports Writer

The last time the Clemson Tigers played for a national championship on the gridiron, they were led by a former University of Alabama player and assistant coach in Danny Ford. The year was 1981, and it was the only season the Tigers have captured a national title.

More than 30 years later, Clemson is again playing for a national championship led by a former Alabama player and assistant coach in Dabo Swinney, and the demand for tickets, not surprisingly, is high.

Add in the fact that the game matches Clemson, which is undefeated, against a national program such as Alabama and the demand for tickets increases even more.

According to seatgeek.com, the average resale price for a ticket to the College Football National Championship is $1,148, after opening immediately after the matchup was set Thursday night at $1,346. At the same time last year, the average resale price for Ohio State versus Oregon was $1,141.

SEE TICKETS, C9

TICKETS
From Page C1

According to Chris Leyden at seatgeek.com, 15 percent of people searching for tickets come from the state of South Carolina. People from Alabama seeking tickets represent 6 percent of the traffic. Other states where demand is high include Georgia (11 percent), Texas (10 percent), California (eight percent), North Carolina (seven percent) and Florida (seven percent).

If immediate history is an indication, prices for the championship game will continue to drop. Last season’s Ohio State-Oregon game settled at $845 and Auburn-Florida State the year before ended up averaging $1,005. On the other hand, tickets for the title games in the preceding two years, both of which included Alabama, were higher. The price for Alabama-Notre Dame in 2012 was $1,705 and Alabama-LSU in 2011 was $1,739.

In 2010, Auburn-Oregon brought $1,339.

Alabama students were given an opportunity, based on credit hours, to purchase tickets for $550.

Round-trip airfare from Birmingham to Phoenix with an arrival date of Saturday, Jan. 9, and a departure of Tuesday, Jan. 12, had a high of $2,245 and a low of $1,150, according to kayak.com.

Of course, Alabama players weren’t talking about Clemson in the moments after their 38-0 win over Michigan State in the Cotton Bowl in the College Football Playoff semifinal.

“We’re going to enjoy this moment. We have a 24-hour rule,” Heisman Trophy-winning running back Derrick Henry said.

“Then we’ll start getting prepared for Arizona because that’s a great team in Clemson. But, like I said, we had a great performance and we just want to carry it on.”

— Reach Aaron Suttles at aaron@tidesports.com or 205-722-0229.
It'll be a family reunion in the desert

Hey, Dabo Swinney. Mama’s calling. No, it’s not that call. Not yet. She simply wants to get together in the Arizona desert for a family reunion with a little football game thrown in.

Oh, and she has one teeny, tiny request. Please, by all means, bring your own gut. She knows you’ve got ‘em, plenty of ‘em, and that makes her awfully proud. She’s also pretty sure you’ll need ‘em.

Swinney’s dream national title matchup came together on the final day of 2015 in two emphatic demonstrations of championship football. First, his undefeated No. 1 Clemson team left 37-17 cleat marks on Oklahoma in the Orange Bowl. Then, No. 2 Alabama was even more dominant in a 38-0 Cotton Bowl beatdown of Michigan State.

It’s only fitting that the two best teams in college football will meet Jan. 11 in the national championship game in Glendale, Ariz. It’s only family with Swinney trying to win Clemson’s first national title since 1981 against his alma mater.

Lucky for Dabo he’s a protege of Gene Stallings. Nick Saban’s pupils tend to get embarrassed when they meet their mentor. It got so bad for Mark Dantonio, he might’ve preferred to meet his maker.

This was the first time one of his Michigan State teams got shut out. It was the first shutout in a postseason game since Alabama 21, LSU 0 in the 2012 BCS Championship Game. It was the first Cotton Bowl shutout since 1963.

The Spartans were lit up by crimson fireworks, and it was hard to pick a favorite. Offensive MVP Jake Coker throwing a laser over a defender to Calvin Ridley from half a field away for a touchdown? Or Ridley climbing over a defender to cradle a Coker dart to his chest while tap-dancing for another score?

Defensive MVP Cyrus Jones doing the hesitation hop while taking a punt return to the house? Or Jones refusing to let Alabama playoff history repeat itself when he picked off a pass in the end zone just before halftime to snuff out Michigan State’s last hope?

That pick got lost in the second-half onslaught, but it was the perfect example that this Alabama team - the defense especially - isn’t last year’s Alabama team. That team let Ohio State score late in the half to cut the lead to one, and it wouldn’t go well from there. This team took its 10-0 lead to the half and then took the Spartans to the woodshed.

The defining moment may have been Derrick Henry flattening a 250-pound defensive end with a Mike Tyson right cross of a stiff arm for the final touchdown. Alabama was so good, Henry was more of a decoy, and Connor Cook and company were mostly sitting ducks.

Coker was supposed to be the Crimson Tide’s weak link, but he was the best quarterback on the field. Lane Kiffin figured Michigan State had spent a month steeling itself to stop Henry so he put the game in Coker’s hands, and he delivered the game of his life.

Coker completed 25 of his 30 throws for 286 yards with two touchdowns and no interceptions. Let that be a lesson to anyone who’s already declared that Clemson will have a decided advantage at that position in the dangerous Deshaun Watson.

Don’t misunderstand. Watson’s a terrific player and the leader of a terrific team. Neither Clemson nor Alabama should be able to do to the other what they did to Oklahoma and Michigan State.

Clemson cornerback Mackensie Alexander on Ridley will be NFL good on good. Clemson’s defensive line, especially if Shaq Lawson’s knee is OK, may be the only front in the nation that won’t take a back seat to Alabama’s.

Then there’s the Heisman winner in Henry against the second runner-up in Watson, two men capable of taking over a game.

Swinney against Alabama is the icing. All he does is knock off national championship coaches, and now he gets a shot at the alpha dog of that breed in Saban in the actual national championship game.

The pride of Pelham went from assistant to interim guy to head coach at Clemson in large part because Alabama humbled Tommy Bowden and the Tigers in the 2008 opener. That was the beginning of the Saban dynasty and the beginning of the end for Bowden.

Can Swinney now put a stop to Saban? It should be some reunion. Mama may have to cover her eyes either way.
Coker, Ridley, Jones step up to deliver knockout to Spartans

By Tommy Deas
Executive Sports Editor

ARLINGTON, Texas — Some of life's deep questions, like the one about whether a falling tree makes a sound if there's no one in the forest to hear it, may never be answered.

The University of Alabama answered one of its own imponderables in Thursday night's Cotton Bowl: Could the Crimson Tide possibly win a playoff game without Heisman Trophy winner Derrick Henry leading the charge?

The answer was a resounding yes, as quarterback Jake Coker and freshman receiver Calvin Ridley stepped up to lead Alabama to a 38-0 victory over Michigan State, earning the Crimson Tide a trip to Glendale, Ariz., to play for the College Football Playoff championship.

Alabama will play undefeated Clemson on Jan. 11 for the national title.

Coker, the senior quarterback from Mobile who transferred to UA two years ago, completed 25 of 30 pass attempts for a career-best 286 yards and two touchdowns. Ridley caught eight passes for 138 yards and both scores.

SEE TIDE, C4

TIDE
From Page C1

"The way (the Spartans) play... it was going to be difficult to run the ball," Alabama coach Nick Saban said. "So we knew Jake was going to have to throw it, and he did a fantastic job of making some big plays."

Coker was named the offensive most valuable player, and Cyrus Jones won the top defensive player award.

The game started as a defensive struggle, as expected, and remained that way until more than midway through the second quarter.

The scoreless tie was broken after Coker cranked a 50-yard completion to Ridley, who accelerated to warp speed to race past two defenders and haul it in. He went down at the 1-yard line, and Henry punched it into the end zone for his 24th touchdown of the season, setting an SEC record and giving Alabama a 7-0 lead with 5:36 to go in the first half.

Adam Griffith added a 47-yard field goal with 8:20 seconds to go before intermission, and Jones intercepted a pass in the final moments of the half deep in UA territory to stave off what would turn out to be Michigan State's only serious scoring threat.

A 10-0 halftime lead didn't satisfy Saban.

"We've got to finish some drives on offense," he said as he left for the halftime locker room. "We are hurting ourselves with penalties and getting behind the sticks."

Alabama took complete control in the third quarter and put the game away.

UA's first drive of the second half ended with Ridley sticking his right foot hard into the artificial turf of the end zone to remain in bounds for a 6-yard touchdown reception to make it 17-0.

Jones returned a punt 57 yards for a touchdown soon after and MSU was reeling.

The kill shot came with 2:20 remaining in the third quarter, when Ridley loped past the Michigan State defense and Coker — after a run fake to Henry — heaved a 50-yard touchdown pass, giving Alabama a 31-0 lead.

Henry put his stamp on the game midway through the final period with an 11-yard touchdown run, displaying his Heisman stiff-arm to throw Michigan State defensive end Shilique Calhoun roughly to the ground before romping into the end zone.

Henry finished with 75 yards on 20 carries to go with his two scores.

Alabama held Michigan State to 239 total yards, and just 29 on 26 rushing attempts.

See next page
Scoring summary

SECOND QUARTER
Ala—Henry 1 run (Griffith kick), 5:36. Drive: 6 plays, 80 yards, 2:38. Key plays: Coker 15 pass to Mullins; Coker 50 pass to Ridley. Alabama 7, Michigan St. 0.

THIRD QUARTER
Ala—Ridley 6 yard pass from Coker (Griffith kick), 6:36. Drive: 9 plays, 76 yards, 4:24. Key play: Coker 26 pass to Mullins. Alabama 17, Michigan St. 0.
Ala—Ridley 50 pass from Coker (Griffith kick), 2:01. Drive: 5 plays, 50 yards, 0:59. Alabama 31, Michigan St. 0.

FOURTH QUARTER
Ala—Henry 11 run (Griffith kick), 7:52. Drive: 3 plays, 69 yards, 1:38. Key play: Drake 58 yard run. Alabama 38, Michigan St. 0.

“This is the first time in a while that this has happened to us,” MSU coach Mark Dantonio said.
Quarterback Connor Cook, a top NFL prospect, completed just 19 of 39 attempts for 210 yards with two interceptions. The shutout was the first in Cotton Bowl history since 1963, and UA's margin of victory was third-largest in the bowl’s history.
“We did a pretty good job of covering them for the most part,” Saban said.

— Reach Tommy Deas at tommy@tidesports.com or at 205-722-0224.
Cochran is quirky, but he's effective

Cecil Hurt

Strength is Scott Cochran's area of expertise, his milieu, the field of knowledge that has made him famous in the college football world. He's helped to take the natural prowess of University of Alabama football recruits and develop line- men the size of mid-size rental cars, backs who hit like wrecking balls.

Scott Cochran knows strength. So he also knows when there are bands of loyalty that are simply too strong to be broken, no matter what.

Cochran, the familiar face - and, even more so, the instantly recognizable voice - of the Crimson Tide football program's strength and conditioning program, faced a choice earlier this month. He had a lucrative opportunity to leave Alabama, where he has been the football strength and conditioning guru since 2007, and join Kirby Smart, the UA defensive coordinator who is leaving for the head coaching job at Georgia.

"Kirby is a family friend," Cochran said at Alabama's media opportunity at AT&T Stadium on Tuesday. "We've been in the grind together, so to speak. I was kind of humbled by the offer, really. To be wanted like that is really exciting."

But no matter how hard Smart pulled and tugged at them, the bonds that keep Cochran in Tuscaloosa didn't snap or fray.

"Coach (Nick) Saban has made a statement many times that the people here (at Alabama) have two families," Cochran said. "You have your family at home and you have your family with the team. At the end of the day, when it's all said, I have my role, my place in that and I wanted to keep it."

"Coach Saban has been great to me. He gave me a chance (at LSU.) He believed in me enough when he came here to give me the head strength coaching job when I was just an assistant strength coach in the NBA (with the New Orleans Pelicans). He's helped me build my brand."

See Hurt, C4
HURT
From Page C1

When Cochran speaks of a strength coach having “a brand,” it’s not empty rhetoric. On Tuesday, with every Alabama coach and player available to a cattle-drive sized media horde, Cochran was surrounded for a full hour, discussing not just the decision to stay at Alabama but a wide range of topics that included a new ritual for reaching

his famous energy level during the grind of August two-a-days.

“I put Icy Hot (heating balm) in my armpits,” Cochran revealed. “Coffee just wasn’t doing it for me any more.”

Is Cochran quirky? Yes – but the quirks are what works. Behind them, there’s a simple, effective plan.

“With every player, I try to give them a tool that he doesn’t have,” Cochran said. “Some of them come to us with a lot of tools, definitely. But there is always something. If he’s not flexible in his lower body, we attack that. If it’s upper body strength, or extra stamina, same thing.”

Cochran said another reason that he particularly loves his role at Alabama is an ongoing tradition of player leadership.

“It started with Julio (Jones),” Cochran said. “For a guy like that to come to Alabama out of high school when he had a lot of suitors was great. But for that guy to come in and work as hard as he did, to set the tone, was tremendous. So it’s Julio. Then it’s Mark Ingram. Then you’ve got Trent Richardson coming in asking, ‘How much did Mark do?’ so he could do more. Then you’ve got something that just keeps going. That’s what we’ve got going now.”

—Reach Cecil Hurt at cecil@tidesports.com or 205-722-0225.
Mel Tucker has big impact early at Alabama

By: Tommy Deas

The first time Nick Saban made an offer, Mel Tucker turned it down.

But Saban didn't make it easy.

Tucker, now assistant head coach and secondary coach for Saban's University of Alabama football team, was a high school prospect in the early 1990s who was being courted by Big Ten schools. Saban was the new head coach at Toledo, where Tucker's father had played.

Saban offered a scholarship.

"Coach Saban's an excellent recruiter, he's very personable and he's very knowledgeable," Tucker said. "He always gives you specific information that pertains to you."

Saban persisted, and went to great lengths to impress the prospect.

"I never got to see my dad play, and one day Coach Saban turns on the film and there's my dad playing defensive end," Tucker said. "That's the type thing I remember to this day."

Tucker ultimately chose Wisconsin, but he was turning down Toledo, not its coach.

"I didn't turn Coach Saban down," Tucker said.

He certainly didn't turn down Saban when UA's coach offered a job back in January. Tucker had spent the previous 10 seasons coaching in the National Football League, seven of those as defensive coordinator.

Tucker has made an impact on a defense that may be the best in the nation, which has helped Alabama to a New Year's Eve date with Michigan State in the Cotton Bowl playoff semifinal.

The chance to work again with Saban – the man who later gave him his start as a graduate assistant coach, and had him on staff when Saban came to LSU in 2000 – was a major factor.

So was the chance to coach at Alabama.

"I think so highly of him and the type of leader that he is and the type of program that he runs," Tucker said Tuesday at a media day function at AT&T Stadium. "Then I'd say Alabama is a great place, with great tradition, just an all-around program where you have an opportunity to win, which I think is important."

In one season, Tucker has made a major mark on Alabama's secondary. He took on a unit with two freshmen – Minkah Fitzpatrick and Marlon Humphrey – and two cornerbacks who were
converted into starting safeties, as well as a veteran corner in Cyrus Jones, and molded them into a unit that ranks fourth nationally in pass efficiency defense.

He also won over the unit.

"That's my boy right there," said safety Eddie Jackson, who earned second-team All-America recognition this season. "He brought a lot of energy. He preaches at us, screams at us, yells at us day-in and day-out: 'Break on the ball, scoop and score, rip it out, rip it out.' Things like that. It really motivates us and gets us going.

"You know, coming from the NFL to college, everything he says you have to listen to and take it into your game and see how it can help you."

Kirby Smart, UA's defensive coordinator, believes Tucker is the perfect counterbalance to Saban, a longtime secondary coach who pays extra attention to that unit.

"He and Nick's demeanor almost mesh perfectly because he's got a great demeanor with the players—calm, cool, collected—and when Nick gets fiery on them he can say something funny and make them laugh," Smart said. "He's really good in the meeting room. He keeps things mixed up and has been an unbelievable asset for us here."

With Smart leaving Alabama to become head coach at Georgia, Saban elected to bring in former UA assistant Jeremy Pruitt to take over the coordinator position rather than promote Tucker.

The longtime NFL coordinator takes no issue with the decision.

"I don't have really much to say about it," he said. "My focus is coaching the defensive backs and Michigan State, and that's the most important thing right now.

"It's a great opportunity that we have ahead of us. I think it's important to stay focused on the task at hand, and really everything else is incidental."

Tucker says he hopes to stay on the Alabama staff.

"I love coaching here," he said. "I think this is a great place. Obviously a tremendous program, Coach Saban is a tremendous head coach, there's great people involved in the program, a great support staff. It's a privilege to coach at a place like Alabama."
MR. GOLF: Potter thrilled to host regional

By: Ian Thompson

Playing only three events this fall, including a win in its opening event – Vanderbilt's Mason Rudolph Championship – and concluding in late October, it has been, and continues to be, a long break from tournaments for the University of Alabama's women's golf team.

UA's spring season begins Feb. 7, and Coach Mic Potter's squad is sure to be anxious to get going when it arrives in Palos Verdes Estates, Calif., for the Northrop Grumman Regional Challenge.

The events then come at a steady pace in New Orleans; Hilton Head Island, S.C.; Athens, Ga.; and Tempe, Ariz.

Alabama will be much closer to home with the SEC Championship at Greystone Golf & Country Club's Legacy Course from April 15-17, and then literally five minutes down the road, UA hosts an NCAA Regional at storied Shoal Creek, May 5-7.

Potter says he is thrilled to be hosting an NCAA Regional at Shoal Creek.

"We love the course, and Shoal Creek has been very kind to us as a program. Being close to home will present a rare opportunity for our boosters, friends and fans to watch us play in person," he said.

Long admired and regarded as the top course in the state, Shoal Creek ended a five-year run in May as host of the Regions Tradition, a major on the Champions Tour, and, in 2018, will host the U.S. Women's Open. The Regions now moves to Greystone.

It would be almost certain that some players in the 2016 Regional will make that U.S. Women's Open field two years later.

There will be four regionals of 18 teams spread across the country, with the top six teams from each one advancing to the NCAA Championship at Eugene Country Club in Eugene, Ore., May 20-25.

"The genesis of this (coming about) was from Martha Lang (a member at Shoal Creek and former head of the USGA’s Women’s Committee) who approached us about hosting a regional, as a way of getting ready for the U.S. Women’s Open," Potter said.

Lang also starred for the golf team at Alabama from 1971-75 and is a highly decorated golfer, including winning the 1988 Women's U.S. Mid-Amateur and playing on and captaining the Curtis Cup team.

"Our events people at Alabama loved the idea and Shoal Creek is such an iconic venue. I'm thrilled it all worked out," Potter said.
Potter also talked about the plusses of "staying home on a course we have some experience on and our players love."

"Shoal Creek are very engaged in hosting. They have already offered a lot more than was required."

Potter indicated the course would be play between 6,200 and 6,400 yards and would "provide a fair, yet challenging test."

Alabama’s Mmen’s team

Alabama’s men’s team wrapped its fall season with back-to-back wins in UA’s own Jerry Pate National Intercollegiate at Old Overton Club and then the Warrior Princeville Makai Invitational in Kauai, Hawaii, in early November. Alabama will travel to another exotic locale to open the spring season on Feb. 21 in the Puerto Rico Classic, followed by events in Las Vegas, Greensboro, Ga., and Nashville, Tenn.

The Crimson Tide then travels in mid-April to Sea Island, Ga., the long-time home of the SEC Championship, where UA has had a lot of success in recent years.

The following month, May 16-18, Alabama has a home event as it will host an NCAA regional at Ol’ Colony Golf Complex.

"We are very, very excited to host a regional," head men's golf coach Jay Seawell said.

Ol’ Colony was completely renovated in 2013, reopening in September of that year with course designer and UA legend Jerry Pate in charge of the renovation that saw all the greens and bunkers redone, hundreds and hundreds of trees removed, and new tees added taking the overall yardage to a very healthy 7,544 yards from all the way back.

These new tees were built to attract just such an event as what will be called the Tuscaloosa Regional, which will be made up of 70 players, with either 13 teams and five individuals involved or 14 teams.

The top five teams from each of six regionals will make up the field for the NCAA Championship, which, like the women’s championship event, will also be played at Eugene Country Club, from May 27-June 1, 2016.

Seawell said Ol’ Colony and PARA were great partners in the venture.

Seawell also noted that he fully expects his team, as the host team, to be in the field; however "there is no rule saying this, but we are pretty much guaranteed to be there. They (the NCAA) want the hosts there," the coach said.

"I’m in my 14th year as head coach here and I’ve wanted to host a regional from the get-go. This has been a dream of mine. I’d like to think we can get on a rotation and host one every five or six years."
Ian Thompson has been writing about golf in Alabama for over 22 years. His weekly "Mr. Golf" column concentrates on golfers, golf events and people associated with the sport of interest to the Tuscaloosa and Birmingham areas. Reach him with story ideas atthompsonteesoff@gmail.com.
Campus activists unite in call for divestments at colleges

By Collin Binkley
The Associated Press

BOSTON — Campus activists who often fight in parallel with one another for their respective causes are now starting to form alliances as they turn up the pressure on some U.S. colleges to financially divest from industries that run counter to their beliefs. Student groups that have long called on colleges to stop investing in fossil fuels have begun working alongside students demanding divestment from the prison industry, a movement that has gained momentum recently with support from black student organizations. Coalitions created this year at Wesleyan University in Connecticut and the University of Pennsylvania have pressured their institutions to drop investments in fossil fuels and prisons and in companies that have ties to Israel's occupation of the Palestinian territories, demands that students previously pursued separately. At Tufts University near Boston, divestment

SEE COLLEGES, A7
groups against fossil fuels and Israel banded together with a coalition opposing investments in private prison companies.

"There's a consciousness with the younger generations that these are not single issues," said Zakaria Kronemer, a national organizer for the Responsible Endowments Coalition, a New York nonprofit group that helps students campaign around what they see as crucial social-justice issues. "It doesn't make sense for us to be working in silos anymore."

Beyond the call for divestments, students have thrown other causes into the mix. After fighting to get Columbia University to divest from fossil fuels, a student group organized a coalition with five other campus groups that tackle issues such as racism, sexual assault and workers' rights. Together, as the Barnard Columbia Solidarity Network, they issued merged demands to campus administrators.

"I don't think they've dealt with anything like this," said Daniela Lapidous, a senior and a group member. "Only by building these coalitions will we win any of our demands."

The collaborations have had some success. After students staged a joint sit-in this year, the president of Wesleyan agreed to endorse divestment from the prison industry.

Advocacy groups that help students organize say they expect to see more cross-over coalitions at colleges. Already, students from several universities are trying to establish a national umbrella group that would unite students across schools and causes. National environmental groups have offered online training to students on the perks of solidarity.

"Increasingly, the climate movement has seen how deeply intertwined the climate crisis is with issues of racial and economic injustice," said Jenny Marlenau, a divestment campaign manager for the environmental group 350.org. "I don't think it's just a numbers game, though. I really do think there's deeper alignment."

Students against fossil fuel investments, for example, point to a recent report from Columbia predicting that rising temperatures will pose a health risk at prisons. But some critics say it's a reach to draw connections between fossil fuel divestment and other movements.

Bradford Cornell, a professor of financial economics at the California Institute of Technology, said the debate over fossil fuels is straightforward, focusing on the costs and benefits of using those fuels. Cornell is also the author of a 2015 report finding that divesting from fossil fuels can hurt universities' investment returns.

Even with the help of newly formed coalitions, though, students have struggled to get colleges to disclose their investments. The Wesleyan group, named the Coalition for Divestment and Transparency, criticized the school because students have no way of knowing if Wesleyan invests in contentious industries.

Of the 30 public universities with the largest endowments, only nine released any of their investment holdings in response to a recent Associated Press records request. None of the 20 private colleges with the top endowments — the smallest of which tops $3 billion — provided any records.

Colleges guard their investments closely, contending that disclosure would tip their hand to competitors. Some students and faculty say colleges should invest only in socially responsible ways, but colleges and financial experts counter that endowments are meant primarily to generate revenue.

Often, administrators can't even trace all their institution's investments.

Most big universities now invest in hedge funds, said Jessica Matthews, head of the mission-related investing practice at Cambridge Associates, which advises colleges on investments. While those types of funds pose a challenge to divestment, she added, there are some fossil-free hedge funds available to schools.

Research has been mixed on whether divesting from fossil fuels would hurt a university's endowment. Some colleges counter that it's better to work with companies on changes rather than cut ties with them.

Still, Matthews said she sees some evidence that universities are heeding the calls of campus activists. Over the past two years, more than 70 colleges have sent inquiries about divestment, a surge over previous years. Most have been focused on fossil fuels, she said, but there has been growing interest in prison divestment.
AP Exclusive: Schools ease athlete penalties for marijuana

By: Eric Olson

At least one-third of the Power Five conference schools are not punishing athletes as harshly as they were 10 years ago for testing positive for marijuana and other so-called recreational drugs, according to an investigation by The Associated Press.

The NCAA last year cut in half the penalty for athletes who fail screenings for substances like marijuana at its championship events, and its chief medical officer is pushing for college sports' governing body to get out of the business of testing for rec drugs altogether. The AP found that some of the nation's biggest universities, from Oregon to Auburn, have already eased their punishments as society's views on marijuana use have changed. Marijuana use among U.S. adults has doubled over a decade, according to government surveys, and recreational use is now legal in four states.

The AP analyzed policies for 57 of the 65 schools in the Southeastern, Atlantic Coast, Big 12, Big Ten and Pac-12 conferences, plus Notre Dame.

Of the 57 schools, 23 since 2005 have either reduced penalties or allowed an athlete to test positive more times before being suspended or dismissed. Ten schools have separate, less stringent policies addressing only marijuana infractions.

In the Pac-12, five schools do not suspend athletes for as long as they once did. At Utah, for example, a third failed test used to mean dismissal; now it's a half-season suspension.

"It's a moving target, and we have to find that balance between being too punitive and not punitive enough, and making sure that we help people that have a problem," Utah athletic director Chris Hill said.

Recreational use of pot is allowed for adults in Oregon and Washington but is against the rules at Pac-12 schools in those states. At Oregon, an athlete doesn't lose playing time until a third failed test; at Oregon State, a third failed test used to mean dismissal, but athletes are now given one more chance.

At Washington, a third failed test used to be a one-year suspension but is now just 30 days.

"The change was intended to make the policy more rehabilitative," Washington spokesman Carter Henderson said.

Northwestern, Penn State, Pittsburgh, Southern California, Syracuse, Vanderbilt and Wake Forest did not provide copies of their drug policies despite repeated requests, citing privacy laws. Stanford does not test its athletes. Illinois has a separate pot policy that has become more strict but isn't as punitive as its policy for drugs like cocaine or heroin.

The Big Ten and Big 12 are the only Power Five conferences that do their own testing in addition to the testing done by the schools and NCAA. Those two conferences punish athletes who test positive for performance-enhancing drugs. The Big 12 is the only conference that screens for recreational drugs, but it does not sanction athletes who test positive. Instead, the Big 12 notifies the school of a positive test and leaves any discipline to the school.

See next page
Alcohol remains by far the most abused substance on college campuses, with marijuana ranking second. In the most recent NCAA survey of athletes (2013), 70.9 percent of Division I football players acknowledged using alcohol in the previous 12 months and 19.3 percent acknowledged using marijuana or synthetic marijuana. In men's basketball, reported use was 58.1 percent for alcohol and 11.3 percent for marijuana/synthetic marijuana.

While schools come down hard on athletes caught using performance-enhancing drugs — a first positive test typically results in a one-year suspension — they are much less punitive for marijuana and other so-called street drugs.

Athletes who test positive a first time typically receive counseling but lose no playing time. Also, athletes who come forward and acknowledge drug use before they are tested are offered help under "safe harbor" programs. Second positive tests typically result in some lost playing time. Suspensions generally start kicking in after a second positive, though Kansas, Mississippi, Purdue and Oregon don't mandate a suspension until a third offense.

Football coach Mike Riley, in his first year at Nebraska after 14 years coaching at Oregon State, said he becomes suspicious marijuana is being used when he notices a player who misses or is late for meetings or is not fully engaged on and off the field.

"Through my years in coaching, I can almost pick out the guys who have a marijuana problem," Riley said. "You give me three weeks with a team and, if you've got five guys, I could get three or four of them."

Former Nebraska defensive end Randy Gregory failed a marijuana test at the NFL scouting combine last February and later publicly acknowledged his use in college. Once considered a high first-round draft pick, he wasn't selected until late in the second round by Dallas.

Gregory said he and his Nebraska teammates didn't worry a lot about being tested. Nebraska, under a policy effective since September 2014, suspends an athlete for 10 percent of his or her sport's season after a second failed drug test and 20 percent after a third failed test. A fourth failed test results in dismissal. The previous policy, in place when Gregory initially enrolled, didn't take away playing time until a third failed test.

"I'm not saying that we were kind of like invincible," said Gregory, who played under former Huskers coach Bo Pelini. "But they don't make it a big deal. ... They didn't really test you unless you had failed one and then after that, they test you weekly almost."

Dr. Lonnie Albers, Nebraska's associate athletic director for athletic medicine, declined an interview request through the sports information department.

In addition to school testing for a wide range of drugs, Gregory and his teammates were subject to random screening for PEDs by the Big Ten and NCAA.

"Did I know folks that were abusing it? Yeah, on different ends of the spectrum. I think you know what I mean, smoking and other performance-enhancing drugs," Gregory said.

"Sometimes guys get lucky. The Big Ten comes in, we're testing steroids, might be a guy on steroids but he may say, 'You know what, I don't think I'll be one of the 12 guys that they're testing out of the 100-and-how-many guys we have on the team.' And they'll get lucky and not get tested. It's kind of hit or miss, I think."
The NCAA has been testing for marijuana and other street drugs at championship events since the 1980s. The NCAA suspends athletes for a full season for a failed PED test. Starting in August 2014, however, the penalty for failing an NCAA street-drug test was reduced from a suspension of one full season to a half season.

NCAA medical chief Dr. Brian Hainline said his organization should concentrate on busting athletes who use PEDs and leave it to the schools to deal with the rest, preferably through treatment rather than punishment.

"The most important thing that I can't emphasize enough is that as a society, we have to make a clear distinction between recreational drug use and cheating," Hainline said. "I really believe that they require two different approaches. One is more nuanced, and one is hard core."

What about marijuana being against the law in most states?

"If we're going to test at championship events for things that are illegal, then we shouldn't just test for pot," Hainline said. "If there are any kids under the age of 18 smoking cigarettes, we should test for that. We certainly should be testing for alcohol for everyone under the age of 21. Then we ask ourselves, 'Where does the moral authority stop?' I'm all for moral authority as long as there is a philosophical consistency to it."