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UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA SYSTEM

Tuition increases to take effect in July

Trustees give final approval to hikes

By Ed Enoch
Staff Writer

HUNTSVILLE — The University of Alabama System board of trustees approved tuition increases ranging from 1.5 percent to 3 percent for its medical, dentistry and optometry schools.

The board approved 1.5 percent increases for in-state medical and optometry students and no increases for out-of-state students. The increases affect students at the University of Alabama at Birmingham and the UA College of Community Health Sciences.

In-state dentistry students in their first and second years will see 3 percent increases and out-of-state students will receive 2 percent increases. Third- and

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TUITION
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The Tuscaloosa News
Saturday, April 9, 2016

fourth-year student will see no changes in tuition rates.

The rates will go into effect July 1. The board typically considers tuition rates for undergraduate and graduate students at UA and UAB at its June meeting.

The trustee also gave approval to proceed with the final year of a transition to a block-tuition structure at the University of Alabama in Huntsville that allows undergraduate students to pay a flat rate per semester for course loads of 12 to 18 hours and graduate students a flat rate for loads of 9-15 hours.

The block rate is meant to encourage students to take more than 12 hours of classes per semesters. Undergraduate students taking 12 hours or less will see tuition rate increases of about 2-4 percent. Those who take 15-18 hours will see decreases of up to 6.33 percent compared to the 2015-16 rates. Graduate students taking 9-15 hours would see a 3-percent increase in the flat rate.

Other action by the board:

UA

- Approved contracts with Regions Bank for purchasing card services, Cadence Bank for banking services, and merchant services with TouchneT.
- Approved issuing up to $114 million in bonds with an interest rate not to exceed 5.5 percent to refund a 2008 bonds series

UAB

- Authorized negotiation of a new contract with existing service provider Protective Securities of Birmingham for financial advisory services for UAB and the UAB Health System.
- Approved the design of a new 1.67 million academic building for the Collat School of Business and the Institution for Innovation and Entrepreneurship.
- Approved the design of a new 1.5 million UAB Police headquarters building.
- Authorized negotiation of an architectural services agreement with Goodwyn Mills Cawood of Birmingham for the new $5.4 million Bryce Park food service building. The firm's fee will be based upon 5 percent of the construction cost of $2 million plus $20,000 for reimbursable expenses.
- Authorized execution of a commercial services agreement with Goodwyn Mills Cawood of Birmingham for the new $5.4 million Bryce Park food service building. The firm's fee will be based on 6.3 percent of the construction and landscaping cost of $4.2 million.
- Authorized the purchase of 32.4 acres of timberland in Chilton and Autauga counties for $1.1 million from the Capstone Foundation and accepting the gift of the remaining 159.9 acres of a related tract, both of which will be added to UA's permanent land endowment.
- Approved providing Shelby County 6.4 acres for a public road easement along Shelby County Road 251 for $10,655.
- Approved a five-year agreement with Verizon Wireless allowing the carrier to install equipment on campus to improve mobile wireless network performance. The company will pay $188,800 in licensing fees the first year, with 1.5-3 percent increases each year for the remaining years.
UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA

Trustees weigh tuition hikes

Increases for medical, dental, optometry students likely

By Ed Enoch
Staff Writer

HUNTSVILLE — The University of Alabama System board of trustees will consider tuition rate increases for its medical, dental and optometry schools when it meets today.

The board's finance committee on Thursday approved 1.5 percent increases for medical and optometry students and increases of as much as 3 percent for dentistry students depending on their year of study. If approved by the full board, the rates would be effective July 1.

The committee also gave preliminary approval to the final year of a transition to a block-tuition structure at the University of Alabama in Huntsville that allows undergraduate students to pay a flat rate per semester for course loads of 12 to 18 hours and graduate students a flat rate for loads of 9-15 hours, instead of paying by the credit hour.

The tuition increases for the professional schools would help cover rising operational costs such as faculty salaries and benefits and facilities upkeep, according to University of Alabama at Birmingham Provost Linda Lucas.

"One of the big things is to keep high-quality faculty," Lucas said.

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See next page
The system and campus administrators offered similar reasons for a round of increases last year. Lucas said the proposed rate for 2016-2017 was the smallest increase in the last five years. She also said tuition is among the revenue sources that universities can control in the face of lean state appropriations — a frequent argument by system officials for increases since 2008.

The annual tuition rate for in-state medical students at the UAB School of Medicine and UA's College of Community Health Sciences would increase $396 to $26,778. Out-of-state students would see no increase and continue to pay $61,848.

First- and second-year in-state dentistry students at UAB would see annual tuition increases of $770 to $26,430. Out-of-state students would see increases of $1,186 to $60,414. Third- and fourth-year students would see no rate changes.

UAB optometry students would see a $387 increase in annual in-state rates to $26,115 and no change in out-of-state rates.

Under the changes in the final year of the UAH plan, undergraduate in-state students taking course loads of 1-9 hours would still be charged by the credit hour and see increases of 4 percent and out-of-state students with similar loads would see increases of approximately 2 percent.

The board approved the block-tuition plan 2014 with the goal of encouraging students to take more than 12 hours of classes a semester.

In-state students taking 12-18 hours in the 2016-2017 academic year would pay a flat semester rate of $4,498, which would represent a 4 percent increase from the 2015-2016 rate for students taking 12 hours but a decrease of as much as 6.33 percent for students taking 15-18 hours. Undergraduates from outside the state would pay a flat rate of $9,883, with students taking 15-18 hours seeing decreases of as much as 9.62 percent.

Graduate students taking 9-15 hours would see a 3 percent increase in the flat rate for in-state students to $4,917 per semester and a 2 percent increase for out-of-state students to $10,915.

Graduate students taking less than 9 hours per semester would see increases of 2-4 percent.

UAH president Robert Altenkirch said the university saw a 4.5 percent increase in credit hour registration in fall 2015. He also noted UAH applications for the 2016 fall semester were up 30 percent to date compared to 2015.

"If we can tell them for sure this tuition structure is in place, it will help ..." Altenkirch said, arguing it would be an incentive for applicants to enroll and matriculate.

The full board is scheduled to meet at 11 a.m. today in the UAH Student Services Building.
Who are the ‘dark money’ donors?
Mystery could be solved through bill seeking constitutional amendment

Howard Koplowitz  hkoplowitz@al.com

Alabamians may be deciding whether the sources of so-called “dark money” will have to be revealed after state Sen. Arthur Orr introduced a bill last month to put that question before voters in a constitutional amendment.

The bill (SB356) by Orr, a Republican from Decatur, would affect special interest groups whose main activity is getting involved in political campaigns. If it passes the legislature, voters would decide whether Montgomery can then make laws regulating the disclosure of dark money donors.

“We’ve seen them pop up here in the last several years and the public has the right to know whose money is this. These groups that are now engaging in electioneering,” Orr told AL.com “If they’re going to engage in electioneering activities in Alabama, I believe the public has a right to know who the donors are.”

Orr said the legislation was inspired by the 2014 and 2010 election cycles, where dark money groups, including the Alabama Foundation for Limited Government, paid for ads in support or in opposition of candidates.

He said the scandal ensnaring Gov. Robert Bentley, whose former senior political adviser and alleged mistress was being paid by a dark money group called the Alabama Council for Excellent Government, didn’t impact his decision to introduce the bill. According to ACESGov’s articles of formation, the group is not involved in electioneering or campaign activities.

The Alabama Foundation for Limited Government is run by former Sen. John Rice. “They sent out mailers attacking candidates, gave to candidates’ campaigns, engaged in all the usual activities of a PAC but they were not registered as a PAC,” Orr said. “Right now it’s just a black hole. We don’t know where the money for that organization came from.”

Orr’s bill was criticized by FreedomWorks, a Washington-based 501(c)(4) organization that doesn’t have to disclose its donors, as “having a chilling effect on political speech.”

FreedomWorks spokesman Jason Pye said the legislation aligns with the views of Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders, who would like to make super PACs illegal.

“Basically, we believe that this amendment is designed to discourage nonprofit organizations from spreading the word on what’s going on in the Alabama Legislature,” Pye said in an email.

“It’s very similar to the constitutional amendment that Senate Democrats in Washington, including Bernie Sanders, who caucuses with them, tried to pass a couple of years ago. Sanders has also railed about this on the campaign trail. We believe the effect of the amendment would be keep constituents in the dark on what exactly legislators are up to in Montgomery.”

Orr said he never heard of FreedomWorks and added that the group didn’t voice its displeasure about the bill.

“They never called me. They never bothered to contact me. I would submit they don’t know our Alabama situation, but I think the public has a right to know who’s giving this money to the dark money groups,” he said. “It’s a pretty simple proposition.”
Montgomery

AEA hires new executive director

The Alabama Education Association has hired a new executive director more than a year after its previous leader, Henry Mabry, resigned after an audit revealed financial mismanagement.

The resignation came a month after the AEA announced its plan to terminate Mabry.
AEA's board announced Saturday the hiring of Dr. Brenda Pike as its executive director after an extensive national search. Pike most recently served as the executive director of the Indiana State Teachers Association.

Pike, a Gadsden native, will begin her new post on May 16.

She worked for 12 years as a classroom teacher before joining the staff of the Tennessee Education Association.
She subsequently worked for eight years as the assistant executive director for the Texas State Teachers Association before being named to head the Indiana State Teachers Association in 2010.

Erin Edgemon
Gulf Shores

Gulf State Park lodge funding challenged

Former state Conservation Commissioner Charles Grimsley filed a lawsuit Friday challenging a source of funding for the new lodge and conference center being built at Gulf State Park in Gulf Shores.

Grimsley asked the Montgomery County Circuit Court to block what he claimed was the unlawful use of state funds.

The Legislature passed a bill in 2013 authorizing the state to partner with the private sector to replace the lodge at Gulf State Park, destroyed by Hurricane Ivan in 2004.

Gov. Robert Bentley has been a leading proponent of the project and is named as a defendant in the lawsuit.

According to Grimsley’s lawsuit, the Gulf State Park Projects Act specified the sources of money the state could use — certain restoration funds from the BP oil spill and revenues from the project itself.

When foundation work for the lodge and conference center began last month, it was funded with grant money received from BP in 2010, not one of the sources authorized in the law, according to Grimsley’s lawsuit.

It’s not the first to challenge funding for the Gulf State Park Project. Last month, a federal judge blocked the state from using National Resource Damage Assessment funds on the lodge and conference center.

The $85.5 million Gulf State Park Project was one of the first Alabama projects approved by the NRDA Trustee Council, which includes four federal agencies and the five states affected by the oil spill.

Mike Cason
Which Alabama high schools best prepare students for college?

List includes Spain Park, Vestavia, Mtn. Brook, Homewood, Hoover

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There are only a couple of more weeks before the class of 2016 walks across the stage to receive their high school diplomas. And while high school graduation is the end of one chapter, it's the beginning of another for those planning on attending college.

So which schools are doing the best job preparing their graduates for the next level? Niche.com, an education website, recently identified the schools where students are most ready to further their education. The 2016 College Readiness Rank looked at SAT/ACT and AP test performance, graduation rates and the quality of colleges students consider and attend, as well as student and parent reviews. Only public schools are included in the rank.

Here are the top 10 Alabama high schools best preparing their students for college, according to Niche.com:

1. Loveless Academic Magnet Program (Montgomery)
2. Bob Jones High School (Madison)
3. Spain Park High School (Hoover)
4. Vestavia Hills High School
5. Mt. Brook High School
6. Homewood High School
7. Auburn High School
8. Virgil Grissom High School (Huntsville)
9. Hoover High School
10. Northridge High School (Tuscaloosa)

Several local schools were cited by Niche.com for preparing students for college. A graduate waves to his family at the University of Alabama in Huntsville Fall Commencement December 13 at the Von Braun Center Propst Arena. Bob Gathany / bgathany@AL.com

Find out more
Want to see what those schools are doing right and how your school compares? Go to https://k12.niche.com/rankings/public-high-schools/best-outcomes/s/alabama/.
Is office too much for Bentley?

Lawmakers debate governor’s political clout in wake of scandal, talk of impeachment

Mike Cason mcason@al.com

State lawmakers have varying opinions on the degree to which a sex scandal involving a relationship with his former senior political adviser has weakened second-term Gov. Robert Bentley.

The governor still has almost three years remaining in office, and he’s vowed to stay on course with key initiatives — his plan to build four new state prisons or efforts toward Medicaid reform.

But some legislators say Bentley has lost his ability to lead the state since evidence surfaced of his inappropriate relationship with Rebekah Caldwell Mason, which was followed by apologies from the governor and several requests for forgiveness from the people of Alabama.

Others say it’s too early to say Bentley is finished or that he’ll limp to the end of his second term without accomplishments.

The relationship with Mason and accusations by fired state law enforcement chief Spencer Collier caused some legislators to launch an unprecedented effort to remove Bentley from office through impeachment. But that’s far from happening as a legislative committee to examine the merits of impeachment is not yet in place with just 10 days left in the legislative session.

Only 11 of the 135 House members are listed as sponsor or cosponsors of the impeachment resolution.

But is Bentley’s political effectiveness really waning? At this point, it’s still hard to tell.

SEE BENTLEY, A7
BENTLEY
FROM A1

On Tuesday, the Alabama Legislature overrode a veto by the governor and passed the General Fund budget without his signature. The Senate voted 22-11 to override his veto, and the House followed with a 71-24 vote.

The governor said the budget didn't adequately fund Medicaid and that the Alabama Medicaid Agency would examine program cuts before he considers calling a special session over the state budget.

But also on Tuesday, Bentley's plan to build four state prisons with an $800 million bond issue passed the Alabama Senate. The plan, initiated by Bentley and Department of Corrections Commissioner Jeff Dunn, includes closing most of the existing prisons.

The governor issued a statement praising the Senate for clearing a "critical hurdle" in efforts to fix the state's prisons.

"The passage of this bill will help reduce overcrowding and will provide safer conditions for corrections officers as well as inmates within the facilities. New facilities will also create greater opportunities to reduce the risk of recidivism," Bentley said.

MIXED REACTION AROUND THE STATE

Others are also concerned about the problems that surfaced after Collier's firing and his subsequent allegations a few weeks ago.

Rep. Jim Patterson, R-Meridianville, said people in his district are angry.

"I'm hearing back home they're not happy with this situation," Patterson said. "I'm going to wait and see what they find. We don't need to rush to judgment.

"It's bad for the whole state. We've got things we need to do right now. And I think it's put a taint on everything going on right now that he's asking for because he got such bad advice from that lady (Mason)."

Rep. A.J. McCampbell, D-Livingston, said it remains to be seen how the scandal will affect Bentley's influence.

"I really don't know if you'd consider that he's weakened or not," McCampbell said. "I think he made what is natural, and that's a human error.

"People are going to make human errors. Whether or not we can continue to influence is a direct reflection of who we are."

McCampbell said he didn't believe the scandal would hurt the state's ability to recruit industry or employers, as some have said.

Rep. John Knight, D-Montgomery, said the state faces serious issues, including adequate funding for Medicaid and a shortage of state troopers that makes highways more dangerous.

"We've got some real serious issues that we've got to address," Knight said. "This is not going to help it, no. But whether or not he can accomplish anything or not, I think it remains to be seen."

Rep. James Buskey, D-Mobile, said he didn't think the scandal has hurt Bentley because the governor already lacked power.

"He came in as a weak governor," Buskey said. "As far as I'm concerned, it's still the status quo."

Some say Bentley is so damaged that it's time to call it quits.

"We have become a laughing stock and an embarrassment because of the governor's actions," Rep. Johnny Mack Morrow, D-Red Bay, said. "He's 73 years old. He needs to go home and go fishing and spend time with his grandchildren because he is no longer effective."

Morrow filed an ethics complaint on Thursday related to the governor's relationship with Mason. It was the third such complaint related to the scandal.

Rep. Ed Henry, R-Hartselle, who is leading the impeachment effort, said his main beef with Bentley is not the relationship with Mason, although he described the way the governor handled it as "disgusting."

Henry said Bentley has been dishonest.
during his second term, including the abandonment of a no-new-taxes campaign pledge.

"Everything Robert Bentley says at this point is in question," Henry said.

Bentley issued a statement Tuesday about the impeachment articles, denouncing them as a political attack. He said he has not misused state resources or done anything to warrant removal from office.

The governor and Mason have also denied that they had a "physical" affair.

The governor has continued making public appearances and finds himself dogged by questions about the scandal.

On Wednesday, when he held a press conference at the Capitol, Bentley refused to take questions on subjects other than Medicaid or prisons and left through a back door.

Rep. Jack Williams, R-Vestavia Hills, said the jury is out on whether Bentley can still successfully advocate for important initiatives, like the prison plan.

"Obviously the governor is harmed, he's weakened," Williams said. "But barring removal from office, he's here for another 34 months. So we need to find ways to make this state successful under whoever's leadership is there, whether it's the governor or there's a change.

"I'm not ready to write him off."

*AL.com's Leada Gore contributed to this report.*
Bentley says he'll explore Medicaid cuts before he considers a special session

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Gov. Robert Bentley says the Alabama Medicaid Agency would examine program cuts before he considers calling a special session over the state budget.

Bentley and Medicaid Commissioner Stephanie Azar went over potential cuts after the Legislature overrode the governor's veto on Tuesday and enacted the General Fund budget.

Lawmakers appropriated $700 million from the General Fund for Medicaid next year, $85 million short of the governor's request.

Bentley and Azar said one option could be to eliminate prescription drug coverage for adults, which would save an estimated $50 million to $60 million in state dollars.

"If we have to live within our means, then we have to make some very tough decisions," the governor said.

The estimated savings on the prescription program don't take into account increased medical costs that would result from people not getting their medicines.

Azar also said Medicaid would not be able to proceed with the plan to begin providing managed care through regional organizations, a move intended to slow the growth in costs and improve health outcomes.

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services earlier this year approved a waiver to allow the change and could provide up to $747 million over five years to help with the transition.

Elimination of prescription coverage was one of 10 areas of potential savings mentioned by Bentley and Azar.

Various combinations of the cuts could be considered and would have to be approved by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services.

Another savings option Azar listed would be for Medicaid to consider a pharmacy preferred provider. That would save an estimated $19 million to $30 million in state dollars.

Other programs mentioned, and the estimated savings in state dollars:

- Eliminate eyeglasses for adults: $300,000
- Eliminate outpatient dialysis: $3.7 million
- Eliminate prosthetics and orthotics: $500,000
- Eliminate Program of All Inclusive Care for the Elderly (PACE): $2 million
- Eliminate Health Home and Physician case management fee: $16.6 million
- Eliminate primary care bump (pays doctors at Medicare levels): $14.7 million
- Reduce administrative costs: $3.5 million
- Reduce reimbursement rates for ambulatory surgical centers, doctors, dentists, optometry, hearing and other programs: Zero to $50 million.

Leaders in the Republican-controlled Legislature said they could not meet Medicaid's funding request without crippling other agencies. They say there is no support for tax increases or taking money from education.

Bentley's proposed budget depended on moving $181 million from education to the General Fund.

House and Senate budget committees plan to hold hearings on Medicaid funding beginning next week. House budget chairman Steve Clouse of Ozark said the goal would be to "zero in" on Medicaid costs.
Forgive? Of course; Resign? Absolutely

Yes, people make mistakes. Even powerful people make mistakes.

Earlier this week, Gov. Robert Bentley, speaking with reporters during a tour of Limestone Correctional facility, said he was “humbly” asking the citizens of Alabama for their forgiveness.

The 73-year-old Republican from Tuscaloosa has been embroiled in a bizarre scandal since admitting last month to making inappropriate remarks to his former senior policy adviser, Rebekah Caldwell Mason, who is 44, married to another one of Bentley’s cabinet members and also from Tuscaloosa.

We’re sure many of the men housed in that prison are sorry for the actions that landed them there. We assume some of them have apologized and sought redemption. But we’re certain that each morning they awake caged away from society they are reminded that forgiveness does not mean an escape from the consequences of their actions.

We don’t know whether Bentley has broken laws. He may have. The scandal has focused primarily on the salacious nature of the sexual comments that were recorded. Bentley already knows there’s no escaping the consequences of the broken trust to his family. Last year, his wife of 50 years divorced him and last week it was learned he wasn’t welcome in his church. Also last week, Mason resigned her position.

But there are many different facets of this scandal that are more impactful to the citizens of the state than whether the governor broke his marriage vows. On the day Bentley fired him last month, Spencer Collier, the state’s top law enforcement officer, said the governor asked him to lie with regard to an investigation into House Speaker Mike Hubbard, who is facing a sweeping indictment and pending trial. Also, questions remain about how Mason and a firm run by her and her husband were paid hundreds of thousands of dollars. Questions remain about the use of state resources with regard to Mason. Many questions remain.

But some key questions have long been answered. Bentley has lost his ability to be an effective leader, even in his own party. The Republican-controlled Legislature voted Tuesday to override and put in place a budget the governor had vetoed. It was just the latest example of his fellow Republicans working against him. There have been many others.

Later on Tuesday, fellow Republican Rep. Ed Henry of Decatur introduced articles of impeachment. It is unlikely that it will be successful.

This newspaper and others have called for the governor to resign. While Bentley asked for forgiveness in front of the prison, he let it be known he has no intention of stepping down. He may be granted the forgiveness he seeks, but he’s done more than break the trust in a 50-year marriage. He’s broken the trust with the people of this state. His “humble” quest for forgiveness has not included full disclosure on all the questions that remain. And he should already know forgiveness, and even a second chance, doesn’t mean escaping repercussions.

We’ll say it again: Bentley should do the right thing. He should resign.
Impeachment process begins

By: Kim Chandler and Melissa Brown

MONTGOMERY, Ala. (AP) — Alabama Gov. Robert Bentley was hit Tuesday with a longshot impeachment effort in the wake of a scandal involving a former top aide, the latest sign of his growing political troubles.

Republican Rep. Ed Henry introduced the articles of impeachment, saying lawmakers and voters have lost confidence in the two-term GOP governor. He accused the governor of moral turpitude, willful neglect of duty, corruption and incompetence.

"We are looking at this governor who has essentially betrayed the trust of the people of Alabama through actions and lies that have caused us to have some doubt about his leadership," Henry said during a press conference at the Alabama Statehouse.

Bentley last month admitted making inappropriate remarks to his senior political adviser, Rebekah Caldwell Mason, who has since resigned. The admission came after Bentley's recently fired law enforcement secretary accused the governor of having an affair with Mason and of interfering with law enforcement investigations. Bentley has denied both accusations.

The troubled governor lashed out at the effort, saying he would vigorously defend himself.

"Today's press conference is nothing more than political grandstanding intended to grab headlines and take the focus away from the important issues the Legislature still has to address before the end of the session," Bentley said in a statement. Henry and Bentley have clashed on past issues, including the governor's 2015 push to raise taxes that some Republicans saw as a betrayal.

The state Constitution spells out a vague but seldom-used procedure for impeachment. Alabama lawmakers have never previously tried to impeach a sitting governor.

The impeachment resolution, which has support from some Democrats including House Minority Leader Craig Ford, was sent to the House Rules Committee for consideration but faces stark odds of being voted on by the full chamber. At least one legislative leader said that would not happen in the 11 meeting days remaining in the current session.

House Rules Committee Chairman Mac McCutcheon said the committee would first establish an investigating commission to vet the articles of impeachment and determine if grounds exist for impeachment. He said that likely wouldn't be resolved before the session ends next month.

The scandal has engulfed Bentley, a mild-mannered dermatologist and former Baptist deacon whose political ascendency was based partly on his morally upright, honest reputation. Dianne
Bentley, the governor's ex-wife, filed for divorce in 2015, saying their 50-year marriage had suffered an irreparable breakdown.

Recordings obtained by The Associated Press purportedly show the governor — before his divorce — professing love to someone named Rebecca or Rebekah and telling her how much he enjoyed kissing her and touching her breasts.

"I love you so much; I worry about loving you so much," Bentley says on the call.

The governor in a press conference last month said that he did not have a "physical affair" with Mason and that there was no "sexual activity."

Henry said the recordings cast doubt on Bentley's version.

Mason played a key role in Bentley's administration but was not on state payroll. She was paid with the governor's leftover campaign funds and also did work for a nonprofit organization formed to promote Bentley's agenda.

Some Alabama lawmakers quickly dismissed the impeachment effort.

"I'm not in the mood to impeach someone over personal issues. Unless someone can show us a reason, that someone has misused their office or misused tax dollars, and I haven't seen that," said Senate President Pro Tem Del Marsh, the GOP's leader in the chamber.

Still, the impeachment effort is indicative of Bentley's transition from lame duck to political punching bag as he spars with lawmakers over budgets and prison policy.

Republican Rep. Will Ainsworth said Bentley needed to be held to the same standard as other government employees.

"Could someone else talk inappropriately or touch inappropriately someone that's in their chain of command and not get fired? I think the answer is no, and I think that's the big problem we have to look at," Ainsworth said.

Ford said he did not care about the governor's personal matters, but he said he was concerned about the allegations that Bentley interfered with law enforcement business.

Bentley has a habit of saying in speeches how much he loves the people of his state. Henry said voters do not reciprocate the affection right now.

"If he truly loves the people of this state, he'll step down," Henry said.
Gov. Bentley hit with second ethics complaint as scandal grows

Analysis of Masons’ finances show hands in many pots

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As the scandal over Gov. Robert Bentley’s “inappropriate” relationship with his now-former political adviser, Rebekah Caldwell Mason, enters its third week, Bentley faces a second ethics complaint regarding use of state security for Mason and more evidence of his ongoing efforts to hide the relationship.

Campaign finance records show that Bentley’s camp spent $1,700 on prepaid “burner” cellphones last year. Spencer Collier, the former head of the Alabama Law Enforcement Agency who exposed evidence of the Bentley-Mason relationship after the governor fired him, said Bentley avoided using state email, used text messaging instead, and frequently changed phone numbers.

The net result: Little of the communication between Bentley and Mason was made public despite last year’s request under the Open Records Act by AL.com’s John Archibald. SEE ETHICS, A12
ETHICS
FROM AL

Mason resigned as the governor's top political adviser on Wednesday, with the public getting more information about the complex financial dealings in which Mason and her husband made hundreds of thousands of dollars from the state and Bentley's campaign.

The newest ethics complaint against Bentley comes from a former rival for the governor's job.

Stacy Lee George of Arab, a former Morgan County Commissioner who ran against Bentley in the 2014 Republican primary and endorsed him in the general election, filed the complaint last week. In it, he asks for an investigation into whether Bentley directed security personnel to accompany Mason during her time as his communications director and later as senior political adviser when she was employed by the governor's campaign and not the state.

George's complaint asks the Ethics Commission to investigate whether Bentley directed Spencer Collier, former head of the Alabama Law Enforcement Agency, to provide security for Mason.

"This is a clear abuse of state resources," George said. State Auditor Jim Zeigler has also filed a complaint about potential misuse of state property in connection with the relationship between Bentley and Mason. The complaint asks the Ethics Commission to determine "whether Gov. Bentley and Mason are using state property in furtherance of their personal relationship, and if they have used their position to interfere with an attorney general's investigation."

The Ethics Commission confirmed it has assigned an investigator to that case.

Gov. Bentley's office did not respond to requests for comments regarding George's claims. Following Zeigler's filing, the governor issued a saying he will "continue to cooperate with the Alabama Ethics Commission."

SECURITY DETAIL ISSUES

George's filing isn't the first time Bentley has faced questions regarding his security detail. In 2014, AL.com reported Wendell Ray Lewis, the head of Gov. Bentley's security detail, earned $16,918 in August alone. His total pay for 2014 was $146,549, the vast majority of which came from overtime compensation. He earned $137,769 in 2015, about $50,000 of which was from overtime.

Lewis was removed from the governor's protection detail and instead moved to what's called the Dignitary Protection Unit.

The unit, which is part of ALEA, provides protection to visiting dignitaries, such as governors, members of Congress or officials who have known threats made against them.

Collier, as head of ALEA, ended all overtime for members of the governor's protection detail in 2014. Gov. Bentley said he had no part in allowing Lewis to earn the extra overtime pay, or played any role in a promotion he received.

Lewis has since retired. His name reemerged last week when it was reported he first brought evidence of the Bentley-Mason relationship to Collier's attention — the sexually charged conversation recorded between Bentley and a woman named "Rebekah." Reports said Lewis was given the audio by a member of Bentley's family in 2014.

See Next Page
'BURNER' PHONES

Bentley's state campaign finance records reveal that his campaign spent $1,733 on "cell phones and prepaid wireless" at Best Buy last year.

The evidence of the expenditure bolster the stories of two employees — one former, one current — of the Best Buy in Tuscaloosa's Midtown Village shopping center who told AL.com that they each personally sold a single disposable "burner" cell phone to Bentley last year.

Bentley's office did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

The filing does not indicate who was reimbursed via the payment, though it does indicate the recipient of the money was an individual. It also does not provide any other details about the purchase, such as what brand or model the phones were or which Best Buy location from which the phones were purchased.

But the two Best Buy employees who spoke to AL.com last week said Bentley himself purchased multiple AT&T flip-phones that retail for about $15 each.

MASONS' FINANCES

An analysis of Jon and Rebekah Mason's finances reveals they have their hands in many pots of money via a complicated network of companies, political consultancy and government appointments.

Jon Mason, who earns $91,000 annually from the state, refused to speak with AL.com about the ways he and his wife earn money, citing the ongoing Ethics Commission inquiry.

"An unfair Ethics commission has now been filed against my wife," the statement said. "I have been advised that until that matter has been resolved, I should not respond further to media inquiries."

Since 2010, University of Alabama records show UA has paid JRMI Enterprises — a Tuscaloosa-based advertising, marketing and design company founded in 2005 by Jon Mason and operated by him ever since — a total of $245,600, categorizing the payments under "service and professional fees."

Chris Bryant, a spokesman for UA, clarified via email that the payments "were for marketing and advertising services provided by JRMI."

The payments continued through last month, as the university disbursed $45,450 to the company via PayPal on Feb. 9 alone.

In 2014, UA paid JRMI $20,050, UA's records show. That same year, Jon Mason disclosed on the Statement of Economic Interests form he filed with the Alabama Ethics Commission that his household received profits of between $10,000 and $50,000 via JRMI.

In 2013, UA paid JRMI $96,200, but Mason reported that JRMI's profits that year were between $10,000 and $50,000 as well. Despite the fact that UA records show that the university paid JRMI $30,000 in 2012, Mason failed to report any JRMI income on his economic interest form that year.

Rebekah Mason did not detail JRMI profits on either of the two economic interest forms she filed, which covered the period from 2012 to 2013, though she did note that her husband earned at least $1,000 through the company in 2012.

WVUA, VETERANS NETWORK

Jon Mason's financial ties to the University of Alabama predate his January 2011 appointment by Bentley as executive director of the Governor's Office of Faith Based and Community Initiatives, known as Serve Alabama.

The university paid him $3,750 a month between August and December 2010, according to UA records, which categorize the payments as payroll. He remained on the payroll in early 2011, according to the records, which show that UA paid him $2,321.43 in January 2011 and $2,027.42 in February 2011. A listing on the University of Alabama's website identifies him as an instructor, but provides no information about what classes he may have taught or for what department he may have worked.

Bryant said via email that the "payroll expenses were for his work as a meteorologist at WVUA from July 2010 to January 2011." WVUA is a TV station owned by UA's board of trustees that services the Tuscaloosa area.

Jon Mason disclosed to the Ethics Commission that he served in 2013 as a member of the Alabama Veterans Executive Network, a commission Bentley created that year to improve delivery of services to the state's veterans. It is unclear whether Mason was paid for his work on that commission.

Gov. Robert Bentley and his former political adviser Rebekah Caldwell Mason. (Glenn Collins / HVTV.com)
BENTLEY CONSULTING

 Jon Mason also reported via economic interest forms that either he or Rebekah earned more than $125,000 by consulting for a single public official between 2013 and 2014. That official appears to have been Bentley, given that Rebekah Mason has said that a company she owns, RCM Communications, was paid by Bentley’s re-election campaign to provide consulting, advertising and media placement services to Bentley for Governor 2014.

 Jon Mason disclosed that in 2013 either he or his wife earned gross income of between $25,000 and $50,000 plus an “anticipated annual retainer” of more than $5,000 via the consulting arrangement, which earned one of the Masons another $100,000 to $150,000 in 2014. They have yet to file economic interest forms covering their activities in 2015.

 Rebekah Mason founded RCM in July 2013. Bentley’s campaign committee paid RCM $503,809.13 between July 31, 2013 and Nov. 30, 2015, according to state campaign finance filings.

 Rebekah Mason has said that in her position as senior political adviser to Bentley in 2015 she earned $76,529 for consulting, fees and mileage reimbursements.

 She also confirmed that she was paid $15,000 by the Alabama Council for Excellent Government (ACEGOV), a 501(c)(4) established in February 2015 by Cooper Shattuck, general counsel for the University of Alabama board of trustees and Bentley’s former legal adviser. The non-profit does not have to disclose the sources of money it spends on political campaigns, though some have said ACEGOV may have violated its own charter by giving $2,500 to the Alabama Republican Party.
It's time for the money behind Bentley to step into the light

John Archibald  jarchibald@a.com

I can't help but think of Gov. Robert Bentley's words from the day he announced the formation of ACEGov, the shadowy nonprofit we now know contributed to the pay of Rebekah Caldwell Mason.

He told the Associated Press on the eve of re-election in 2014 that he would set up a charitable organization — later given the saintly sounding name Alabama Council for Excellent Government — to channel unused campaign money to good causes.

Like foster children, he said.

"If I have money left over, it's going to go back to help the state," he said.

What he meant by "help the state," as it turned out, was "help Mason, his crush and former political adviser." Because the fund went to supplement her pay.

If it went to any foster children, well, we haven't seen it yet.

And this, as much as sex or FaceTime flirtation or flights on state planes, is as much a concern as anything in this whole Bentley brouhaha. ACEGov has always been a lights-on, sirens-blaing warning to Alabamians who cared to look at it.

Because it's a dark money group, a 501(c) (4), it does not have to explain itself to the people of Alabama. It does not have to say who donated to help Bentley help himself. It does not have to say how much it paid out to Mason or anyone else.

Call it a flaw in the tax system.

Call it more proof that those with the money in America make the rules about money.

But that doesn't make it right. Mason has said her company got only $15,000 from ACEGov, that the bulk of her money coming from Bentley campaign funds.

But what she says means nothing without a glimpse of her tax records. And of the documentation of money paid into ACEGov itself. Which, by the way, was formed by people with connections to Alabama's biggest mules: the University of Alabama and Alabama Power.

Alabama has a right to know who pays the people working in its highest offices. Sex or no sex.

ACEGov chair Cooper Shattuck — general counsel for the UA Board of Trustees and former Bentley legal adviser — said "information regarding the organization's donors and expenditures will be included on the organization's IRS form 990, which has not yet been prepared. When it is completed, I will be happy to provide it."

Which sounds promising. But if that is the case there is no reason not to reveal it now, when the whole state needs to know.

And in the meantime, the darkness of the dark money remains.

This is how government works in Alabama — and beyond. This is exactly why government does not work any better than it does.

ACEGov — which took down its website Friday — has no obligation under the law to reveal its donors or donations.

Shattuck and board members R.B. Walker and Marquita Davis can turn away and give the old Sgt. Schultz "I know nothing." and the council for excellence will become synonymous with Bentley and failure and deceit.

And so will the organizations connected to it.

Or its officials can do a public service to the state they call home. They can do a service to the people of Alabama, and reveal where the money came, and went. Soon. If there was nothing nefarious, as those in the dark like to whisper, no harm will be done.

We don't need to pay our state political advisers from the shadows, whether they are involved in a relationship with our politicians or not.

That is the same thing as handing them bags of money, as has been done far too often in the past.

It is ugly, and dangerous, and as far from foster children as you can get. The whole basis for this group's "excellence" was a lie, right there at the feet of those Big Mules. It is time to tell the truth.

And ACEGov can become ACTgov. The Alabama Council for Truth in Government. That will be a new day.
Legislature passes General Fund, overrides Bentley veto

Mike Cason mcason@al.com

The Alabama Legislature overrode a veto by Gov. Robert Bentley and passed the General Fund budget without his signature on Tuesday.

The governor said the budget didn’t adequately fund Medicaid.

The Senate voted 22-11 to override his veto, and the House followed with a 71-24 vote.

House budget chairman Steve Clouse, R-Ozark, said the budget was adequate for most agencies.

It calls for spending $1.85 billion from the General Fund, 5 percent more than this year.

Clouse said both House and Senate budget committees plan to hold joint meetings starting next week to study rising costs of Medicaid.

“We want to give everybody on the committees and any other members of the Legislature a chance to zero in on Medicaid,” Clouse said.

Bentley sought a $100 million increase in Medicaid’s General Fund appropriation, to $785 million. The budget passed by the Legislature provides $700 million.

The governor has said he might call a special session on Medicaid funding.

Bentley and Medicaid Commissioner Stephanie Azar will hold a press conference Wednesday to talk about the budget impact on Medicaid.

Azar has said the agency will have to cut optional programs if it doesn’t receive the requested funding, including a home health program, hospice, outpatient dialysis, adult eyeglasses and PACE, a program to help some elderly people avoid having to be admitted to nursing homes.

Azar said the agency will also have to reduce payments to doctors, which could cause some to stop seeing Medicaid patients.

Some Democrats criticized the budget for cutting what they said were critical services, like dialysis.

“That’s life or death,” said Sen. Rodger Smitherman, D-Birmingham. “I want you to understand what we are doing. Your vote is a vote to cut out dialysis for people who need it.”

Executive Director Kimble Forrister of Arise Citizens' Policy Project — an advocacy group for low-income families — said the budget would force “devastating” Medicaid cuts, the Associated Press reported.

“We can’t build a stronger Alabama by taking a sledgehammer to the foundation of our state’s health care system. But that’s just what this inadequate General Fund budget would do,” Forrister said.

The Associated Press contributed to this report.
Time for Legislature to address gambling

Editorial

A defiant McGregor wasted almost no time in making known his disdain for the court’s decision, and he even went so far as to complain about the unfairness of the Poarch Band of Creek Indians operating three casinos in the state with similar machines. But those casinos might as well be in Alaska. The federal courts have ruled that Alabama has no jurisdiction over the tribe’s operations, so they are irrelevant to the issue of whether the games that have been offered at VictoryLand and Greenetrack, the similar facility in Greene County, are legal.

McGregor doesn’t get to nullify the Supreme Court’s ruling because he thinks it’s unfair. But here’s the thing – he doesn’t need to concern himself with the legality of electronic “bingo” because the consequences of doing it anyway are negligible.

Then-Gov. Bob Riley’s illegal gambling task force began raiding bingo facilities around the state in 2009, but we can’t recall an instance of anyone being charged with a crime as a result. In fact, in some cases, bingo facilities were up and running again not long after being raided. Sure, expensive machines have been confiscated, but when one considers the revenue generated by the bingo facilities – especially at “entertainment complexes” like Greenetrack and VictoryLand – this amounts to nothing more than the cost of doing business, especially now that Gov. Robert Bentley has disbanded the task force and decreed that the state will leave it up to local jurisdictions to enforce gambling laws.

So McGregor has even less to worry about, and he knows it.

We say, enough of this silliness.

It’s time for the Legislature to address gambling in a comprehensive way. Either put the issue to a vote, with a proposed amendment that establishes a clear framework for regulation and evenhandedness -- and that does not automatically hand a monopoly to private businesses like VictoryLand and Greenetrack -- or establish meaningful penalties for those who violate existing gambling laws.
Online education partnership questioned

By: Ed Enoch

MONTGOMERY | University of West Alabama trustees met with representatives of Learning House on Monday as part of discussions about a proposed agreement with the for-profit online education company to help enhance the regional institution’s online programs in exchange for a share of the resulting tuition revenues.

The university is exploring the proposal as it tries to retool and increase its online programs in a competitive market, following a trend of declining enrollment at UWA since 2011.

“This is something we think we need. It’s a question of whether we can live with a contract and whether we can afford to do this,” said Alex Saad, finance committee chairman.

The UWA board of trustees' finance committee met with Learning House executives at the university's regional office to discuss the proposed seven-year agreement under which the Kentucky-based company would help UWA develop and market online courses. In exchange, Learning House would keep 48 percent of the revenues from new undergraduate online student enrollment and 25 percent for graduate education courses, an area where UWA already has well-established programs.

Under the agreement, UWA and its faculty would still be in charge of the content of the courses, but Learning House would help develop the online courses based on institutional and market research and best practices. The company would also provide marketing for the program and student services, including admission assistance.

The academic affairs committee recommended sending the proposal to the finance committee in a 3-1 vote in March. The contract would have to be approved by the full board.

The trustees and the university attorney voiced a range of concerns including the ability to see financial information about the company's investment, the contract length, the absence of a commitment to a minimum investment by Learning House, defined performance standards, a non-compete clause or other protections against similar offerings by other institutions served by the company in UWA's market, and some form of a severance clause for the parties.

“My concern is not the fact we need change; I recognize that and think it is a good thing,” trustee Randy Hillman said. "My concern is how we do it."

Learning House executives sought to assure the trustees they were open to ongoing discussions about the proposed contract.

“I think all your points are fair. We will address them,” said Learning House President Todd Zipper.
The company expects to operate at a loss under the deal for the first two years before breaking even and beginning to see a return on its investment in years three and four, Zipper said. The company needs the longer-term agreement to see returns as new courses are developed under the partnership.

The company is willing to tailor the agreements with its partners, said Zipper and Jay Hatcher, vice president of business development for Learning House. Learning House's services are divided generally into combined marketing and enrollment services and course development.

Hillman, the dissenting vote for the proposal on the academic affairs committee, suggested the university review its own funding, marketing and staffing for its online programs before committing to a deal with an outside organization.

“What does it cost us to give this thing a year or two years of us doing this thing in-house and then seeing what happens?” Hillman said.

Lisa Compton, director of recruiting, estimated UWA would need to invest at least $1 million to $3 million in infrastructure and automated systems in addition to staff to provide similar marketing and student services that would be offered by Learning House under the agreement.

Compton is among the team of administrators that has been exploring the option of an outside partner for UWA during the past year.

The university projects, with students enrolled with the help of Learning House, the enrollment and gross revenue will roughly double in five years. The projections prepared by UWA predict the annual gross revenue, currently about $15.2 million, will increase to roughly $30.3 million. The net revenue after scholarships, faculty and other expenses is roughly $12.1 million currently. Under the revenue sharing agreement, the net revenue would remain nearly flat for the first couple of years before increasing to roughly $15.4 million at the end of the five-year projection.

Revenues from the online program have historically been a strong point of the university's finances and used to shore up its general fund budget.

Sharing the revenues remains a point of concern for the trustees. The university administration has argued UWA would see new revenue and increased enrollment under the agreement being considered by the board that it could not likely achieve with its existing resources.

“I think it is going to take three to four years before we start to get a whole lot more (students). The difference is we don't go negative with (Learning House),” Compton said. “The difference is without a greater investment, we won't keep that $12 million.”

Trustee Justin Smith also asked about the tuition-sharing percentage under an agreement without course development. Hatcher estimated the rate would run about 38 percent.

See next page
The UWA administrative team exploring the deal advocated for the course development on the grounds it was critical for the university, which has the bulk of its online catalog in graduate education courses, to diversify and develop new offerings. Compton noted changes in state policies on teacher pay raises and other market changes could precipitously change demand in the market for online education degrees.

"We are in a rapidly changing industry. I don't know may other industries that move as rapidly as online," Compton said.
Who is Kay Ivey? First in line to replace Gov. Robert Bentley has 'varied career' in politics, banking

By: Kelsey Stein

Kay Ivey's political career has been years in the making, from high school leadership roles with Alabama Girls State to one of the state's highest offices several decades later.

Her career has been a steady climb to her current position as lieutenant governor. Though typically not a front-and-center role, and one that has lost power over the past few decades, responsibilities include presiding over debate in the state Senate and, if necessary, stepping in to fill the governor's seat.

Rumors circulated in fall 2015 of an affair between Gov. Robert Bentley and Rebekah Caldwell Mason, his senior political adviser. The allegations returned with full force last week, prompting Bentley to apologize but at the same time deny a "physical affair."

Bentley has said that he does not plan to leave office but several elected officials have called for his removal. The consequence of that, so far mentioned without much detail, would be Ivey taking over as governor, according to the state's line of succession.

Representatives from Ivey's office declined to comment for this article.

In campaign literature compiled by an exploratory committee in 2009, Ivey emphasized transparency, efficiency and the importance of Alabama industry as the cornerstones of her public service.

Political beginnings

Ivey was born Oct. 15, 1944, and grew up in Camden, Ala. – then a town of fewer than 1,000 in Wilcox County where her grandparents operated a cattle farm and a mercantile company.

Ivey's first brush with politics came in 1962. She represented Wilcox County High School at Alabama Girls State, where she served as lieutenant governor. She went on to represent the state in Washington, D.C., where she met Sen. Margaret Chase Smith – the first woman to serve in both Houses of U.S. Congress.

She attended Auburn University, where she was president of her Alpha Gamma Delta pledge class and served in the Student Government Association all four years. She encountered the state's politically powerful while coordinating on-campus efforts for Lurleen Wallace's gubernatorial campaign.

Ivey said this in 2009: "During her campaign visits to Auburn, I had time to discuss topics and interests with her. She even invited me to join her staff and cabinet upon my graduation in May 1967. Hindsight is 20-20! I should have accepted and joined her administration, but instead I chose to get married in August 1967."

Ivey moved with her then-husband to California, where she taught high school for several years. Upon returning to Alabama, she landed a position with Merchants National Bank launching a school relations program to promote financial literacy.

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Her debut on the state political stage was relatively quiet, when in 1979 she left the bank to serve in Gov. Fob James' cabinet. She went on to serve as director of government affairs and communications for the Alabama Commission on Higher Education before running for state treasurer in 2002.

"For 33 years I've been teaching at Alabama Girls State that qualified folks need to offer themselves for public office. Now I'm going to practice what I've been preaching," Ivey told the AP.

Ivey was re-elected in 2006. She served as Romney's Alabama campaign chairwoman during the 2008 presidential race, and last fall she endorsed Jeb Bush, who has since dropped out.

Stepping onto a bigger stage

In May 2009, with term limits precluding another run for treasurer, Ivey announced that she would seek the Republican nomination for governor in 2010 - "It is the only office I intend to seek in 2010," she told a reporter. She was the fourth to join a slate of candidates that included Bentley.

She rebuffed criticism of her management of the state's prepaid college tuition program, or PACT, during her tenure as treasurer, saying few people could have foreseen the economic collapse of U.S. financial markets.

"After the economic downturn caused a negative impact on the PACT program, I purposefully turned my energies ... to finding solutions for students rather than being just another politician," Ivey said in an email to supporters at the time.

Created by the legislature in 1989, PACT allowed parents to pay college tuition years in advance, either in a lump sum or regular payments. The program began struggling in 2000, when increased tuition and attendance were coupled with stock market downturns.

In 2003, Ivey said the PACT program, which allowed parents to pay into an account that the state then invested, remained one of the soundest college savings plans in the country.

"Only market conditions caused this, not staff or the board. It's due solely to the economic conditions of the country," Ivey said.

Regardless of her role in PACT's collapse, the program's failures have haunted Ivey's political career for years, most often in attacks from opponents in election years.

The program stopped selling new contracts in 2008. In 2010, the Legislature passed a plan to help save PACT, pledging a total of $548 million over 13 years starting in 2015.

But after Boozer took office in January 2011, he determined the legislative bailout would not be nearly enough to sustain PACT. In May 2011, the PACT board approved the settlement of the class-action lawsuit filed by contract holders.

The settlement was appealed, and the Legislature had to approve a change in the law before it finally took effect in 2013. Young Boozer, who succeeded Ivey as state treasurer, said a program that was once in a "financial death spiral" is now stable.
The 2009 announcement of Ivey's gubernatorial bid was delayed by ongoing efforts to address the PACT funding crisis, which she said was being stabilized with help from the Retirement Systems of Alabama.

"I have faced this PACT challenge head on in the only way I know how — with honesty, with transparency, with focus and without heated passion and political gamesmanship," she wrote. "I have been tested. I have been challenged. How one handles and responds to pressure during a challenge tells a lot."

Nearly a year later, she dropped out of the governor's race and declared her intention to instead run for lieutenant governor. She trailed fellow Republicans in the polls and in campaign funding.

Saying the change offered her the best chance to provide "efficient leadership" for the state, she set her sights on unseating incumbent Jim Folsom Jr. and becoming the second woman to hold the office.

During the campaign, she accused Folsom of presiding over the most corrupt and gridlocked Senate in Alabama history and creating the financially troubled PACT program.

He fired back by saying PACT lost $480 million in value under Ivey's watch, leading to a legislative rescue that he helped lead.

Though lagging behind Folsom in campaign donations and losing out on several major endorsements from business groups, Ivey defeated Folsom in November 2010. Her victory was part of a Republican takeover of the state's highest offices.

Steve Flowers, a political commentator and former state representative, interviewed Ivey on the eve of the 2012 legislative session. She expressed contentment with her first year presiding over the Senate and optimism about the future.

"Coming into the 2011 session was a challenging and very sobering experience because of the unknown and the uncertainty," Ivey said in the interview. "So many of us were first-timers, brand new."

But that apprehension quickly gave way to confidence and optimism, she said, as it became clear that legislators had come to Montgomery devoted to "causes greater than themselves" with no more petty politics and personal agendas.

She said weekly meetings with the majority and minority leadership fostered teamwork and effective communication.

Ivey outlined to the Associated Press what she saw as the biggest successes of her first term: working with Republican legislators to reduce the size of state government, bringing down unemployment and passing budgets that haven't required midyear cuts due to overspending.

Ivey's second term: 'There is more to do'

In June 2013, she kicked off her campaign for a second term with an announcement on the Capitol steps. Since she began presiding over the Senate, she said, the Legislature had worked with Bentley to downsize government, pass balanced budgets and sustain essential state services.
"Alabama is in better shape now than it was then, and yet there is more to do," she said at the time.

She defeated GOP challenger Stan Cooke in the primary, despite his attacks on her performance and criticism of what he saw as a largely passive role in state government.

Ivey countered by saying Bentley had entrusted her with important duties, including leading the commission he appointed in 2011 to find ways to streamline state government and reduce expenses, as well as appointing her to the advisory committee that decides which road and bridge projects should share in the $1 billion in the Alabama Transportation Rehabilitation and Improvement Program.

She went on to defeat Democrat James Fields in November 2014.

Now, with less than two years left in her second term, Ivey's name has arisen as commentators and legislators have discussed the rocky remainder of Bentley's term. Many were reticent to speculate about what will happen in the coming weeks and months.

Flowers says that he does not believe Bentley will resign, but, if for some reason Ivey had to step in, she is qualified to fill the position.

Her resume is a laundry list of governmental and civic responsibilities, from teaching schoolchildren about managing finances to presiding over the Senate.

"She's had a varied career," Flowers said. "She's had a career that's been considered a good background for being governor. Her qualifications stack up as well as anybody."

Whether Bentley finishes out his term or if Ivey were to do so may not have much impact, Flowers said. He expects that soon after the presidential race is over in November, eyes will turn to 2018 state elections.

"The whole focus is going to be 'Who's the next governor?'" he said.
U.S. CENSUS ESTIMATES

Tuscaloosa County, metro area grow

Pickens County growth rate among nation's top 100

By Jason Morton
Staff Writer

Tuscaloosa County and the Tuscaloosa metropolitan area grew slightly last year, according to new U.S. Census Bureau population estimates released in late March.

Census estimates said Tuscaloosa County grew by 1,457 residents— from 202,510 to 203,967— between July 1, 2014 and July 1, 2015.

During that same period, the Tuscaloosa metropolitan area of Tuscaloosa, Pickens and Hale counties, grew from 237,989 residents to 239,908, an increase of by 1,919.

SEE GROWTH, A9

West Alabama’s population

Here’s a look at the U.S. Census Bureau’s latest population estimates for the 10 counties in West Alabama along with the change in population between July 1, 2014, and July 1, 2015.

- Greene: 8,553 - 8,479, down 74
- Hale: 15,131 - 15,068, down 63
- Lamar: 14,050 - 13,886, down 164
- Marengo: 20,136 - 20,028, down 108
- Perry: 9,855 - 9,652, down 203
- Pickens: 20,339 - 20,864, up 525
- Sumter: 13,243 - 13,103, up 140
- Tuscaloosa: 202,510 - 203,976, up 1,467

GROWTH

From Page A1

According to the Census Bureau, metropolitan statistical areas are geographic entities created by the U.S. Office of Management and Budget for use by federal statistical agencies in collecting, compiling and publishing federal statistics.

Officials with both the city and county of Tuscaloosa attributed the population increase to the area’s automotive industry that is led by the Mercedes-Benz U.S. International manufacturing plant in Vance.

“We’re going to continue to grow as we continue to recruit industry into the community,” said Tuscaloosa County Probate Judge and County Commission Chairman Hardy McCollum. He noted the population growth has occurred since Mercedes announced it was coming to the Tuscaloosa area in 1993.

Tuscaloosa Mayor Walt Maddox agreed.

“It’s a combination of the growth of the University of Alabama and the new industries we’ve seen related to the growth of Mercedes,” he said.

Dozens of automotive suppliers have opened plants in the Tuscaloosa region since Mercedes. OPone of the most recent suppliers to the join the region is Boltz Werke GmbH, a German company that is expected to create 350 new jobs when it opens a $40 million manufacturing plant in Tuscaloosa's Airport Development Park.

This plant will supply specialized-molded plastic and chrome parts to Mercedes and other automakers across the state and the Southeast.

One West Alabama county made the Census Bureau’s list of 100 fastest growing counties in the nation.

Pickens County saw its population increase 2.6 percent—from 20,339 people to 20,864, or an increase of 525 residents— according to Census estimates.

See next page
Pickens County Commission Chairman Frederick Kennedy also attributed his county's growth to industry, but not the automotive kind.

The Federal Correctional Institution in Aliceville, which is actually located between Aliceville and Pickensville, opened in 2013 and brought some new employees to the area.

But Kennedy said not every worker there lives in Pickens County.

"It's a positive when you look at having that type of industry coming in," he said, "but we didn't have housing and places for them to stay while they're working here."

He said a better plan to have housing ready for the new employees would have helped retain some new Pickens County residents. Instead, many of the workers commute daily from the Tuscaloosa or Columbus, Miss., areas.

But steps are in place to correct that, he said.

Kennedy said a recent partnership between the Pickens County school system and Bevill State Community College led to the opening of a new vocational center.

This center will provide education and training for high school students in a number of fields, including law enforcement and prison management.

—Reach Jason Morton at jason.morton@tuscaloosanews.com or 205-722-0200.
LOOKING BACK

UA's first A-Day was 100 years ago

The headline of the April 10, 1916, Tuscaloosa News and Times Gazette read: "Bully" VandeGraaff is Best All-Round Athlete at the Meet.

The "Meet" was the first ever A-Day at the University of Alabama. Unlike recent A-Days, there was no squad football game played. There were, however, interclass rivalries in a track meet and other sports. This is where the great football hero, VandeGraaff, proved himself the best all-round athlete. He scored the most points in the meet held on a sultry day that prevented athletes from performing at their best. His class, the seniors, won the meet.

VandeGraaff was crowned champion athlete by Lucile Warley of Mobile who had been elected "A-Queen."

The morning events were largely boxing and wrestling matches and featured about fifty girls of the Stafford School dressed in crimson and white. The drill closed with the formation of the letter "A" in the middle of the baseball diamond.
MENTAL HEALTH

Campaign plants seed for conversation

There’s a reason for those metal sunflowers around town

By Leïla Beem Núñez
Special to The Tuscaloosa News

Five big metal sunflowers will be on display through April 13 at Tuscaloosa participating businesses, restaurants and organizations in an effort to raise awareness about mental health in West Alabama.

"It’s basically a visual for people to say, ‘Hey, what’s that all about?’ It’s a good conversation starter," said Kathryn Adams, administrative assistant with the Tuscaloosa Mental Health Alliance.

Adams said the campaign, dubbed Plant the Seed, is the brainchild of senior public relations students at the University of Alabama. The students chose to create a public relations campaign for the Tuscaloosa Mental Health Alliance as part of a class assignment.

The goal of Plant the Seed is to get people talking about mental health as much as they talk about physical health, Adams said.

The way the campaign works is that participating businesses or organizations hold one of the flowers for 24 hours and donate $90 to the Tuscaloosa Mental Health Alliance. After the time is up, a business can challenge another-business to partake in Plant the Seed by passing the flower on to them. Each flower has a tag with information about the organization and its current campaign.

Seven establishments,

SEE SEED, B3
including Innisfree Irish Pub, Moe's Original BBQ, the Avenue Pub and Kappa Alpha Theta sorority at UA, have participated in the Plant the Seed campaign so far. All proceeds go toward the alliance's efforts to solve mental health issues in the community.

The nonprofit networking organization is comprised of healthcare providers, community leaders and local residents. Indian Rivers Mental Health Center, Tuscaloosa VA Medical Center and West Alabama AIDS Outreach are among the affiliated organizations. Adams said the alliance meets once a month to discuss services provided by each agency and resources available, so that the various organizations have an understanding of how best to help clients with issues ranging from depression to anxiety to bipolar and mood disorders.

"We just want to make sure that anybody in the community dealing with the challenges and stigmas of mental illness receives the care and therapy and support they need," Adams said.

UA senior and public relations student Maya Jansen, who helped create the Plant the Seed for her class, said the results of the campaign have been positive so far.

"It's been great to see all the restaurants and businesses and organizations that have been so willing to help us," Jansen said. "The community has been really good about offering support."

The campaign began on March 29 and will end with an event at Five Bar downtown from 5 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. April 13. Tuscaloosa County Mental Health Commissioner Jim Perdue will speak at the event. Appetizers will cost $5 and wine will be sold at half the regular price.
DEVELOPMENT

Plan calls for condos near stadium

Proposal is for upscale units targeting UA alumni

By Jason Morton
Staff Writer

Developers behind a proposed condominium project near Bryant-Denny Stadium are hoping that, if all goes according to plan, construction can begin by the end of this year.

Plans for Westgate, proposed by Spectrum Capital of Jackson, Miss., doing business as Spectrum Tide LLC, will require the rezoning of a 2.16-acre tract on Eighth Street between 12th and Wallace Wade avenues.

Originally described as separate student apartment buildings, the developers said Wednesday that the project would have one condominium building with 68 units of two-, three- or four-bedroom.

Details on the project were unclear at City Council meeting on Tuesday, which prompted Matt Summers, vice president of real estate and development for Spectrum Capital, to reach out and clarify some of the misconceptions.

"We’re going to build a really good-looking project that’s going to complement Bryant-Denny Stadium," Summers said.

Summers said that Spectrum Capital was seeking to rezone the tract back to its original zoning of RMF-2U to eliminate the requirement for retail space.

Retail will not work in that area because the property is blocks away from any kind of

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similar retail shops and lacks adequate parking for shoppers, he said.

Spectrum Capital has developed a number of other retail projects — The Outlets of Mississippi near Jackson and Bass Pro Shops in Pearl, Miss., among others that he said gives the company an understanding of what an area needs to sustain successful retail development.

Spectrum Capital has owned the property since 2006 and originally planned to develop Dynasty Park, a proposed $110 million-$115 million development that envisioned a T-shaped 14-story tower with a 250-room hotel and another section with 65 condominiums. That proposal also called for 19,000 square feet of retail space and a 738-space parking garage.

Plans for Dynasty Park were first proposed in 2008 and, at one time, it was expected to be complete by 2011.

But Summers said city officials later became "no longer enthusiastic" about a project of that size near the stadium and asked his company to scale it back.

"So, that's what we did and that's what we've been working on for the past year," Summers said.

A public hearing and final vote on the site's rezoning is set for at 6 p.m. May 3 in the council chambers at City Hall, and Summers said the company plans to go through the planned-unit development process, which will push back the project 18-month construction timeline even further.

Westgate would replace a series of aging structures with a new, upscale development marketed toward University of Alabama alumni, Summers said.

"I don't think anyone is enthusiastic about stadium apartments being on the site," he said. "And it's really going to improve the look of the neighborhood in that part of Tuscaloosa."
Rezoning for student apartments sought

7 apartment buildings near stadium proposed

By Jason Morton
Staff Writer

City officials on Tuesday began the initial process of approving a rezoning request for a multi-building apartment complex next to Bryant-Denny Stadium.

Spectrum Tide LLC has requested the rezoning for a planned development that will have seven apartment buildings on Eighth Street between 12th and Wallace Wade avenues.

But to move forward with the plans as currently designed, the developers need the City Council to give final approval to rezone the 2.16-acre tract to RMF-2U, which eliminates the requirement

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for the ground floor to have retail, which is required under area's existing BNU zoning.

The council formally introduced the zoning amendment to do just that on Tuesday. A public hearing and final vote is set for May 3 at 6 p.m. in the council chambers at City Hall.

The city's Planning and Zoning Commission gave its blessing for the rezoning on March 21, but Councilman Eddie Pugh had some questions Tuesday about what Spectrum Park all will entail.

No finalized plans for the project were available Tuesday, but under the requested zoning, the developers would be allowed to place up to five bedrooms per apartment unit, said Eric Thompson, senior planner in the city's Office of Planning and Development Services.

The existing buildings on the 2.16 acres will not be torn down and work on Spectrum Park will not begin for at least a month to six weeks, mainly because of legal requirements affiliated with the rezoning process.

Spectrum Park is planned for the site once eyed for Dynasty Park, a proposed $110 million-$115 million development that envisioned a T-shaped 14-story tower with a 250-room hotel and another section with 65 condominiums.

That proposal also called for a 19,000 square feet of retail space and a 738-space parking garage.

Plans for Dynasty Park were first proposed in 2008 and, at one time, it was expected to be complete by 2011. But the project never materialize, and the older structures that it would have replaced remain.

—Reach Jason Morton at jason.morton@tuscaloosanews.com or 205-722-0200.
ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES

Moundville in contest to pick best

People can vote for favorites online

By Ed Enoch
Staff Writer

Moundville Archaeological Park is in the running in a contest to choose the country’s best archaeological site.

Moundville is among 20 sites competing in USA Today’s 10 Best Readers’ Choice Best Archaeological Site. The park south of Tuscaloosa was among the sites selected based on expert consensus, geographic diversity and quality of the visitor experience, according to the contest.

The four-week contest allows people to vote online at the 10Best website once a day for their favorite site. Voting ends April 11 at 11:59 a.m. EDT. The winners will be announced on the 10Best website on April 15 at noon EDT.

The other sites in the contest include Aztec Ruins National Monument, Aztec, New Mexico; Bandelier National Monument, Los Alamos, New Mexico; Cahokia Mounds State Historic Site, Collinsville, Illinois; Chaco Culture National Historical Park, Nageezi, New Mexico; First Peoples Buffalo Jump State Park, Ulm, Montana; Horseshoe Canyon Great Gallery, Moab, Utah; Hudson-Meng Bison Kill Site, Crawford, Nebraska; Lava Beds National Monument, Tulelake, California; Legend Rock Petroglyph Site, Thermopolis, Wyoming; Meadowcroft Rockshelter and Historic Village, Avella, Pennsylvania; Medicine Wheel National Historic Landmark, Big Horn County, Wyoming; Mesa Verde National Park, Mesa Verde, Colorado;

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CONTEST
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Newspaper Rock State Historic Monument, San Juan County, Utah; Ocmulgee National Monument, Macon, Georgia; Ozette Archaeological Site, Neah Bay, Washington; Poverty Point National Monument, Pioneer, Louisiana; Seminole Canyon State Park and Historic Site, Comstock, Texas; Serpent Mound, Peebles, Ohio; and Wupatki National Monument, Flagstaff, Arizona.

On the web:
www.10best.com/awards/travel/best-archaeological-site/
By Aaron Suttles
Sports Writer

It was a big season for the University of Alabama football program in 2015, as it hurdled challenges after challenge to capture conference and national championships.

The athletic department signed some big checks as a result, too.

The UA coaching staff, including head coach Nick Saban and his nine on-the-field assistant coaches, netted a total of more than $1.65 million in bonuses for the team's SEC title and College Football Playoff national championship.

In total, UA paid out more than $2.2 million in bonuses to more than 60 athletic department staff members for the championships according to records obtained by The Tuscaloosa News under open records law requests. The bonuses ranged from up to $525,000 to $3,000.

Saban earned $1,250,000 for the program's 25th SEC championship and another $400,000 for its national championship by virtue of a 45-40 victory over Clemson, his fourth national title in his nine seasons as the Alabama head coach.

Saban was already scheduled to earn more than $7 million in salary, per his contract — more than any other college football coach in the country. His $525,000 bonus is more than 19 FBS head coaches' yearly salaries, according to the USA Today annual coaching salaries database.

Now-departed defensive coordinator Kirby Smart also profited greatly from the wins, earning a total of $310,000 ($60,000 for the SEC championship and $250,000 for the national title). Smart earned $1.5 million in salary (not including bonuses) before accepting the Georgia head coaching staff with an annual salary of $3.75 million.

For the SEC championship, the university paid out nearly $300,000 to 20 coaches and support staff members. A total of $1.8 million was paid out to 60 employees for the national title.

Saban and his on-the-field assistants accounted for 74 percent of the total bonuses paid by the athletic department.

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BONUSES
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Offensive coordinator Lane Kiffin took home a bonus of nearly $150,000. Other assistants who received bonuses that topped $100,000 were offensive line coach Mario Cristobal ($113,300.01), defensive backs coach Mel Tucker ($110,000.01) and defensive line coach Bo Davis ($104,500.01).

Bill Battle, the director of athletics, earned $50,000 for the national title win.

—Reach Aaron Suttles at aaron@tidesports.com or at 205-722-0229.
LOCAL ECONOMY

UA students spend $366M a year in Tuscaloosa

Those living off campus spend five times more than those in dorms.

By Drew Taylor
Staff Writer

Students at the University of Alabama have a significant role in the businesses that come to the city of Tuscaloosa, according to local commerce experts.

During the recent “State of the Economy” luncheon at the Hotel Capstone, Al Spencer of the Chamber of Commerce for West Alabama said 2015 was a good year for new retail in Tuscaloosa and that students were part of the reason for that growth.

UA students pump nearly $366 million a year into the Tuscaloosa economy, excluding money spent on campus, he said.

“The growth of the university is certainly in that vein,” Spencer said.

Since 2001, UA’s student population doubled from 18,582 to an estimated 37,100 students this academic year.

Spencer, who is the chamber’s vice president of economic development and public policy, said the 5 percent year-to-year growth is crucial to understanding two types of students: in-state students and out-of-state students.

“This is important because out-of-state students have a different spending patte-ron,” he said.

Out-of-state students are more likely to buy more things in town as a convenience rather than bringing a lot of things with them, he said.

“You may notice we have a lot of mattress stores in town,” Spencer joked. “We have more on the way.”

ECONOMY

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From 2007 to 2015, the number of out-of-state students has jumped from around 25 percent UA’s enrollment to 54 percent today.

Spencer noted there are also differences in spending between students who live on campus and those who living off campus.

“According to a report on student shopping patterns by the Institute of Social Science Research and the chamber, students living off campus will on average spend $1,357 per month, compared with an average of $257 per month for students living on campus. Total student spending comes to about $366 million per year.

“That is a very significant thing to notice,” he said.

Spencer said the report, which was initially published in Spring 2011, found that students generally live in Tuscaloosa approximately 10 months out of the year. The report was revised with the help of the chamber this past summer to reflect spending patterns.

“We have been able to use that data quite successfully in recruiting retail to our market,” he said.

According to the chamber, nearly 40 different stores opened in the Tuscaloosa market since 2015. The largest portion of retail stores in Tuscaloosa tend to be grocery stores, clothing stores and sporting goods stores.

—Reach Drew Taylor at drew.taylor@tuscaloosanews.com or 205-722-0204.
Is UA joining ‘The Great Renaming Craze’?

It was an article in the Washington Post that alerted me to efforts at the University of Alabama (my alma mater) to join in what has been called “The Great Renaming Craze of 2015-16.”

All over this fair land of ours, people are demanding that the names of flawed public figures be removed from the buildings and streets and other places where they were put by people who didn’t know the honoree was flawed, or didn’t think the flaws were much to write home about, or in some cases had the same flaws themselves.

At Yale, students are demanding that Calhoun College be renamed because pro-slavery advocate John C. Calhoun was flawed.

At Princeton, students want Woodrow Wilson’s name taken off the School of Public and International Affairs because Wilson was flawed.

And now a petition is circulating at UA to have Morgan Hall, which is named after secessionist, Confederate general, U.S. senator and ardent white supremacist John Tyler Morgan, renamed to honor Harper Lee.

I am all for naming something for Harper Lee, but considering her love for Alabama football, a building in the university’s ever-expanding athletic complex might be more appropriate.

However, when it comes to taking down one name and putting up another, let me say up front, as a historian, I think it is a bad idea.

Why?

Because renaming allows us to ignore the reason things were named for flawed folks in the first place.

Renaming purges history and purges history is bad history.

Consider what might happen if this purging were extended to a figure whose flaws are much better documented than those of Morgan. Bibb Graves.

Twice governor of Alabama (1927-31 and 1934-39), Bibb Graves was also the Exalted Cyclops of the Montgomery chapter of the Ku Klux Klan.

Yet nine universities in this state have buildings named after Graves, and two of the nine are historically black — Alabama State and Alabama A&M.

Since racism is the flaw most frequently cited today when renaming is proposed, if someone stumbled across Graves’ Klan career and decided he was no longer worthy, who Bibb Graves was and why his name was there could be conveniently, and cheerfully, ignored.

Also ignored would be the inconvenient fact that Bibb Graves’ career was about more than race and the hallmark was done despite his Klan credentials, not because of them.

Graves was a governor who saw the Klan as a refuge for working class whites who had been cut out of the political process by the bankers, industrialists, planters and such — the men that Graves called the “Big Mules.”

The “Big Mules” hated the Klan not because of its racism, which at the time most of them shared, but because it gave voice to many who were almost as voiceless as black Alabamians.

As a Klansman, Graves could count on Klan votes and in return for their support he promoted programs that benefitted that constituency. That these programs also benefited African-Americans only adds to the complexity of the time and of the man.

Take, for example, education.

Under Graves, the state education budget more than doubled, public schools were required to teach seven months out of the year (many were open fewer) and the state educational administration was reorganized to include a Division of Negro Education, with a black director — a “liberal” even “radical” move at the time.

Teacher salaries were also raised, and in higher education, colleges were expanded, more faculty were hired, more programs were offered and, of course, more buildings were built.

And named.

If Alabama, and Alabamians, get caught up in the “Great Renaming Craze” in an effort to erase our flawed past, will what was accomplished in that past be erased as well? History should not be something manipulated to make us feel good about ourselves. Instead, history should be acknowledged for what it is, or was, for like it or not, we are a consequence of it.

Moreover, like it or not, what happened in the past seldom revolved around a single issue — like, for example, racism.

So it follows that using a single issue to judge a person’s career and contributions, enables, indeed encourages, us to ignore those things that do not fit neatly into our own narrow notion of what is or is not acceptable today.

But beware, for to ignore the racial dimensions of the careers of men like Graves encourages the same narrow-mindedness.

So keep the names on those buildings, and on those other public places and institutions. Add an historical marker explaining the naming and why later generations objected, so that together they, the name and the marker, would stand as monuments to our willingness to confront a past that is not always heroic and leaders who were as flawed as we all are.

With one reservation.

If leaving things as they are has just the opposite effect, if it causes us to gloss over past failings and ignore shortcomings, if there is no lesson to be learned from them being there, then get on with the renaming.

And in a decade or so, they will be renamed again.

—Harvey F. Jackson III is professor emeritus of History at Jacksonville State University. This article is based on remarks he made when he received the 2016 Clarence E. Cason award for Nonfiction Writing from the University of Alabama College of Communication & Information Sciences.
Experts say dialog needed between police, community

Symposium focuses on rights and reforms

By Nick Privitera
Special to The Tuscaloosa News

Tuscaloosa Police Chief Steve Anderson said Friday that better training could be one of the keys to improving the relationship between the community and police.

Anderson was one of several law enforcement professionals and law professors who attended a Friday symposium hosted by the Alabama Civil Rights and Civil Liberties Law Review at the University of Alabama School of Law. The symposium focused on civil rights, law enforcement reform and community policing in the wake of the death of Michael Brown, the 18-year-old whose 2014 shooting police in Ferguson, Missouri, ignited protests that lasted for weeks.

Anderson said recent police-involved shootings have led him to re-examine his officers’ preparations.

“Having been through a lot of the things we’ve been through in the last six to nine months, it has definitely shifted my focus on what I feel we need to be looking at from a training perspective for our police officers,” Anderson said.

Topics covered during the symposium included recognizing racial biases in law enforcement practices, the militarization of police forces and how to reconcile differences between critics of police officers and the officers themselves.

Kira Fonteneau of the Jefferson County Community Law Office said that there needs to be a dialog between community members and the police force.

“We probably need to be talking about how race is affecting our communities and police, and we need to be really, really honest with ourselves about whether or not we actually harbor bias,” Fonteneau said.

Kandice Pickett, a Tuscaloosa County deputy district attorney, urged people to come to law enforcement with their ideas for improvement.

“If you are in a community that you feel is over-policed, what is the other option? Do you want less police presence or do you want police presence that is more tailored to a certain time of the day? A certain day of the week? And that is information that only you, as members of that community, can give law enforcement,” Pickett said.

Others who spoke at the symposium included Praveen Krishna, a U.S. assistant attorney, and Yuri Linentsky, a law professor at the University of Alabama and former police officer.
Virginia Van der Veer Hamilton
September 7, 1921 - April 4, 2016

Virginia Van der Veer Hamilton was born in Kansas City, MO, on September 7, 1921, and died in Birmingham, AL, on April 4, 2016. Early in her life, her parents, McClellan (Ted) and Dorothy Rainold Van der Veer, moved to the Roebuck Springs neighborhood of Birmingham, where she attended private school at the home of Roland Frye and finished public school at Woodlawn High School. She obtained her B.A. and M.A. degrees from Birmingham-Southern College, where she was inducted into Phi Beta Kappa. During World War II, she worked as a staff writer for Associated Press in Washington, D.C., continuing in the journalistic tradition of her father, a distinguished Birmingham newspaper man.

She rose to women's beat reporter at the Truman White House. After her marriage to Lowell (Larry) Hamilton and relocation to Birmingham, she became a reporter for the Birmingham News from 1948-1950.

Virginia, in 1961, became the second woman to earn a Ph.D. in history from the University of Alabama despite one professor's warning that a married woman with children "cannot possibly do it." Her teaching career included the University of Montevallo (1951-1955) and Birmingham-Southern College (1955-1965), before becoming the tenth person hired by what became UAB. She taught there for twenty-five years, chaired the History Department for a decade, and earned the rank of University Scholar.

Professor Hamilton was considered the premier Alabama historian of her generation. Author of seven books about the state and three volumes of memoirs, she also authored prize-winning essays published in The New York Times, International Herald-

Tribune, American Heritage and Travel-Holiday. Honors included election as Fellow of the Society of American Historians, Academy of Honor of Business and Professional Women, Alabama Humanities Foundation Award, the Alabama Association of Historians John F. Ramsey Award for teaching and writing, and an honorary Doctor of Letters from UAB.

Virginia most enjoyed writing about Alabama's liberal political tradition, of which she was a proud part. In her biographies of Alabama senators Hugo Black and Lister Hill, her 1976 Bicentennial History of Alabama, and her 4th and 9th grade Alabama history textbooks, she insisted that women, native Americans, and black Americans really did exist in Alabama and left important marks on the state's history. Two of Virginia's most prized accomplishments were her honest and balanced accounts of slavery, especially in her textbooks, and her example in leading the way for women to function as full and valued members of the academic community.

Virginia is survived by her beloved grandson Alex Hamilton and her mother, Telura Hamilton. She was predeceased by her parents, her husband of 45 years, her daughter, Dr. Carol Hamilton and her son, David Hamilton. She was blessed during the latter part of her life to have the expert and affectionate care of Pamela French, Nakeisha Gilbert, and Nora Stell. A memorial service for Dr. Hamilton will be held at the Independent Presbyterian Church Chapel, 3100 Highland Avenue (35205), on April 8 at 3:30 p.m. In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to Independent Presbyterian Church, New Beacon Hospice or to the charity of your choice.
CURRENT ROOMMATE WEIGHS IN

‘Real World’ seeks honest, outgoing cast

Auditions for show being held Wednesday on UA campus

By Mark Hughes Cobb
Staff Writer

In the 1992 debut season of MTV’s “The Real World,” Birmingham native Julie Oliver was chosen to be among the stranger-roommates filmed talking, fighting, drinking, loving and otherwise living it up in the same house.

There hasn’t been an Alabamian on the show since, but for its 32nd season—the show, re-dubbed “Real World” in 2014, sometimes airs more than one season per year—that could change. Bunim-Murray Productions will visit the University of Alabama campus Wednesday, holding open auditions for the next version of the show, reportedly set in Miami. The call will be 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. in the Ferguson Center’s rooms 3107 and 3108.

SEE REAL WORLD, A4

Want to try out?

What: Open auditions for MTV’s “Real World”

When: 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Wednesday

Where: Ferguson Center rooms 3107 and 3108 on the University of Alabama campus

More: Bring a recent picture, which won’t be returned, and photo ID. Applicants must be 21 or older by June of this year, and appear to be between the ages of 20 and 24.

Online: For those who can’t make it to the open call, applications also will be accepted via email; see www.bmpcasting.com/casting/realworld for more.

Sabrina Kennedy, a singer from Massachusetts, is one of the roommates on the current season of MTV’s “Real World: Go Big or Go Home.” MTV

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Though it hasn’t been decided yet, that upcoming show could tack on a theme, as the last three have: “Real World: Ex-Plosion” saw cast member’s exes move in as extra roommates; “Real World: Skeletons” brought skeletons — unfinished business — out of the closet; and the current-running “Real World: Go Big or Go Home” is presenting a series of challenges. In both individual and team-based missions, if a cast member fails, he or she will be booted out, and a runner-up will move in.

Sabrina Kennedy, a singer from Massachusetts, landed one of the slots on “Go Big or Go Home” after auditioning in Boston.

“I had some labels looking at me, and they told me I needed to build up my fan base,” Kennedy said. “I saw the auditions and said I’m just gonna go for it.”

Like those coming up at UA, those were open calls for anyone 21 and up, “appearing to be between 20 and 24.”

“You’re kinda like cattle,” she said. “There are a bunch of people to interview you, and you start in a group. It’s round after another round after another round.

... It was very strenuous, and very stressful, because you’re just sitting there, and you don’t know when they’re going to call you.”

But she hung in.

“And then before I know it, I’m on a flight to Vegas.”

Kennedy, who went into her audition with no real preparation, advises would-be “Real World”-ers to be fun, honest and outgoing.

“You just have to kind of live in the moment and be who you are,” she said. At one point, some girls mentioned that they were bisexual, which Kennedy doubted.

“A lot of people make up stuff to be cool,” she said. “But you’re going to be on national television; they’re going to find out.”

Producers told Kennedy they liked her honesty and affability.
“And they loved the fact that I was adopted and didn’t know my biological parents. If you have a cool storyline, you’re golden in this process,” she said, laughing.

She also advised that only those who really want it should answer the call.

“Some folks were there just trying out to see if they could get it,” Kennedy said. “If you don’t want it, don’t take someone else’s time.”

Although the filming is obviously edited for broadcast, much of what you see is what they got, she said. The cast traveled straight to its first challenge, leaping out of a hot-air balloon, even before hitting hotel-headquarters. The roommates met for the first time out in the desert.

As a singer, she’s used to performing for crowds, but that’s for minutes at a time, on a stage. Here, she’s on display virtually 24-7. The show does edit to the best moments, of course, but “...there’s a perception it’s nothing but partying and having a real good time; but ours is more about going after your dreams. You’ll see that more once the episodes get in-depth.”

The roommates also weren’t told, until arrival, about the show’s mission theme.

“I thought I was just going to go live in a house with seven strangers,” she said. “The fact that I could possibly go home was kinda scary, with every mission. It’s sort of a cross between ‘Survivor,’ ‘The Challenge’ (another MTV show) and ‘Real World.’ A lot of people were kinda skeptical about the theme, but it gives us all more of a storyline.”

Other stops on the casting-call tour include Miami, Orlando, San Francisco, Boston, Phoenix and Philadelphia, and other college towns such as Ann Arbor, Mich., Ames, Iowa, and Morgantown, W.Va.
UAB

Pig organs eyed for transplants in humans

New program could save lives, end long wait for organs

By Ed Enoch
Staff Writer

BIRMINGHAM | The University of Alabama at Birmingham is partnering with a private biotechnology company to launch a new organ transplantation program with the goal of developing organs from genetically-modified pigs as a way to help meet the demand for human transplants.

“The biggest problem in transplantation is not enough organs. In this state alone, we have over 3,500 people awaiting organ transplantation,” said Devin Eckhoff, director of UAB’s Division of Transplantation. “We have always tried to find new ways to get people more organs ... but regardless of what method we use, or how we push the envelope to get more donors, there will never be enough.”

At UAB alone, 3,000 patients were on the waiting list for a kidney, said UAB Medical School Dean Selwyn Vickers said.

Vickers, Eckhoff and Joseph Tector, the expert recruited to lead UAB’s new xenotransplantation program, believe xenotransplantation, implanting tissue from animal sources into humans, could help meet the demand and save lives. The men also believe the program, which was officially announced Friday, could position UAB as leading center in the field nationally and internationally.

“I think it is very realistic to

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"To some extent it is going to be breaking new ground, so we are going to have to see how long (FDA approval) takes. If it goes how we expect, we are talking about putting the transplants in sometime in the next three years in a small, very focused trial to demonstrate feasibility."

—Joseph Tector, Xenotransplantation Expert

The University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB) recruited Tector, a leading liver transplant surgeon with clinical expertise in multivisceral and small bowel transplantation, from Indiana University.

"We think we are creating an incubator of people with expertise with xenotransplantation at UAB. Dr. Tector is the first," Eckhoff said. "We hope to recruit a couple of more researchers."

The university announced on Friday it had secured a five-year, $19.5 million grant from biotechnology company United Therapeutics Corporation, which is partnering with the new program to develop the genetically-modified transplant organs from pigs. The use of pig tissue has a well-established history, from heart valves to skin grafts.

UAB began discussing the possibility of the partnership with United Therapeutics about 18 months ago, Eckhoff said.

The announcement followed approval by the UA System board of trustees earlier on Friday of a preliminary plan for a $5 million, 15,400 square-foot facility off campus to house the program.

The facility is designed to produce "clean" pigs that will meet the U.S. Food and Drug Administration standards to be used in trials in humans, Tector said. The site will include clinical lab space as well as warehouse space for the pigs, Eckhoff said. The team hopes to have the site, about 30 miles off campus, within a year, Eckhoff said.

The program will work with genetically-modified pigs that are being developed both by United Therapeutics and Tector, Eckhoff said.

Eckhoff believes the team can achieve the goal of a successful transplant based on positive preliminary research.

"There have been some new techniques developed that allow you to change the DNA and change what is on the surface of pigs' cells to make them more suitable for transplantation in humans," Eckhoff said.

The ability to modify the genes of the pigs, specifically in relation to the cell surfaces, is what makes the research promising. By changing the cell surface, the researchers can influence the immune response.

"Now what you are starting to see is rejection is going to be much more like the rejection that happens when you put an organ from one human into another, so that is a situation that we have a great deal of experience controlling," Tector said.

If the trials are successful, it would lead to efforts to scale up the program to produce the pigs for organ transplants on a commercial scale, Eckhoff said.

"It would position us to be a leading center for 10-20 years," Eckhoff said.

The ability to modify the genes of the pigs, specifically in relation to the cell surfaces, is what makes the research promising. By changing the cell surface, the researchers can influence the immune response.
A pioneering historian

UAB historian, AP reporter covered FDR, wrote 10 books about Alabama

Greg Garrison ggarrison@al.com

Virginia Van Der Veer Hamilton, who wrote 10 books including a history of Alabama and biographies of Supreme Court Justice Hugo Black and U.S. Sen. Lister Hill, paved the way for women writing about history, her contemporaries say.

Hamilton, a retired UAB professor of history and former chair of the department for a decade, died April 4. She was 94.

“She was very interested in the issues of civil rights and human rights,” said Odessa Woodruff, founding president of the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute.

“She was a progressive historian. She was very proud of the books she wrote for the Alabama school curriculum. She believed the earlier you introduced kids to history, the better they would be able to interpret events of the day. She thought history was neglected or taught poorly in early grades. She called attention to the neglect of telling positive stories about Native Americans and African-Americans.”


“They still stand as the definitive works on those two men,” said Margaret Armbruster, retired UAB history professor.

Hamilton wrote textbooks that were used to teach Alabama history in fourth and ninth grades, Armbruster said.

Hamilton also wrote a bicentennial history of Alabama in 1976 for WW Norton & Co., which commissioned histories for all 50 states. Hamilton’s history of Alabama was judged the best of the 50 by the American Association for State and Local History, Armbruster said.

“She always said she wanted to write history in a way that people would actually read it,” Armbruster said.

Hamilton’s last book was a 2009 memoir, “Teddy’s Child,” about her childhood among Birmingham’s elite, and it was praised by Harper Lee, the author of "To Kill a Mockingbird.

Lee wrote a letter to the publisher, NewSouth, for Hamilton. “It’s beautiful. I loved your book” Lee wrote.

JOURNALISM BACKGROUND

Hamilton’s engaging writing style came from her background as a journalist for The Associated Press and The Birmingham News, Armbruster said.

In the mid-1940s, Hamilton was among the first female newspaper reporters ever assigned to Capital Hill. She knew President Harry Truman and his wife, Bess, and covered the funeral procession of President Franklin D. Roosevelt for The Associated Press in 1945. She covered the Truman White House as the “women’s beat” reporter.

Her father, McClellan “Ted” Van Der Veer, wrote editorials for The Birmingham News, and Virginia went to work with him as a reporter at the News from 1948 to 1956.

She was among the first women to pursue a doctorate in history at the University of Alabama, where her male classmates looked down on her journalistic tendencies.

“At Tuscaloosa in the 1960s, being a woman reporter was like being a prostitute,” Hamilton told Kathy Remp of The Birmingham News in 2001.

Retired Auburn University historian Leah Rawls Atkins added, “Virginia had a lot of trouble with University of Alabama professors because they didn’t think women ought to be teaching history. That’s just the way it was. She fought a lot of wars for women teaching history. Our battles were smaller because Virginia had blazed such a path.”

When she became head of the history department at UAB, she insisted on hiring females as half of the faculty.

“Since women are more than 50 percent of the population, she thought it was unreasonable to have 50 percent of the history department females,” Armbruster said.

When she left as chair, it was 50-50, men to women. She had strong principles and personality to make it happen.

Although she was a strong feminist, she doted on her husband and dropped her career when he became ill and nursed him until he died.

“Her loved dancing, she loved to travel.”

After her husband died, she traveled extensively with her son and daughter, often taking relatives or friends on the trips.

“She was completely quirky but brilliant,” Armbruster said. “She was courteous to a fault.”

Armbruster said the most appealing of Hamilton’s books was “Seeing Historic Alabama,” a guidebook of historic sites.

“Seeing Historic Alabama is the best book ever to give a newcomer to Alabama,” Armbruster said. “It tells who, Joseph Wheeler was, who Helen Keller was. You can go to the sites and make it historical.”

Her teaching career included the University of Montevallo from 1961 to 1965 and Birmingham-Southern College from 1965 to 1969. She then taught at UAB for 25 years, chaired the history department for 10 and earned the rank of University Scholar.

The Alabama Historical Association gives an annual award in her name to a historian who makes history accessible.

And all of Hamilton’s books are accessible to the average reader, Atkins said.

“She was brilliant,” Atkins said. “She wrote beautifully.”
Astounding video of 26,000 sea turtles

UAB research highlights losses since BP spill

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The world’s most endangered sea turtle, the Kemp’s ridley, suffered a 34 percent decline in the number of nests laid in 2015 compared to the year before the BP oil spill, according to a new study authored by scientists at the University of Alabama at Birmingham.

The study analyzes both the recent decline, seen since 2010, and a stunning 99 percent drop in the overall population between 1947 and 1985. The status of the present population is measured against a historic estimate based on film footage shot on a Mexican beach in 1947.

That footage is simply astounding. In it, tens of thousands of Kemp’s ridley turtles are seen lumbering from the sea en masse to nest in an aggregation called an arribada. The camera pans up and down a beach so crowded with turtles that they have a difficult time finding an open spot to dig a nest. In some of the shots, the turtles are barely visible due to all the sand being thrown in the air by their digging. The turtles stretch off in the distance, as far as the eye can see.

The grainy footage was shot by Andres Herrera, a Mexican sportsman and naturalist. While it was clear from the film that incredible numbers of turtles were on the beach, the camera was hand-held and shaky, with lots of pans along the horizon.

Using modern digital video equipment, the UAB scientists were able to dissect the film in a new way, and create composite images of vast stretches of the beach by combining various shots. From those images, Thane Wibbels and Elizabeth Bevan made estimates for the nesting population.

By their count, about 26,000 turtles were laying eggs on a two-mile stretch of beach on a single day in 1947. Further extrapolation suggests the overall Kemp’s ridley population at the time involved 180,000 nesting turtles. Last year, scientists believe there were about 14,000 Kemp’s ridley nests in the entire Gulf region.

“I consider it a signature species for the Gulf of Mexico,” said Thane Wibbels, one of the study’s co-authors. “The northern Gulf of Mexico appears to possibly be the most important foraging ground, developmental habitat, and migratory corridor for the Kemp’s ridley. They grow up and live here but head back to the western Gulf to nest for a couple of months every year on a beach near Rancho Nuevo.”

The Kemp’s ridley is easily the most common turtle seen in Alabama waters and along the northern Gulf today, and the same was likely true before the population began to decline. Mobile Bay is considered one of the most important juvenile feeding places, but dead sea turtles turn up with distressing regularity in Alabama.

Today, Herrera’s discovery provides a window into the past that scientists hope will lead to further recovery for the Kemp’s ridley. The great mystery is what caused the recent decline.

The overall population was experiencing exponential growth in the years since 1985, Wibbels said, when scientists believe about 750 nests were laid. By 2009, that number had climbed to around 21,000 nests. Scientists expected the recovery to climb steadily. But that hasn’t happened.

Instead, in the years since the spill, nesting has fallen off. Some point to limits on habitat and to growing coastal residential development.

“Another hypothesis among the field is that environmental pollution, in particular the 2010 Deepwater Horizon oil spill, may have significantly impacted the population, and many years may be required before the species regains an exponential recovery rate,” said Elizabeth Bevan, working toward her doctorate at UAB.

A decline in prey items, such as blue crabs, may have also played a role.

“Solving the mystery will require continued monitoring of turtles on the nesting beach, a better understanding of the ecology of the Kemp’s ridley in its foraging and developmental habitats, and an evaluation of potential changes in the Gulf of Mexico ecosystem since the 1947 Herrera film,” Wibbels said. “It’s a local species. The Kemp’s ridley is definitely part of Alabama’s heritage. Probably the most abundant sea turtle in this area until it almost went extinct in the 1980s. Hopefully, it will get back to that status in the future.”

The study was published this past week by the Ecological Society of America.
Former assistant caught AD's eye before job was open

Drew Champlin  dchamplin@al.com

Two years ago, after an 80-70 loss to Charlotte in the Conference USA Tournament in El Paso, Texas, Robert Ehsan was on the UAB postgame radio show with David Crane.

The tone was disappointment, as the game wasn't as close as the final score indicated. It, however, turned into great deal of hope and optimism. Ehsan practically begged fans to stay with the program, as he believed special things were about to happen.

"That was after HaHa (William Lee) signed, right?" Ehsan joked Tuesday.

It was, and the program took a sharp turn after a slow start the following year, winning an NCAA Tournament game. UAB then won a school-record 26 games this season and a Conference USA title, but finished the season on a whimper.

Still, Stanford hired Jerod Haase away from UAB and, after a nine-day search, Ehsan was promoted to the top spot.

He was introduced as UAB's sixth head coach in program history on Tuesday. Athletics director Mark Ingram and his advisory committee interviewed several candidates from around the country, but gave Ehsan the first shot and his interview set the benchmark.

"Last summer, Coach Haase thought that

See EHSAN, B6
he was a star and he was going to be a head coach one day," Ingram said. "I paid attention to how he handled himself during games, on the bus, on the road and at practice. He was very active. Coach Haase gave him a lot of responsibilities. I liked what I saw, and this was well before the job became available."

Ingram listened to the players. The choice to promote Ehsan was an obvious one, since the program is still ascending and returns three all-conference players next season.

"It was handled in a very mannerable way," UAB rising senior guard Denzell Watts said. "He listed to us, and I thank (Ingram) for that."

Watts was part of Haase and Ehsan’s first full recruiting class. Watts’ 2-year-old daughter, Elinnana, was born in Flint, Mich., when he was a freshman.

"He’s helped me a lot and kept me positive," Watts said. "Things like Father’s Day and we’re here. He’d send me a text to uplift me about the situation and let me know that, even though you’re not home with her, you’re building something for the future."

Ehsan is about to become a father for the second time. Two-year-old Katelyn was visibly excited in a UAB cheerleader outfit. Son Davis Ehsan’s due date is Wednesday.

So, imagine the stress of last week when Robert and Lindsey were anxious about more than one big life event.

“She’s a tough woman,” Ehsan said. “She’s handled this really, really good. Jokingly, we wake up every morning and it’s like, ‘How you feeling? How you feeling?’ It’s been an exciting week. It’s a lot going on, but it’s all good things.”

Ehsan comes with the endorsement of more than just one former boss.

“He didn’t care what the hours were or what he was getting paid, he just wanted to do it and have a job,” said former Maryland coach Gary Williams, who had Ehsan on his staff for six seasons. “It’s hard to find those type of people.

“People like Robert. I don’t say that about everybody. He just has that personality where players, other assistants, alumni, seem to gravitate toward Robert.”

Ehsan said he’s going to jump into everything as soon as he can. He promoted Turner Battle to associate head coach. Battle has been on the staff for two seasons.

He’ll look to finalize the rest of his coaching staff soon. One spot, he said, he wants someone who is familiar with UAB’s players and program. The other, he’s hoping for someone more experienced, maybe even as a head coach.

Then it’s off to recruit for what could be a large 2017 recruiting class. UAB has five rising seniors in Watts, Dirk Williams, Hakeem Baxter, Tyler Madison and Tosin Mehinti.

The Blazers’ roster is set for next season and at the full 13 scholarships.

Ehsan called Haase one of the best people in college basketball. Their core beliefs are similar, but he said he’ll be able to implement a few different things.

He’s ready for the challenge that will come with high expectations. UAB’s roster is set up to be the best in Conference USA on paper heading into next season.

“This place is different,” Ehsan said. “You’ve seen the midmajors who have had sustained and national success. We’re in a position with our roster, facilities and leadership that we can do that. That’s the unique thing about this situation.”
Ehsan's challenge: Break a pattern and raise the roof

Kevin Scarbinsky  kscarbinsky@al.com

How self-assured is Rob Ehsan? He stood in the Green and Gold Room of Bartow Arena, with UAB matriarch Ruth Bartow herself sitting a few rows away, and said he wants to take UAB basketball places it's never been.

There's only one place the Blazers have never been. The Final Four.

Ruth's late husband, the legend Gene Bartow, took them to conference championships, to NCAA Tournaments, to the Sweet 16 and the Elite Eight, and the next four coaches in line all hit some memorable heights themselves.

Ehsan, the sixth coach in school history, didn't shrink from the history he's inheri-
ting.

"I think there is no ceiling," he said.

"We're going to try to go higher than we ever have."

He said it with a confidence beyond his 33 years, a confidence without a trace of arrogance, a confidence he showed to his players Saturday.

He was still in that uncertain time in his role as interim head coach before finding out for sure the interim tag would be removed. Rather than sit around, wonder and worry, see scarbinsky, B6

SCARBINSKY

FROM B1

and worry, he put the players through a permissible workout and told them, "There are five teams in the country working to get better today."

The four Final Four teams and UAB.

Athletic Director Mark Ingram respects that confidence. He started paying closer attention to Ehsan this season after then-head coach Jerod Haase told Ingram a year ago that "Rob's a star."

The closer Ingram looked, the more he liked what he saw, and age didn't matter to him. He said he likes that "you don't know (his age) other than his birth certificate. He's a very mature guy."

Ehsan will have to grow up in a hurry in his first season as a head coach. He has a mature team returning, coming off a Conference USA regular-season title and a school-record 26 victories, but as he said Tuesday, they all feel "a sense of unfinished business" after losing in the first rounds of the C-USA Tournament and the NIT.

He'll be met with greater expectations than any previous first-year UAB coach, including Bartow himself, who started a Division I basketball program from scratch in the heart of football country.

The succession of UAB head coaches has followed a pattern. Bartow set an almost impossible standard for a start-up program. Murry Bartow, his son and assistant, took over with C-USA at its strongest, and the program never could recapture its early magic.

Mike Anderson arrived to make NCAA trips an annual thing again. Mike Davis followed and couldn't carry his regular-season success into the postseason.

Haase came to town, won championships and set records, but when he left for Stanford he knew his fourth and final collection of Blazers, for all their accomplishments, didn't squeeze every last drop from this season.

If the pattern holds, Ehsan will do OK but not as well as Haase. Remember the third and fifth coaches in school history were hired because the second and fourth men to hold the job were fired.

If Ehsan can equal or better his former boss Haase, he'll be the first UAB coach to match or outdo an immediate predecessor who didn't get fired. It's a daunting task, but you don't earn the confidence of the players, staff, fans and suits the way Ehsan has by expecting to maintain the status quo.

Ingram himself said his expectation for the program going forward is "not the status quo. This is the floor now."

Ehsan helped raise that floor the last four years. Now all he has to do is raise the roof.
Jefferson County coroner receives highest national award for medical examiners

By: Mitchell Kilpatrick

The Jefferson County chief coroner and medical examiner is the newest recipient of the nation’s most prestigious award given to medical examiners.

The American Academy of Forensic Sciences presented Alabama’s Dr. Gregory Davis with the 2016 Milton Helpern Award at the 68th Annual Scientific Meeting held in Las Vegas, Nevada in February.

“I was humbled, to see all of the previous recipients and to think I would be considered by my peers worthy of being on that list,” Dr. Davis said. “I didn’t grasp how big it was until I looked and saw what all it entailed. I’ve just been doing my work.”

Dr. Davis has been the Jefferson County chief coroner and medical examiner since 2013, and he is also the director of the Forensic Division of the University of Alabama at Birmingham’s Department of Pathology. Davis has been a part of the Medical Examiner’s office since 1993.

Davis attended Vanderbilt University for college, medical school, and his pathology residency. He completed his forensic pathology fellowship at the San Diego County Medical Examiner’s Office and earned his Master of Science of Public Health from UAB.

As the head of the Jefferson County Coroner/Medical Examiner’s office, Davis oversees approximately 25% of deaths occurring in Jefferson County. He is responsible for notifying the proper authorities if he suspects criminal violence or neglect, suspicious circumstances, or other trauma or violence has occurred.

He has also published a number of renowned articles on a variety of subjects, including a comparison of heart mass in seizure patients dying sudden deaths to deaths caused by other factors, connections between drug abuse and sudden death, and suggestions for investigating, diagnosing, and certifying deaths in cases involving opiod drugs. He has also written one book.

Davis has also been a prominent member of the American Academy of Forensic Sciences, being elected to chair and direct a number of sections of the organization, and a member of the Board of Directors since 2011.

The Milton Helpern Award is named after New York City’s most famous chief medical examiner. Nicknamed “Sherlock Holmes with a microscope,” Helpern performed over 20,000 autopsies in 20 years.
Did UAB’s Parcak just help rewrite Vikings history?

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An expert team of archaeologists, including UAB archaeologist Sarah Parcak, has uncovered what may be the first new Norse site discovered in North America in decades.

Parcak’s international renown grew last year when she was announced as the winner of a $1 million TED Prize, which she is using to fight looting using satellite technology.

Now she is part of a group of scientists who have uncovered what could prove to be North America’s second Viking site.

Parcak, a researcher and professor of anthropology at UAB, was awarded the 2016 TED Prize because of her innovative work preserving ancient Egyptian sites using satellites. She has discovered 17 pyramids, more than 1,000 tombs and more than 3,100 ancient settlements in Egypt.

Parcak used her pioneering brand of satellite imagery analysis to aid in the excavation and investigation of archaeological evidence in Newfoundland. She and her team studied tens of thousands of square kilometers along the eastern seaboard of the U.S. and Canada until they saw possible manmade shapes in Point Rosee.

Preliminary excavations took place over a period of two and a half weeks in June 2016. The potential discovery, which must be confirmed by further research, could show Vikings traveled 300 miles further southwest than previously known.

The Newfoundland project was co-directed by Gregory Mumford, Ph.D., Parcak’s husband and professor in the UAB College of Arts and Sciences Department of Anthropology. Their discovery will be featured on a two-hour PBS special called “Vikings Unearthed.” It will stream online at pbs.org/nova on Monday at 2:30 p.m., coinciding with the film’s UK premiere on BBC One. It will premiere on television in the U.S. on Wednesday at 8 p.m. on PBS and Alabama Public Television.

Before their discovery indicated another Viking site exists, the only known Viking site in North America was found in the 1960s on the northern tip of Newfoundland at L’Anse Aux Meadows. Scientists discovered 1,000-year-old buildings and artifacts.

For more than 50 years since, scientists had searched for another Norse site in North America, to no avail.

Sarah Parcak, shown at an archaeological site in Egypt, was a member of the team that used satellite imagery to discover what might be the second Viking site in North America.

Courtesy/Sarah Parcak, via National Geographic
Keep IT Local

Pledge to help Birmingham grow its tech sector

Scott McGlaun for AL.com

People frequently ask me about ways we can strengthen the local technology community. Birmingham’s technology community is stronger than it has ever been. Innovation Depot, which gives start-ups and entrepreneurs competitive advantage, is almost at capacity. TechBirmingham membership is experiencing explosive growth and seeing record attendance at events. Access to capital for start-ups is plentiful if you have a solid business plan. Technology executives are working together with TechBridge to bring technology-based efficiencies to non-profit agencies. Birmingham is taking steps to develop local technology talent through Depot/\U, a software development boot camp. The city is entering its second year of Venture for America internships and several local companies are working to bring a new workforce development program to the area called Year-Up. So that covers it, right? Well, there is one more thing ...

Keep IT Local.
"Keep IT Local" makes sense for two reasons. First and foremost, it is a reflection of the business community's support of technology-based entrepreneurs. "Keeping IT Local" tells existing local entrepreneurs, and entrepreneurs considering Birmingham as their start-up location, that the business community wants them to thrive and prosper here. We can play a role in their success by looking first to local companies for business impacting capabilities.

Birmingham has very talented and capable technologists that are driving innovation. Partnerships among entrepreneurs and the business community will accelerate that innovation.

Secondly, we have a huge opportunity to grow tech-based jobs here in Birmingham. When the business community spends locally on technology, we promote local job growth. Large company spending on technology will result in job growth among vendor partners.

The purpose of the Keep IT Local Pledge initiative is to create an easily accessible platform to showcase commitment from local companies to first look within our city and surrounding areas when procuring IT products and services before spending those IT dollars outside the region.

Working collaboratively with industry, TechBirmingham and Innovation Depot led the effort to craft a pledge and create a digital presence where companies on both the demand and supply side can show their support by digitally signing the pledge.

Organizations that sign the pledge will be recognized on the www.keepitlocalpledge.com website.

TechBirmingham will maintain the database of companies that sign the pledge and will be able to provide information on the services and products those companies offer.

The list of Founding Partners includes: TechBirmingham and Innovation Depot, as well as Alabama Power, BlueCross and BlueShield of Alabama, Regions, 2B Solutions, Isotope II, BBVA Compass, University of Alabama Birmingham, Alabama Media Group, Airship, Daxko, Platypus, Teklinks, TEKSystems, Viperline and Warren Averett.

Once the website goes live next week, companies can sign the pledge online.

Let's grow those jobs in our community, not somewhere else. Will you join me in taking the pledge to Keep IT Local?
$12.5M budget approved for UAH Innovation Center

By: Travis Leder

A multi-million dollar business incubator and innovation hub is one step closer to being constructed.

The University of Alabama System Board of Trustees has approved the Stage II submittal for the UAH Innovation Center. The three-story, 45,000 square foot facility will serve a 15-county region of north Alabama and southeast Tennessee.

The total project cost is expected to be $12.5 million, while the overall construction is expected to cost $10 million. The Innovation Center will adjoin the UAH Business Administration Building, and Fuqua & Partners Architects will provide architectural services for the project.

Funding sources include federal grants, state funds and the UAH Foundation.
New Teaching Assignments for Two Black Scholars

By: Staff

Martha Mamo was appointed the Aaron Douglas/John E. Weaver Professor of Agronomy and Horticulture at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

Professor Mamo holds a bachelor’s degree in chemistry and a master’s degree in soil science from the University of Alabama at Huntsville. She earned a Ph.D. in soil science at the University of Minnesota.

Milton Coleman, the former senior editor at The Washington Post, will spend the fall 2016 semester as the Edith Kinney Gaylord Visiting Professor of Journalism Ethics in the Walter Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communications at Arizona State University. Coleman retired from the Post in 2012 and currently serves as ombudsperson for the Corporation of Public Broadcasting.

Coleman is a graduate of the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. He was hired by the Post in 1976 as a reporter covering government and politics.
Decatur students win awards at UAH technology fair

By: Deangelo McDaniel

More than 40 Decatur City Schools students won awards while competing in the Northwest Regional Technology Fair at the University of Alabama in Huntsville.

The competition, which is sponsored by the Alabama Council for Technology Education and has been held annually for more than three decades, gives students an opportunity to demonstrate technology awareness and measure their proficiency in educational applications.

The following is a list of winners by school and category:

**Cedar Ridge Middle, Level 2, sixth grade**

Jonathan Aguiar, first place, IT test; Jonus Rugebregt, third place, IT test; Brandon Davis, third place, web design; Nicholas Ballentine, second place, hardware robotics; Moses Gonzalez, second place, hardware robotics; Noah Sledge, honorable mention, hardware robotics; Lucas Hasting, honorable mention, hardware robotics; and Jose Ruiz, honorable mention, hardware robotics.

**Cedar Ridge, Level 3, seventh and eighth grade**

Brady Self, second place, IT Test; Wesley Lowman, first place, multimedia, video production and hardware robotics; Jacob Atkins, first place, hardware robotics; Delroy Tulloch, first place, hardware robotics; Noah Flood, second place, hardware robotics; Tre Jenkins, second place, hardware robotics; Marque Laster, second place, hardware robotics; Josh Haavik, third place, hardware robotics; Bradie Self, third place, hardware robotics; Linkon Johnson, third place, hardware robotics; and Dylan Forster, Hunter Hays, Christopher Robinson, Jonatan Mendez, Luke Green and Angel Hernandez honorable mention, hardware robotics.

**Chestnut Grove Elementary, Level 1, third and fourth grade**

T.J Pickering, Teon Dayes, Symphony Flowers, and Analeigh Fansler, second place, hardware robotics; Kaleb Taylor, Madyson Gray, Cole Collins, and Easton Palmer, third place, hardware robotics.

**Brookhaven Middle**

Marcus Abrams and Martin Rodriguez, third place, online information technology test; Armando Cienfuegos, first place, search and rescue robot; Johnathon Trimble, second place, elephant art robot; Stephen Brito, third place, trash recycle robot; Carlos Palacios and Nathan Bullard, second place, spin art robot and second place, trash pickup robot.
Stifling Free Speech on Climate Change

By: William O’Keefe

Massachusetts and the Virgin Islands recently joined New York in its investigation into whether ExxonMobil misled the public and its investors about climate change. This brings the total number of State Attorneys General to have initiated similar investigations to 20. Additionally, the Attorney General of the United States also announced that she had referred this matter to the FBI.

While the named target is ExxonMobil, it has been made clear that the investigatory net is going to be thrown over other oil companies and, by implication, the so-called skeptics who have been involved in the climate debate.

The targeted companies can and will defend the actions they have taken on the issue of climate change. Some may be tempted to consider the equivalent of some sort of plea bargain that would involve greenmail payments and promises to behave more responsibly in the future. That would be a serious mistake and would weaken First Amendment protections.

The crux of the allegation is whether these organizations and others who may have been associated with them knowingly engaged in deception. To be guilty, the weight of evidence would have to show that: climate change was a serious risk, that the risk was significantly increased by ExxonMobil’s actions, and that ExxonMobil failed to support programs and policies which reduce CO2 emissions.

None of the articles written about these allegations have provided evidence that any company has denied that climate change is real or that human activities have an influence on climate. The New York Times last November published an article, “A Range of Opinions on Climate Change at ExxonMobil,” that makes these two facts clear.

The Attorney General’s claim is based on the belief—or, more accurately, assumption—that our future climate will have catastrophic effects on our way of life and economic wellbeing unless CO2 emissions are significantly reduced. While this belief reflects the views of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), its leadership, and some scientists, the asserted certainty of catastrophic climate change is based on judgments, not validated science.

Earlier this year, University of Alabama Huntsville professor John Christy, one of the developers of the satellite global temperature measurement system, provided congressional testimony that made it absolutely clear that statements made about climate change by its advocates lack the extent of uncertainty that still accompanies the issue. His analysis showed that the models relied on by the IPCC “on average warm the global atmosphere at a rate 2.5 times that of the real world.” That extent of variability is not trivial.
Sir Karl Popper, who is regarded as the world’s preeminent science philosopher, developed the concept of falsifiability as a criterion for testing theories. Based on this principle, as Christy demonstrated, the theory that increases in CO2 emissions will cause dangerous temperature increases has been proven false by the projections of models based on it. The reason for behind this failure is that the extent of uncertainty about the climate system remains too great for any model to accurately reflect reality.

In 2001, the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) stated in a report, "Because there is considerable uncertainty in current understanding of how the climate system varies naturally and reacts to emissions of greenhouse gases and aerosols, current estimates of the magnitude of future warming should be regarded as tentative and subject to future adjustments (either upward or downward)."

The NAS statement combined with the Christy testimony demonstrates that the “considerable uncertainty” has not been significantly reduced. Hence, it is not credible to claim that any organizational or individual assessment of climate change is intentionally misleading. What it does suggest is that allegations by some members of Congress and State Attorneys General are political tactics to intimidate and silence dissent. Actions that erode the bedrock protections of the First Amendment are a clear and present danger, something that climate change is not.
Giant Martian dust devil seen from Mars Rover in exciting Red Planet photos

By: Beth Balen

The Mars Rover “Opportunity” has recorded the exciting image of a Martian dust devil as seen through a valley below the NASA vehicle. The whirling cloud was seen on March 31, looking back at the rover’s tracks which lead up “Knudsen Ridge,” part of the southern edge of “Marathon Valley.” The image was taken using the Rover’s navigation camera as the vehicle navigated a 32-degree uphill climb, the steepest ever for any rover working on Mars.

Although frequently seen by the previous rover, Spirit, from its station at Gusev Crater, dust devils have been an uncommon sight for Opportunity.

The phenomenon is created by a rising, rotating column of air that gets heated by the sun, just as they are on Earth. Once it whirls fast enough it picks up tiny grains of dust, which then makes the whirling vortex visible. Scientists believe that dust devils help shape the global climate of Mars, since, in the planet’s thin atmosphere, they carry out the important role of dust cycling.

The dust devils are also a clue to the Mars climate puzzle. Dust in the martian air during the day reduces the amount of sunlight that makes it through to the planet’s surface. During the night the atmospheric dust warms the surface. Understanding how the dust gets into the thin Mars air through dust devil activity can help in developing Mars climate models.

Some dust devils can rival the size of tornadoes on Earth, rising hundreds of meters into the air. Some have been measured at 12 miles high. “To start a dust devil on Mars you need a convection, a strong updraft” according to University of Alabama in Huntsville atmospheric science graduate Bryce Williams, who said that twice as much convective updraft is needed in the thin atmosphere of the Red planet as what is required on Earth.

The Marathon Valley region of Mars is of interest to scientists due to orbital measurements that suggest the presence of clays. They are eager for Opportunity to study these minerals since they were created through chemical processes with ancient surface water. The clays may offer answers to more of the mysteries of Mars’ what happened to Mars water.

Spirit lost communication with Earth after becoming stuck in a sand trap in 2010. Opportunity has spent the last 12 years on the planet. The mini-tornadoes play an important part in the continued operations of Opportunity, since they occasionally spin over the solar panels of the rover and blow away accumulations of dust. This allows for a power burst to the solar-powered vehicle.
New Photos Capture Massive Dust Devils Dancing Across Mars' Surface

By: Andrew MacFarlane

While the name dust devils may seem rather harmless, new photos from NASA's Opportunity rover show that the massive dusty spin-ups that stake a claim to Mars' barren surface can grow to be the size of tornadoes, much larger than the average dust devils that form in different parts of the Earth.

Earthly dust devils tend to top off at about 30 feet in width and have an average height of about 650 feet. The ones measured on Mars, however, can reach more than 330 feet wide and stretch up to 12 miles above the surface, according to NASA.

"This is one of the best dust devils that we have seen," Ray Arvidson, the Opportunity's deputy principal investigator, told Mashable. "We are lucky to have captured this one in an image!"

Just like they do on Earth, dust devils are normally seen on clear days when the ground is being heated by the sun. The warm air just above the surface then rises quickly through a pocket of cool air, which can kickstart the rotation if the conditions are suitable.

Using photos taken by the Mars Reconnaissance Orbiter in 2012, scientists learned that dust devils on Mars required a more powerful updraft to form a vortex like those seen on Earth.

"To start a dust devil on Mars you need convection, a strong updraft," Bryce Williams, a University of Alabama in Huntsville atmospheric science graduate student, said in a press release. "We looked at the ratio between convection and surface turbulence to find the sweet spot where there is enough updraft to overcome the low level wind and turbulence. And on Mars, where we think the process that creates a vortex is more easily disrupted by frictional dissipation – turbulence and wind at the surface – you need twice as much convective updraft as you do on Earth."

Now the concern about the dust devils is what type of lasting effect the rising dust has on the planet’s atmosphere and climate.

"The Martian air is so thin, dust has a greater effect on energy transfers in the atmosphere and on the surface than it does in Earth's thick atmosphere," said Dr. Udaysankar Nair.

Dust in the planet’s air cools the surface during the day and gives off long-wave radiation that heats the surface at night.

Although catching traces of former dust devils that have blasted across the surface is a common occurrence, capturing a photo of one in progress has proven to be a difficult task.

However, despite the twister’s ravaging speeds, the Opportunity rover has benefitted from the dust devils by allowing it to clean off material stuck to the solar powered robot.

The Opportunity rover originally landed on Mars in January 2004 and was intended to last only 90 days. The robot has now logged 27 miles since its arrival, according to Spaceflight Now.
Rapid Address Change Aids Security

By: Staff

By changing a networked device’s IP address repeatedly at a very fast pace makes it possible to enhance security.

The new concept called moving target defense moves an IP address around rapidly to avoid attackers from finding it, said Vahid Heydari’s, computer engineering doctoral student at the University of Alabama in Huntsville (UAH). His research poster on “Preventing Remote Cyber Attacks against Aircraft Avionics Systems” ended up named the best poster at the 11th International Conference on Cyber Warfare and Security in Boston.

“Receiving the best poster award means we are exactly on the right track and have a lot of work to do on this topic,” says Heydari, who also presented a paper on his research at the conference.

His research exploits the abundance of addresses available in the new Internet Protocol version 6 (IPv6) to change a networked device’s IP address repeatedly at a very fast pace. The concept, called moving target defense, moves an IP address around rapidly to avoid it being found by an attacker.

“IP connectivity is increasingly used in aircraft systems, creating the possibility that unauthorized individuals might access and compromise aircraft avionics systems,” Heydari said. “I am working on a Moving Target Mobile IPv6 Defense (MTM6D) that changes the IP addresses randomly and dynamically to prevent remote attacks in the reconnaissance step. Because it uses dynamic IP addresses, it will be very hard for attackers to target a system.”

Applications for MTM6D include critical infrastructure networks, aircraft avionics systems, uninterruptible autopilot systems and anti-censorship systems.

“Fortunately, I found a lot of interest in this topic in the conference,” Heydari said. “According to the feedback, this method can increase the security of aircraft and prevent cyber attacks. Adding this method to aircraft avionics systems can open an avenue for the uninterruptible autopilot system to prevent events like the 9/11 attacks, Malaysia Airlines Flight 370 crash or the Germanwings Flight 9525 crash.”

“His research proposes a possibility to prevent remote cyber attacks against undisclosed computer application vulnerabilities, while current technology – such as firewalls or intrusion detection systems – can prevent the attacks only against known vulnerability exploits,” said Dr. Seong-Moo (Sam) Yoo, associate professor of electrical and computer engineering and Heydari’s advisor. “His research could be applied to protect national critical infrastructure networks.”

Researchers and government agencies have big interest in moving target defense, said Dr. Tommy Morris, director of UAH’s Center for Cybersecurity Research and Education.

“Vahid has found a way to use standardized IP version 6 protocol techniques to achieve an effective moving target defense,” Dr. Morris said. “Vahid’s poster was about using moving

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target defense to defend an avionics system – that is just one of many applicable areas. Moving
target defense is useful for industrial control systems, personal computers, servers, the Internet of
things and in many other domains.”
UAH doctoral student says his cyber research can prevent another 9/11-type attack

By: Travis Leder

UAH doctoral student Vahid Heydari is trying a new approach to cybersecurity which he believes can help stop airplane hijackings.

Heydari is not a big fan of establishing firewalls as a main cyber defense mechanism, because it provides sophisticated attackers a single target if they are able to penetrate your system whether it is for critical infrastructure, driverless cars or airplanes.

"You are giving attackers unlimited distance and unlimited time for an attack," Heydari explains.

Heydari is using what he calls a Moving Target Mobile IPv6 Defense (MTM6D). He says this defense can change IP addresses randomly and dynamically to prevent remote attacks.

"We can change the IP address so an attacker cannot have access, cannot find the IP, cannot find a victim," Heydari says, "If they found the victim, they will have a very short time of access to the victim."

This is because the hacker will essentially be breaking into the wrong house, because you have already moved to another address. This could potentially be a major breakthrough for aircraft safety, as Boeing has already developed technology which allows commercial airplanes to be controlled from the ground in case of a hijacking.

The problem has been that the technology could actually make air travel less safe because hackers could infiltrate the network. This problem is mitigated if they don't have enough time to access the controls.

"We can prevent some events like 9/11, the Malaysia Airlines crash or the Germanwings flight crash that we had last year," Heydari says.
Bob Jones, UAH release high-flying balloons

By: Gregg Parker

MADISON – The pursuit of scientific fact-finding flew sky-high for students enrolled in “Foundations of Engineering” at Bob Jones High School, who gained experience from seniors at the University of Alabama in Huntsville (UAH).

Leading these students were Engineering Academy Director Jessye G. Gaines at Bob Jones and Dr. Matt Turner with the “STEM Projects Advancing Relevance and Confidence in the Classroom” lab (SPARCC) at UAH. STEM abbreviates science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

These students launched high-altitude balloons at Discovery middle and West Madison elementary schools on March 25.

“The balloon was equipped with temperature and pressure sensors, GoPro cameras, Geiger counters, GPS monitors and a small, on-board computer,” Bob Jones Assistant Principal Amy Thaxton said.

“Data collected by all these instruments was available for classroom use after the balloon landed and was recovered,” Thaxton said. “Video footage was fun for younger students, while atmospheric data was fun for the older students.”

Before it exploded, the balloon likely reached an altitude of at least 100,000 feet. The payload then parachuted back to Earth, and ground chasers retrieved the equipment, John Peck said. Peck works as Manager of Public Relations for Madison Public Schools.

“By increasing the exposure young students have to hands-on, relevant STEM activities, we hope also to increase their confidence and interest in pursuing STEM-related careers,” Thaxton said.

“If we want large numbers of young people interested in STEM fields, waiting until they are in high school is too late,” Thaxton said. “STEM application must start at a young age and be embedded consistently in K-12 curriculum.”
The lessons of the April 27 tornadoes: Are we safer? What have we learned?

By: Paul Gattis

There is no luxury of the moment for some, no time to linger in the agony and despair that defined April 27, 2011.

Not for National Weather Service, not for the utility company with thousands of customers not only without power but without the immediate infrastructure to restore it, not for the mayor whose downtown was in shambles and not for the office charged with overseeing emergency operations across the state.

For these agencies, there is always the thought about "...the next time." However good today may be, tomorrow must be better.

"It just so happened that on April 27, many people did the right thing and, unfortunately, they still died," said Chris Darden, meteorologist in charge of the National Weather Service forecasting office in Huntsville.

So, yes, there must be lessons learned. There must be a way to do things better.

"Sometimes from a negative can come a positive," Darden said. "And we're definitely using this as a learning tool."

So what did we learn from Wednesday, April 27, 2011?

Weather warnings

Not just the tornado warnings announced minutes before the storm hits but the warnings, or cautions, provided days in advance of a significant weather event are invaluable. After all, the 2011 tornadoes caught no one by surprise. The community of meteorologists and forecasters knew days ahead of time that danger was imminent and didn't keep it a secret. If you were paying attention, you knew it, too.

"It's important to provide warnings to the public to get that information out," Darden said. "We also learned that it's important to work with our partners in the media and the emergency management community, the first responders, to get the message out early."

"And I mean days in advance if we expect there's going to be a big event coming."

Five years later, weather technology has improved. There are also ongoing efforts to learn more about tornadoes, such as the Vortex Southeast study taking place this spring. Based at the University of Alabama in Huntsville, it's bringing together the nation's top tornado researchers.

Maybe you even contributed to the growing effort to learn more about tornadoes.
"Certainly 2011, although it was a tragic day, a horrible day, we learned a lot. We learned a lot actually because we had a lot of video," Darden said. "A lot of people took video of the tornadoes, which is unusual in the southeast.

"We were able to take that video and look at the radar data and do a lot of comparisons and we have learned a lot about how the terrain affects the tornadoes, how the local environment affects the storms that produce the tornadoes."

There are efforts to be even more exact in forecasts, in issuing tornado warnings, in anticipating how a storm will behave by understanding the storm itself. An example? The theory that a rotating supercell thunderstorm typically produced a tornado has been dispelled, Darden said. The reality is that only about 5 percent of those storms produce tornadoes.

"April 27, those high-end tornadoes, those are not overly difficult to warn for," he said. "Those are sort of the ones that are obvious on radar. But the morning storms that day (the weaker tornadoes by scale), those were the more challenging storms to warn for.

"So we're learning a lot more about those and we're learning what types of environments – the wind shear in the atmosphere, the instability, the balance within the atmosphere that help produce these tornadoes – we're constantly learning about those."

**Keeping the power**

With the bulk of the April 27 tornadoes centered in north Alabama, the electricity provider for the region absorbed crushing blows to its ability to deliver power to its customers. With transmissions towers mangled, more than 850,000 customers of the Tennessee Valley Authority lost power.

According to TVA, 108 transmission lines were out of service and 75 TVA local power companies were affected. The government-owned utility also reported that 98 percent of its customers had power restored within a week even though 25 percent of the structures and 40 percent of the lines were repaired.

It took more than two months to fully restore the system smashed by the tornadoes.

"What you saw from Russellville up through the Trinity area outside Decatur and East Limestone and on up toward Tennessee, it basically looked like somebody had cleared a straight line for an interstate," said Clayton Clem, TVA's vice president for transmission engineering.

The recovery job was so massive for TVA that Clem said the utility moved 441 tractor trailer loads of material.

"From a lessons learned standpoint, we reviewed our steel stocking plan and our emergency material plan, that worked pretty well considering the amount we were able to restore

*See next page*
quickly," Clem said. "We have made some improvements to that in how we handle some of our energy supplies that give us a little more flexibility. We've worked on what we consider a broader threat front with grid resiliency where we're looking not only at storms like this but other events that can cause impacts to the grid.

"One of the pieces of that is we have workforce support focus going on where we're looking at additional mutual assistance agreements with neighboring utilities that would help us bring workforce into the area more easily in the event of a storm to help support us. Some of the lessons learned from this scale event was just how important the ability to carry your own diesel, your own aviation fuel and your own gasoline with you. As you mobilize the amount of equipment we did, having those supply lines well thought out. So we've built that into our emergency planning."

The recovery effort was not unlike mobilizing an army, Clem said. And that creates logistical issues beyond the task of getting equipment where it needs to go.

"Even the fact that you've got to feed that mass of people you bring in," he said. "You've got to feed them, find a place to put them to bed and keep them working."

**Emergency response**

As the director of the state's emergency management agency, Art Faulkner's job exists for bad days. By definition, the state EMA is the coordinating agency for disaster, preparedness, response and recovery.

Faulkner had all of that on April 27, 2011 – certainly the disaster, the subsequent response and the first hours of recovery. He also had preparedness until the plans blew up by sunrise that morning.

"I'm not quite sure we were prepared for the severity of the storms that hit the state right around sunrise that Wednesday morning," Faulkner said. "So very quickly, we had to readjust our plan that we had for the day."

Indeed, the largest storms weren't expected until later in the day. That early-morning wave of tornadoes, however, scrambled the plans that were in place for the rest of the day.

Faulkner even used the word "chaos" to describe the reaction and response to the unexpected morning storms. Emerging from that chaos, though, was efficiency. Put another way, Faulkner said instinct kicked in.

"The way we were able to respond is because we have a good emergency operations plan," he said." And that plan is tested. We continually update that plan and we exercise that plan. So when there was such mass chaos going on, people – especially first responders – they are going to do what they are trained to do and what they have practiced to do.

"That's one of the biggest lessons we learned – that you have the prepared you have to be trained and exercise your plan and be prepared."
So those plans today get continual exercise and the instinct of efficient response is groomed.

That's not to say, however, that there haven't been changes in operational plans. Faulkner said that instead of all emergency calls being funneled into the statewide operations center in Clanton, seven geographic regions within the state have been established to help triage situations.

Faulkner described those centers as "mini-state EOCs" and they are staffed by employees of "all the critical agencies in the state emergency operations plan."

"What the purpose of that is that a majority or initial requests are able to be handled at that division setting a lot better than all coming to the state EOC," he said. "You've multiplied your forces from just having a representative from each one of these state agencies in Clanton to a representative here and seven others throughout the state."

The mini-EOCs in those regions coordinate with county emergency management agencies, which are schooled in the capabilities – and limits – of the regional EOC.

Meanwhile, the state EMA has lost about 20 percent of its workforce since the 2011 tornadoes – shrinking from more than 100 employees that day to about 85 today. It prompts the obvious question: Is Alabama's emergency management team adequately staffed to handle a statewide emergency?

"It's our job to take the resources that we have and make it work," Faulkner said. "We are making it work. Certainly, as with any other state agency, could we use more funds and personnel? Absolutely we could. But we're going to make it work with what we do have."

'Phoenix rising'

By nature, mayors are proud of their cities. But perhaps no mayor can top Cullman's Max Townsend when it comes to touting his town.

"We have actually been thriving since that tornado," Townsend said. Cullman was one of the state's largest cities that absorbed a direct blow from a severe tornado – an EF-4 that seemingly dynamited downtown. In still one more remarkable detail from that day, the only casualty in Cullman was a woman with a broken leg and broken hip.

As Townsend put it, his town shook off the effects of the tornado and blossomed.

"On April 27, we got hit with an EF-4 tornado that devastated the downtown area, that destroyed churches, businesses, homes, historical area, everything," he said. "But that tornado woke up a sleeping giant. We became phoenix rising. In the past five years, we have not ceased."
Now the town in north central Alabama has a bevy of popular chain restaurants and well as
booming retail business, the mayor said. There are also capital plans in place to build a new
fire department as well as new facilities for the road department and water department.

Downtown businesses, gutted by the tornado, experienced renewal in part through a financial
incentive program the city council approved to encourage those business to invest in their
property.

Cullman is "growing by leaps and bounds," Townson said.

While the story of Cullman's rebirth is perhaps dramatic, the town's handling of the tornado
may seem mundane by comparison. When Townson became mayor in 2008, he was urged by
the Cullman County EMA to take a class it was offering about dealing with natural disasters.

In wake of that class, the city designed a response plan and then put it into action.

"We had it all planned out and it went very smooth," Townson said. "Our street department,
they jumped in there and they started clearing immediately even before FEMA got here. It
was devastating but sometimes from these disasters, you learn things and improve."

Then Townson detailed the backbone of his city, praising the people of Cullman with words
that could echo across the state and apply to virtually every community affected by a tornado.

"We saw the true character of the citizens of this community," he said. "It was neighbor
helping neighbor, schools giving out food, churches giving out food, doing laundry for the
National Guard that was here. It was an inspirational experience."

Throughout the month of April, AL.com will be looking back five years later at the April 27,
2011 tornadoes. If you have photos, memories or stories to share that you'd like us to
consider for publication, please email Paul Gattis.
The myth of the 97 percent global warming consensus

By: Guest Voices

By Roy Spencer, Ph.D., principal research scientist in the Earth System Science Center. Prior to joining The University of Alabama in Huntsville, Dr. Spencer was a senior scientist for climate studies at NASA's Marshall Space Flight Center.

Nothing helps raise public awareness like a good meme, and at least on that score, the "97 percent of scientists agree" meme has been wildly successful in convincing people that the science of global warming is settled. But as we shall see, the statistic – even if it were true – tells us nothing particularly useful regarding the global warming debate.

The 97 percent number comes from a 2013 paper that was published by John Cook in Environmental Research Letters and that claimed to review about 12,000 published scientific papers on global warming and climate change. Now, for those of us who work in climate change research, it is well known that "climate change" is widely assumed to be mostly human-caused, despite the fact that very few published studies have actually attempted to demonstrate this to be the case.

Again, it is simply assumed.

And that is one of the (many) problems with the Cook literature review study. It only established that there is widespread consensus that humans contribute to (not even dominate) global warming, a position that the vast majority of climate "skeptics" agree with – including myself. I do not know of any climate skeptic researchers who claim that humans have no influence on the climate system. The existence of trees has an influence on the climate system, and it is entirely reasonable to assume that humans do as well.

The most pertinent questions really are: just how much warming is occurring? (not as much as predicted); how much of that warming is being caused by humans? (we don't really know); is modest warming a bad thing? (maybe not); and is there anything we can do about it anyway? (not without a new energy technology).

Also, while the scientific consensus on climate change is a mile wide, it is only inches deep. Very few climate researchers can tell you what evidence points to (say) 50 percent of recent global warming being human-caused. There might be a few dozen scientists in the world who are familiar enough with the science to defend it. Instead, the vast majority of scientists simply repeat what they have heard, or are familiar within only a cursory manner. Climate change research involves so many specialities and sub-disciplines that few scientists have a knowledge base sufficiently holistic to make an informed judgment.

Regarding just how wrong scientific consensus can be, I like to use the example of peptic ulcers. With millions of sufferers being treated over the last century by doctors, you would think we would know what causes them. Until relatively recently it was assumed that eating spicy food or stress caused them. But two Australian doctors, Robin Warren and Barry Marshall, had a theory
that they were caused by bacteria, a fringe idea that led to them being shunned and ridiculed at conferences.

Yet they were correct, and were awarded the 2005 Nobel Prize in medicine for their work. One can only imagine the thousands of published medical papers that simply assumed that ulcers were caused by stress or spicy food. Would it have been 97 percent? Or even more? I don't know. Yet they were all wrong.

Now, if the physical cause of millions of peptic ulcers went undiscovered for so many years, isn't it possible that there are natural causes of climate change? Climate change is a relatively young science. Computerized climate models do a reasonably good job of replicating the average behavior of the climate system, but have been almost worthless for forecasting climate change. They have not even been able to hindcast (let alone forecast) the warming rate of the past 30-50 years, generally overstating that warming by about a factor of two.

When I have discussed the evidences for natural causes of climate change with "consensus" researchers, they inevitably retreat to the position that "we need to get away from fossil fuels anyway." But there are no large-scale replacements yet available – even optimistic estimates place 80 percent of the energy generation burden on fossil fuels in the coming decades. You cannot simply legislate or regulate new forms of energy generation into existence.

We really don't understand the natural sources of climate change on decadal or centennial time scales. I liken these sources as "chaos" in the climate system, most likely tied to small changes in ocean circulation that occur naturally, just because that's what nonlinear dynamical systems (like the ocean and atmosphere) do. We have published research that suggests as much as 50 percent of global average warming over the last 50 years was due to more frequent El Nino activity, which affects the ocean circulation, global cloudiness, and global temperatures.

Yes, human greenhouse gas emissions from burning fossil fuels almost certainly play a role. How much of a role is unknown.

The extreme popularity and success of the 97 percent meme tells us something about the global warming debate and how it is received. People gravitate toward simple ways to support and defend their preconceived beliefs. Global warming is one of those issues that the believer holds onto with an almost religious fervor. As a scientist I learned long ago that there is no point wanting this or that theory to be correct. Mother Nature really doesn't care what you believe. Instead, I just follow the evidence and generally assume that whatever is developed as an explanation is most likely going to be proved wrong eventually ... as is the case with most published science.

Climate science isn't rocket science. It's actually much more difficult.
UAH students track severe weather potential in county

By: Alison James

At the entrance to the Mike Green Industrial Park on Highway 243 in Russellville today, a tall white spire reached toward the sky, spiraled by a black cord. At its base was a large gray dome, both situated on a trailer. Gray clouds were building in the afternoon sky, threatening rain – and the mobile weather unit was capturing it all.

A four-person student team from the University of Alabama at Huntsville was monitoring the weather equipment, on a mission to gather any data they could about weather conditions preceding tornados.

"Basically what we’re doing – all of our instruments are vertically pointed ... so we can take these vertical slices of the storm," explained Ashley Ravenscraft, a graduate student in atmospheric science. Ravenscraft and her fellow classmates – Montana Etten-Bohm, Alex Staarmann and Cameron Kowalski – are “hoping to learn more about severe weather evolutions – how we get tornados down here in the South, and how those evolve (and) what kind of role topography has to do with tornado genesis. We’re hoping to sample a tornado,” Ravenscraft said.

UAH is one of several schools across the South and beyond involved in the VORTEX Southeast Research Program field campaign, through the National Severe Storms Laboratory. VORTEX Southeast is the 2016 iteration of the VORTEX project, which began in 1994 as a two-year campaign that led to several follow up studies and field projects.

The UAH team set up in the early afternoon Thursday and were prepared to spend the rest of the day and through the night at the entrance to the industrial park, tracking atmospheric conditions. “We’ll be out here until there’s not a threat of severe weather anymore,” Ravenscraft said.

Each student on the team in Russellville Thursday has his or her own reasons for majoring in atmospheric science and pursuing careers in meteorology. Etten-Bohm, a Birmingham native, made the decision after experiencing a tornado as a young child.

“I can remember that day like it was yesterday,” Etten-Bohm said.

For Ravenscraft, a Huntsville native, the destruction caused by the April 27, 2011, tornado in Northwest Alabama pushed her toward the career path.

“I was a student at UNA at the time and was deciding what I wanted to do career-wise ... after that happened, seeing the devastation and how many lives were affected, that really spoke to me,” she said. “The death toll – it was sickening. It broke my heart.”
Doctoral student's research enhances cybersecurity via rapid address change

By: Staff

Research exploiting the abundance of addresses available in the new Internet Protocol version 6 to enhance cybersecurity by changing a networked device's IP address repeatedly at a very fast pace has won recognition for a computer engineering doctoral student at The University of Alabama in Huntsville.

Vahid Heydari's work relies on a concept called moving target defense that moves an IP address around rapidly to avoid it being found by an attacker. His research poster on "Preventing Remote Cyber Attacks against Aircraft Avionics Systems" recently was named the best poster at the 11th International Conference on Cyber Warfare and Security in Boston.

"Receiving the best poster award means we are exactly on the right track and have a lot of work to do on this topic," says Heydari, who also presented a paper on his research at the conference.

His research exploits the abundance of addresses available in the new Internet Protocol version 6 to change a networked device's IP address repeatedly at a very fast pace. The concept, called moving target defense, moves an IP address around rapidly to avoid it being found by an attacker.

"IP connectivity is increasingly used in aircraft systems, creating the possibility that unauthorized individuals might access and compromise aircraft avionics systems," Heydari said. "I am working on a Moving Target Mobile IPv6 Defense that changes the IP addresses randomly and dynamically to prevent remote attacks in the reconnaissance step. Because it uses dynamic IP addresses, it will be very hard for attackers to target a system."

Applications for MTM6D include critical infrastructure networks, aircraft avionics systems, uninterruptible autopilot systems and anti-censorship systems.

"Fortunately, I found a lot of interest in this topic in the conference," Heydari said. "According to the feedback, this method can increase the security of aircraft and prevent cyber-attacks. Adding this method to aircraft avionics systems can open an avenue for the uninterruptible autopilot system to prevent events like the 9-11 attacks, Malaysia Airlines Flight 370 crash or the Germanwings Flight 9525 crash."

Heydari attended seven presentations that focused on moving target defenses. "I talked with all of them and obtained some valuable comments for my future work."

"His research proposes a possibility to prevent remote cyber-attacks against undisclosed computer application vulnerabilities, while current technology – such as firewalls or intrusion detection systems – can prevent the attacks only against known vulnerability exploits," said Dr. Seong-Moo (Sam) Yoo, associate professor of electrical and computer engineering and Heydari's advisor. "His research could be applied to protect national critical infrastructure networks."

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Many researchers and government agencies are interested in moving target defense, says Dr. Tommy Morris, director of UAH's Center for Cybersecurity Research and Education.

"Vahid has found a way to use standardized IP version 6 protocol techniques to achieve an effective moving target defense," Morris said. "Vahid's poster was about using moving target defense to defend an avionics system – that is just one of many applicable areas. Moving target defense is useful for industrial control systems, personal computers, servers, the Internet of things and in many other domains."

Heydari says the cybersecurity field is broad and there's room for a lot more innovative research by UAH students.

"Cyber-attacks are the biggest threats for new technologies and we have expert faculty in this field who can advise students," he says. "Some of them that I am happy to know are Dr. Seong-Moo Yoo, Dr. Tommy Morris and Dr. Sun-il Kim."

The University of Alabama in Huntsville is a Tier 1 research university that prepares students for demanding positions in Engineering, the Sciences, Business, Nursing, Education, and the Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences. Located within one of the largest research parks in the United States, UAH is considered one of the nation's premier research universities.
SEC wins, high school players lose with satellite camp ban

Kevin Scarbinsky  kscarbinsky@al.com

So the NCAA banned satellite camps. Shut 'em down with extreme prejudice and no further delay. Let’s go to the scoreboard so we can salute the winners and laugh at the losers. Or vice versa.

Nick Saban won, and Jim Harbaugh lost. Probably won’t be the last time.
The SEC won, and the Big Ten lost. Definitely isn’t the first time.
UAB, South Alabama, Troy and other FBS schools without bottomless budgets won, and big-spending carpetbaggers who want to steal some of the Deep South’s most valuable resources lost. It doesn’t even the score for the Civil War, but it’ll have to do.

But seriously, and sadly, the biggest losers here are the members of what should be the most important constituency in college football. They’re the young men playing the game that enriches so many others, and as often happens when men in suits make this kind of decision, it reinforces the notion that college football isn’t all that interested in putting its players first.

Here’s what really happened Friday: The best thing to happen to young football players since unlimited meals and cost-of-attendance stipends was just taken away.

Figures.

Of course, Harbaugh, Urban Meyer, James Franklin and other coaches who either had participated as guest counselors at camps in the SEC footprint or were planning to do so didn’t have the purest of motives. They were driven by self-interest. More good high school football players live here than there so they found an ingenious way to put themselves, their assistants and their brands in front of more of those players.

However practical/cynical their motivation, the real benefit belonged to the players. Satellite camps gave them the chance to make more informed college choices by seeing more coaching staffs in action at little cost to the recruits themselves.

Now, if a young man in Alabama is intrigued by the Michigan program, he can’t just drive to Prattville or Madison in June to watch Harbaugh and his coaches work to get a feel for how they relate to players. Instead that young man will have to drive to Ann Arbor.

Congratulations, Division I Council. You just increased the chances that especially

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determined and talented young men who might want to broaden their horizons will trek cross-country anyway — with their expenses covered in a way that just might violate your rules.

Leave it to the NCAA to pave the way for more NCAA violations.

SEC coaches may have won this battle, but they walk away looking weak and hypocritical. Their reaction to the camps themselves — threatening to fight fire with fire and go camping outside their own state lines if a ban didn’t happen — demonstrated their hypocrisy.

For them, this issue was never about the alleged evils of what they dubbed “recruiting camps.” It certainly wasn’t about what’s best for the players. It was and is about what’s best for the coaches and their programs.

What’s best for SEC coaches and their programs is to limit the amount of time coaches from the Big Ten and other Power 5 conferences can spend in SEC country. Kudos. Mission accomplished.

Of course, the satellite camp ban isn’t going to keep Harbaugh, Meyer and others from recruiting in Alabama, Florida, Georgia and other states that like their tea sweet. Meyer already has a base in the region, and if Harbaugh can win games as often as he does Twitter wars, he’ll continue to increase Michigan’s profile here, too.

That is, unless Donald Trump becomes president and Greg Sankey can convince him to build a wall around the SEC footprint. To keep Harbaugh and other undesirable coaches out — and all those desirable players in.

Which is, after all, what SEC coaches really want. Now if they could just get Dabo Swinney and Jimbo Fisher deported to the Pac-12.
Serving as inspiration

NCAA Championships

When: Friday at 7 p.m.
Where: Fort Worth Convention Center in Fort Worth, Texas
TV: ESPNU

Marine Corps is a very small organization. They have much more discipline. They have a system of core values – honor, courage and commitment – and they stand strongly by those things. They have a certain camaraderie and way of doing things that makes them kind of an elite. That’s something that I was really strongly attracted to. They’re infantry first, they play super good attention to details and I really liked that.

With the help of a recommendation letter from Duckworth, Sanders was accepted, with a recruiting officer conducting the ceremony at one of the team’s practices. He presented Duckworth with a commendation from the Marines for her role in producing an officer candidate at the same time.

On May 25, 2015, Sanders reported to Marine Corps Base Quantico to begin the first of two six-week courses at OCS.

"It was the best and worst time of my entire life," Sanders said of her time in Quantico. "It was the most challenging I have ever been. It pushed me to my limits mentally, physically. You get to the point where it takes every bit of mental energy you have just to take one more step, just to pick yourself up and keep going the whole day. It’s living moment to moment. That’s how it’s been, and it’s very challenging, but also very, very rewarding.

"Duckworth said she and the team kept in touch with Sanders as much as possible, writing motivational letters and calling whenever able. When the OCS process began to take its toll and Sanders was fighting an illness, Duckworth said, her team was there to help.

"I know one time I got off the phone and, she doesn’t know this, but I just cried because she sounded so weak and so broken, but I knew that if anyone could persevere through it, it would be her," Duckworth said.

"And she did. She came home and she succeeded at her mission.

When Sanders arrived back at the University of Alabama, her body was so beaten down, her mind so exhausted, that the coaching staff had to develop a whole new timeline of training for her. They gave her weeks off to recover before attempting to bring her back up to speed, training the gymnastics muscles she had abandoned during her Marine Corps training.

"When she came back, we had to be very careful about how we were training her, just to get her back to being healthy, feeling like she could do gymnastics," assistant coach Bill Lorens said. "I think she would tell you that she would have been able to run a couple of miles with a backpack on, but that’s not what we’re doing in the gym. We’re training power and speed, but that’s endurance. We had to let her take a break and heal, and we had the summer to do that."

As practice went on, her teammates and coaches noticed changes in Sanders’ personality. Once entirely quiet and reserved, she became a more vocal leader. She showed a new, unfappable focus, her coaches said, a perfect ability to be in the moment. When the time for leadership team elections, she was a unanimous first choice. Her beam and vault performances began to push teammates who had once been assured of spots ahead of her.

Sometime last month, Sanders walked into Duckworth’s office to ask for help. At the time, she still hadn’t broken the competitive lineup, though the team’s beam performances had been shaky in practice leading up to SEC Championships.

This time, Sanders wanted to talk gymnastics.

"We had a couple of girls struggling, and she knocked on my door and said ‘Can I talk to you?’" Duckworth said. "She looked at me and she said ‘I would never do this because this isn’t my style. I really want my gymnastics to speak for itself. But I need you to know that I’m ready, I want this,’ and she looked at me with these eyes, dead in my eyes, and she said ‘I will not let you down. That was it for me.’"

Sanders went into the beam lineup for the SEC Championships, posting a 0.75. Two weeks later, she scored a 9.85 at the NCAA Regionals, her career best.

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"I have a purpose here as a gymnast, and I’m not done with that," Sanders said. "I had to figure out a way to get my mind to focus on that. It’s about what you’re doing right here, right now, not two years from now, or 10 years ago. It’s all about the present moment. How can I be a better person for my team here and now? This is where I’ve been placed, and by doing that and living out my full potential as a gymnast and being in the program where I think that will continue to build myself into a better Marine.”
COLLEGE FOOTBALL

SEC beats Harbaugh as NCAA bans satellite camps

By Ralph D. Russo
The Associated Press

Michigan coach Jim Harbaugh’s next satellite camping trip through the South has been canceled.

The NCAA shut down so-called satellite football camps Friday after the Big Ten turned out to be the only Power Five conference in favor of them.

The Division I Council approved a proposal from the Southeastern Conference and the Atlantic Coast Conference requiring Bowl Subdivision schools “to conduct camps and clinics at their school’s facilities or at facilities regularly used for practice or competition,” the NCAA said. “Additionally, FBS coaches and non-coaching staff members with responsibilities specific to football may be employed only at their school’s camps or clinics.”

The change was effective immediately. Harbaugh, whose sweeping tour of the South last year heightened the debate about satellite camps, already had stops lined up this year in Florida and Alabama.

Division I Council chairman Jim Phillips, the athletic director at Northwestern, said the Big 12 and the Pac-12 also

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voted for the ACC and SEC proposal. From the Group of Five conferences, the Mid-American Conference, Conference USA and the American Athletic Conference voted with the Big Ten. Power Five votes count for two, so the final tally was 10-5 in favor of banning satellite camps.

The Big Ten also supported keeping the satellite camp issue as part of a comprehensive look at football that the sports’ NCAA oversight committee plans to undertake this year. Last year the Big Ten wanted to bring several proposals before the council, including an early signing period, initial eligibility, roster and coaching staff sizes and in-season practice time, but the 10 FBS conferences agreed instead to a broadband review.

“What occurred was that the SEC and the ACC in February or so felt that the satellite camp issue was such a critical issue that it should go in front of the council and be taken out of the comprehensive package and the holistic review,” Phillips said. “From a Big Ten perspective, I think we’re disappointed. We felt like this should be part of all the other legislative items that we have tabled and that we haven’t brought forward to the council.”

The SEC and ACC already ban their coaches from working at football camps away from their campuses. The Big Ten and other conferences do not. Harbaugh, Penn State coach James Franklin and others have been trying to make recruiting inroads in the South by guest coaching at camps held at other colleges and high schools.

SEC Commissioner Greg Sankey was the most vocal critic of what he called “recruiting camps,” but said his league was prepared to lift its restrictions unless the NCAA stepped in. The SEC is in the most fertile football recruiting territory in the country, so its coaches don’t necessarily need to venture outside the league’s footprint for talent. If anything, permitting satellite camps might have led to SEC coaches encroaching on each other’s turf.
ON FOOTBALL

The Tide quarterback watch is on

CECIL HURT

On one hand, there are hundreds of variations a University of Alabama football fan can follow over the course of a spring practice.

The battle over a left guard position, or the question of whether a converted defensive back can prosper at wide receiver is important and can be captivating.

But let's be honest — much of the interest in spring practice centers on the quarterback for the coming year. That's especially true when there's not an incumbent on the roster, a luxury Alabama has not enjoyed since AJ McCarron was entering his third year on the job in 2013. So when Nick Saban says something about quarterbacks, no matter how benign, it's news.

No one should be surprised at what Saban said Wednesday when he noted Cooper Bateman and David Cornwell were the most consistent performers in last Saturday's scrimmage and thus (he didn't say this, but let's infer for a moment) are probably hypothetically atop the non-existent depth chart heading into this Saturday's scrimmage.

"I think the guys that have the most knowledge and experience played the best," Saban said. "When I say that, I'm talking about Cooper Bateman — who's been in the system the longest — and David Cornwell. They played the best."

That sparked all sorts of discussion, of course. As noted earlier, people watch spring training for a quarterback race as surely as people buy tickets to a Star Wars movie to see the Death Star explode. If you require a spoiler alert for that, you haven't seen enough Star Wars movies to care.

But why should that come as a surprise to anyone? The line of quarterback succession under Saban has been as stable as the ascension to the throne of the Japanese Empire. From John Parker Wilson to Greg McElroy, the No. 1 quarterback in the spring — and the eventual

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winner in the fall -- has always been the returning starter, or the experienced backup from the year before. It's been inevitable, no matter how certain the Alabama fan base and the national media has predicted that this year (fill in the year of your choice) will be different.

It's not exclusive to Alabama, of course. There are other fan bases who are perennially convinced that a five-star freshman or junior-college transfer is going to explode on the scene and win a Heisman Trophy. It happens, rarely. For every Cam Newton or Johnny Manziel, though, there are dozens of perfectly good quarterbacks who get unfairly labeled as "disappointments."

It does happen everywhere. But -- and I write about this from time to time -- it strikes Alabama with a peculiar vengeance. Perhaps it's because in a fabulous stretch of success over a half-century, it's the one good thing in college football that hasn't happened, not since Joe Namath or Kenny Stabler -- that golden-armed superstar that dominates opponents and goes on to be the No. 1 pick in the draft and a great program-defining icon, a Peyton Manning or John Elway or (on the field, so cancel the debate) a Jameis Winston. Alabama has abundant championships and All-Americans galore but they don't have, well, that. Is that fair to Richard Todd or Jeff Rutledge, super pro-style recruits who played in the wishbone? Is it fair to McElroy or McCarron or to Jay Barker? Probably not. But it is unmistakably what Alabama fans want, as much as anything short of another national championship. So even when things are fine at the position, and they seem to be, even the best heir apparent sometimes can't win -- even when he is winning..
Better than expected

Avery Johnson reflects on his first year in Tuscaloosa, looks forward to upcoming challenges

Michael Casagrande mcasagrande@al.com

News broke a year ago Wednesday night.
The brief flirtation between the University of Alabama and Avery Johnson grew into a long-term relationship. Exactly two minutes before Duke and Wisconsin tipped off in Indianapolis for the NCAA championship, an emailed statement from Alabama athletics director Bill Battle made it official.

Johnson hopped on a plane the next day.
He hasn’t stopped moving since.
A year later, Johnson spoke with AL.com to reflect on the successes, failures and surprises in the maiden season with an eye on the future.

For starters, Johnson won’t deny the 2015-16 season exceeded his initial impressions. Though it ended with six losses in the final

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eight games, the 18-15 record wasn’t on the table a year ago. There’s internal satisfaction with the foundation if not the final result.

“We never expected to be a part of any bubble talk or tournament talk,” Johnson told AL.com. “But to just go through that experience and have an opportunity to make it into the tournament was an achievement within itself.”

There were upset wins over the likes of Wichita State, Notre Dame, South Carolina and Texas A&M. Those put Alabama in position to beat preseason expectations that Johnson hopes will ramp up in years to come. A few programs are used as the model for where the Tide aims moving forward.

Building a basketball power in the heart of football country isn’t without precedent.

“That’s why I’m excited about Oklahoma,” Johnson said. “They’ve been able to find that balance of patience with the basketball program and now they’re in the Final Four. They were able to grow and develop. That’s what we’re trying to do.”

Lon Kruger took over the Sooner program five years ago coming off consecutive losing seasons. It took a third in his first year before they reached the NCAA tournament in Year 2. Consecutive second-round exits were followed by a Sweet 16 last year and a Final Four run as a No. 1 seed this year.

Ohio State has played for basketball national championships and Florida won a few while simultaneously maintaining powerful football programs.

Alabama’s been to just two NCAA tournaments in the past decade. It’s never been past the Elite Eight.

“We can’t ever make it to the Final Four until we get into the tournament consistently,” Johnson said, “have some ups and downs and hopefully get lucky and learn from some of our mistakes.”

Johnson pointed to a moment from last year's NCAA tournament. He recalled the Villanova pep band piccolo player who gained internet fame when CBS cameras caught her with tears streaming down her cheeks when the top-seeded Wildcats lost to NC State in the second round.

“I’d rather have our team in that situation crying and have another opportunity to come back. You can’t do anything until you get in (the tournament) and experience it. The same thing with Villanova. The coaches have been there for a while, been able to lay the groundwork for the program.”

That means getting the roster built in Johnson’s image. Since arriving, six of Anthony Grant’s recruits have transferred. Of the 10 scholarship players returning or headed to Alabama, four were signed in the Grant era. Recruiting continues for next sea-

son with a few graduate transfers on the wish list.

They’ll also need to replace Retin Obasohan’s team-high 17.6-point average and 45 steals. Low-post play didn’t meet expectations as the Tide was out-rebounded by nearly four boards a game. Arthur Edwards (9.5 ppg.) also graduated while Justin Coleman (7.8 ppg) and Michael Kessens (3.7 ppg) will transfer. That leaves Alabama without three of the four top scorers.

Help is coming from a few directions. First, freshman Dazon Ingram’s promising debut season was cut short by the December broken foot. Transfers Nick King (Memphis) and Avery Johnson Jr. (Texas A&M) will be eligible by the fall. King especially has impressed coaches and teammates since arriving last summer.

As of now, two newcomers are on scheduled for arrival this summer. Forward Braxton Key is the current headliner as the No. 67 player in the 247Sports composite of recruiting rankings. He’ll be joined by shooting guard Ar’Mond Davis, the No. 6 JUCO transfer.

The recruiting cycle is far from over with a few graduate transfers targeted. It just won’t include the one-time crown jewel of the class. Terrance Ferguson, the nation’s No. 15 player, committed to Alabama in August but didn’t sign in the fall. He officially dropped the pledge March 1. Johnson had stated his willingness to pursue the one-and-done level player like Ferguson, but didn’t hook one thus far in the first full year recruiting.

As the calendar flips, Johnson has an idea of what’ll be anticipated from this second Alabama team. It was picked 13th in the 14-team SEC last fall and he thinks a mid-pack forecast is coming this time.

The real target come after that. Johnson said they should be ready to make noise by 2017-18 with two full recruiting classes built around his vision.

“By the third year, that’s when we have to have the wheels rolling on this thing,” Johnson said. “If we do it right. Coaches hate responsibility, but that will let me know if I have this thing going by the third year.”

That buckle-up energy of Day 1 remains in Johnson’s voice as the long offseason begins. Early success came more in the form of a culture shift than the upset wins. There have been recruiting hits and a few misses — standard stuff for a re-crafted program’s first year.

Whether by accident or design, setting low bar for the first year allows Johnson to ride the successes into Year 2 as momentum.

“I’m not trying to come in here and wave a magic wand and say we’re going to get this thing done over night,” Johnson said. “But at the same time, we are laying the steps. We have to treat our program, not like we’re a football program, but we have to treat our program like it’s a basketball elite program.”

The Birmingham News
Wednesday, April 6, 2016

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Tide roughs up Devilettes in milestone win

By Tommy Deas
Executive Sports Editor

The University of Alabama didn't prolong its 1,000-victory celebration.
A milestone game signifying 20 years of winning softball was overwhelming, but it was brief. The fourth-ranked Crimson Tide used just five innings to put away Mississippi Valley State by the mercy rule. Alabama won 14-0 at Rhoads Stadium to improve to 32-7.

"I just told the team there's not many times when you're in a program that's 20 years old that you get to see history," said Patrick Murphy, who was an assistant for the program's first two seasons before being promoted to head coach. "Team 20 was a part of history tonight. A thousand wins is a lot."

By the end of the first inning, Alabama was up 8-0. Chandler Dare went 2-for-2 with three RBIs in that inning and Marisa Runyon was 2-for-2 with two runs as the Crimson Tide batted around.

UA added four runs in the second and a couple more in the third, with Peyton Grantham hitting a home run.

The pitching was nearly perfect. Starter Alexis Osorio (9-5) didn't give up a hit in three innings of work, but did yield a couple of walks while striking out seven. Madi Moore came out of the bullpen to pitch the final two innings, giving up the only hit.

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Alabama's Chandler Dare steals second as the ball bounds away from Mississippi Valley State shortstop Dejanac Gage at Rhoads Stadium. STAFF PHOTO/GARY COSBY JR.

"It's kind of hard to grasp how many wins that is," she said. "You think about it, it's 20 years and that's 20 seasons, so it's really cool to be part of this moment in history."

"I'm 20. It's pretty cool to kind of watch Alabama softball evolve over the years. I started watching Alabama play when I was about 5 years old, so they were out at Sokol Park and I would watch Kelly Kretschman, Stephanie VanBrakle, Jordan Praytor, all these greats who played here. It's really cool to be a part of it now."

Alabama will host Mississippi State in a three-game series starting Friday.

—Reach Tommy Deas at tommy@tidesports.com or at 205-722-0224.

SOFTWARE
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Alabama has averaged better than 50 wins per season, making 10 Women's College World Series appearances and winning the national title in 2012. UA has also made 17 straight trips to NCAA regionals and is the only team in the country to appear in the super regional round for all 11 seasons since that format was adopted. Alabama has won 10 SEC championships: five regular-season titles and five tournament crowns.

Dare, a junior from Moundville, went over to the stands after the game and signed autographs for a handful of young fans. In the program's early years, she was one of them.
ALABAMA SWIMMING

Tide earns first NCAA relay title

Oslin, Romanov, Kaliszak and Gkolomeev set school record

By Evan Dudley
Special to The Tuscaloosa News

The water is warm but the swim team is frosty. There is no anxiousness, no apprehension — most importantly — there are no doubts. They are cool and collected, undisturbed by the chants of the crowd and unafraid of the competition awaiting them in the pool. The guys on the University of Alabama swim team have a comfortable air about them as they lay languidly in the ready room before making the two-minute walk to the pool deck. History is only one minute and twenty-two seconds away.

Calm confidence quickly turned to joyful exuberance as UA's 200-meter medley relay won the first NCAA relay title in school history. The Crimson Tide used a record-setting anchor split to secure the title on March 25, at the 2016 NCAA Swimming and Diving Championships, held at the McAuley Aquatic Center on the campus of Georgia Tech.


"We were just ready to rip," said Kaliszak. While Kaliszak, Romanov and Gkolomeev were eagerly waiting in the ready room, Connor Oslin was still in the water.

Oslin, a three time All-American, had just finished the 100-meter backstroke and was warming down. He would have only a few moments to rest before gearing back up for the first leg of the relay.

"I was just trying to chill and relax before heading back to the pool," Oslin said. "We all walked out together, gave a quick 'Roll Tide,' and I got in the water and just did my thing."

After months of training and effort, the moment was not lost on the relay team. Four individuals had become one and they were not to be denied.

"There was no fear, we were smiling the whole way to the pool deck," said Romanov.

"We had already won the race psychologically, the only thing we had to do was get in the water."

The only question heading into the event was Gkolomeev.

Over the previous two days at the championships were uneventful for the junior from Athens, Greece, as he battled a stomach illness. However, Gkolomeev recovered quickly and became the hero of the day after diving in third and battling to first during his record-setting anchor split.

"I had a really good turn and I knew it was about to happen," said. "I heard the guys screaming, turned behind me and saw the board. It was amazing."

Although the relay title was a high mark during the four-day event, the Crimson Tide tallied 225 points and took sixth place in the championships, the best finish by a Crimson Tide team since taking fifth in 1983 and runner-up in 1977.

Following a 10th-place finish last year, Alabama has now posted back-to-back top-10 finishes for the first time since placing eighth in 1985 and 1986.

Coach Dennis Pursley, a former Alabama swimmer and coach of Great Britain's 2012 Olympic team, said the foundation for this success was built four years ago by the seniors who bought in to the culture change that would be required to resurrect the once-proud program.

"There's three aspects to it," said Pursley. "'The team first concept was one, another was the commitment and performance level in training and not being satisfied with what had existed previously. The third aspect was the lifestyle component, a lifestyle compatible with excellence."
No. 6 Crimson Tide wins 3-0, first shutout of season

By: Jim Harvin

GAINESVILLE, Fla. -- Sixth-ranked Alabama scored two first-inning runs and added an insurance run in the top of the sixth en route to posting a 3-0 shutout of top-ranked Florida Sunday, winning the series in the process before a season-high crowd of 2,409, the fifth-largest in UF history.

Haylie Mccleney and Chandler Dare, the first two hitters in the Tide lineup, each reached base and eventually scored in the top of the first to give Bama a quick 2-0 lead, and junior right-hander Sydney Littlejohn did the rest, tossing a complete-game two-hitter as the Tide won two of three from the Gators, with Littlejohn picking up both wins.

“I have to credit that 100 percent to my defense,” said Littlejohn, who improved to 14-2 in the circle on the season. “I heard them the whole time behind me.

“Florida is very strong offensively, and their hitters make adjustments. Our defense made adjustments to their hitters, and they played so well behind me. This is just a big confidence builder for our team to be able to do that against such a great offense.”

The Tide (31-7, 5-4) added a single run in the sixth, but it was just window dressing as Littlejohn was in command all afternoon.

“I think it was their first shutout all year at home, so you just really have to give her a lot of credit,” head coach Patrick Murphy said. “She mixed it up, she hit her spots and she was spinning it really well. We played good defense, too.

“This is a series that whoever wins it, earned it. Nobody gives it away. You really have to earn the win, and I thought we earned it today.”

The loss marked the first time Florida (34-3, 9-3) has dropped a series in four tries thus far, and adding salt to the wound was the fact UF head coach Tim Walton got thrown out of the game in the sixth inning after a heated argument with the home plate umpire.

“One of our keys this year is team speed, and we've got nine girls who've got the green light,” Murphy said. “When you have a really good catcher like (UF's Aubree) Munro, you're probably not going to steal much. So you've got to create opportunities for the speed somewhere else, and drag bunts is usually what does it for us.”

The Tide returns home for four straight games, beginning with a game against Mississippi Valley State University Tuesday at 6 p.m.
Record
31st
regional
title win
for Tide

Advances to 34th
straight NCAA
championships

By Tommy Deas
Executive Sports Editor

The peculiarities of
collegiate gymnastics
allow a team to throw
out a low score on each
apparatus, making a
major gaffe forgivable
as long as there isn't a
second on that event.
The fourth-ranked
University of Alabama
took full advantage of
that rule at Saturday's
NCAA Tuscaloosa
Regional, taking tumbles
from the balance
beam and on the floor
exercise but counting
neither to win with a
score of 197.125 in front
of a crowd of 10,116.
Alabama advances
to the NCAA champi-
onships on April 15-16
in Fort Worth, Texas,

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GYMNASTICS

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joined by runner-up Cal, which scored 195.925. Boise State finished third, followed by Kentucky, West Virginia and Bowling Green.

UA won its 12th consecutive regional and has now won an NCAA-best 31 total regional crowns. Alabama is advancing to the national championship event for the 34th year in a row.

The Crimson Tide’s road to Fort Worth could have ended abruptly at Coleman Coliseum, or at least been put in serious jeopardy, with another fall on either beam or floor, but UA survived it’s mistakes and avoided major disaster.

"Would I say it was pretty? No, it wasn’t our prettiest performance, but it was an example of never giving up," UA coach Dana Duckworth said. "... Just some very weird, odd mistakes and we bounced back."

Alabama’s first routine on beam resulted in a fall before Keely McNeer really even got started, and a score of 9.375. It was the first fall of her career.

Up next, Lauren Beers wobbled, perilously close to a second fall that would have counted on the score sheet. She collected herself and finished without any further drama.

"Everyone makes mistakes," said Mary Lillian Sanders, who came through with a 9.85 in the middle of the beam lineup to help settle the team down, “so we’re just ready to have each other’s back.”

On floor, Mackenzie Brannan came up short on a tumbling pass and fell backward. Her score of 9.2, however, didn’t count as Alabama scored 0.9 or better on its last four routines to close out its turn on the floor exercise.

While Alabama out-scored its competition, it was far from precise. There were few stuck landings and only five out of 24 routines resulted in scores of 9.9 or higher. The only 9.9 on an event other than floor was Brannan’s 9.9 on the uneven bars.

Alabama scored 49.275 on bars; 49.15 on beam, 49.475 on floor – just .025 below its season high – and 49.225 on vault.

“I feel that this team has yet to have our very, very best meet,” Duckworth said, “but I also feel like rebounding and coming back the way we did is one of the biggest lessons that we’ll be able to carry into the rest of our season.”

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Brown faces indefinite suspension

UA awaits appeal decision

By Aaron Suttles
Sports Writer

University of Alabama defensive back Tony Brown is facing an indefinite suspension from the NCAA, The Tuscaloosa News has learned.

The university has appealed and is awaiting a decision.

UA coach Nick Saban acknowledged Brown was “facing suspensions” during the veteran coach’s introductory spring press conference in March.

“When I get the final data on that I’ll definitely let you know,” Saban said.

Brown, a junior-to-be for the 2016 season, has participated in all eight of Alabama’s spring practices, including Saturday’s scrimmage.

The 6-foot, 195-pounder for Beaumont, Texas, has played in 26 career games, totaling 26 tackles, including two tackles for loss, during his two seasons at Alabama.

Brown was sent home the day before the Cotton Bowl in December for an undisclosed violation of team rules. He did not travel with the team to Arizona for the national championship game in January.

“We have made an internal decision to send Tony Brown home due to a violation of team rules,” Saban said at the time in a released statement.

A few weeks later at the Senior Bowl in Mobile, Saban said Brown was back with the team “right now but he is facing some future suspensions.”

Brown arrived in Tuscaloosa as an early

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BROWN
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enrollee in 2014 as a five-star recruit. He was arrested in January 2014 on charges of failure to obey and resisting arrest.
Those charges were questioned by eyewitnesses who said Brown had done nothing wrong, and Saban even hinted that the charges may have been a bit overblown.
"Look, some people are in the wrong place at the wrong time," Saban said at the time. "Some people don't make good decisions about what they do, what they say. Tony Brown's a fine young man, we're glad to have him in the program. We'll certainly try to use this as a learning experience for him.
"The punishment he receives will be so that he learns not to do something like this in a disrespectful way to somebody in a position of authority who is there to protect us all, which is our police. We're going to get him to learn from this."
Brown is competing for expanded role in the secondary. He has worked at cornerback, nickel back and safety during his time with the team. He's also a good special teams player, including a gunner on punt coverage.

-- Reach Aaron Suttles at aaron@tidesports.com or at 205-722-0229.
ALABAMA FOOTBALL

Scarborough has big effort in first scrimmage

By Aaron Sutts
Sports Writer

In the context of a spring practice, Saturday’s scrimmage, the first of the season for the University of Alabama football team, indicated a baseline for what is to come for the 2016 season.

As UA head coach Nick Saban accurately pointed out, if the first scrimmage was perfect there would be no need for subsequent spring practices or even fall camp. No, it wasn’t perfect, but it was the first data point for a lot of successful careers in crimson and white.

Among those was sophomore running back Bo Scarbrough, who much has been written about and from whom far less had been seen during his young career. But he was on full display inside Bryant-Denny Stadium on Saturday afternoon.

According to statistics released by UA, the 6-foot-2, 230-pounder rushed for 132 yards and three touchdowns on just nine carries. He’s got a lot of work to do before the team takes the field for the start of the season against Southern California, as do all of the other 84 scholarship players on the team, but it was a good start for a position that lacks experienced depth.

“Bo Scarbrough ran pretty well...” Saban said. “I think he’s got things that he can improve on. I certainly think he’s capable of doing all the things that we need him to do. I think part of it is confidence, knowledge, experience. Having confidence in what he’s supposed to do, how he’s supposed to do it, why it’s important to do it that way. I think when he understands that he plays fast and he’s very effective.”

Inside
Statistics from Saturday’s scrimmage. C7

Alabama tight end O.J. Howard cuts downfield after making a catch during warmups Saturday at Bryant Denny Stadium. PHOTO/DANIEL MELODRANA

“...They need to worry about what they need to do to be better so they can play winning football at the position and do the things that they need to do to become a really good quarterback,” Saban said. “I think they’ve done a pretty good job of that so far.

“We rotated a lot of guys around today. We’re trying to give everybody a chance right now. We’ll evaluate how they did on film and divvy up the reps for next week.”

Like most scrimmages, the defense played well.

“...batted some balls down, got some turnovers, made some good plays,” Saban said. “The team scrimmages again next Saturday.”

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PRESSURE TO BOOST GRADES?

A look at a campus constant: grade inflation

By Scott Canon
The Kansas City Star (TNS)

COLUMBIA, Mo. -- Want an easy A? Steer clear of R. Lee Lyman's Fundamentals of Archaeology. He's flunked students at the University of Missouri for decades.

In a sophomore class of 25 students in 2014, fewer than half earned an A. Two got D's and two flunked. Last fall, only two people in the course scored an A. Four failed. In 2012, half of the dozen students in his archaeology class tanked.

What gives? “I've used the same grading scale for the 30-odd years,” said Lyman, an anthropologist and now professor emeritus.

That makes him an academic oddity. Across the country at places like MU, at less selective schools and on the elite campuses of the Ivy League, grades keep going up. Professors such as Lyman take an ever lonelier stand to hold steady on the value of an A or a B.

Some analysts say grade inflation may be topping out simply because there's nowhere higher to go. Some schools have begun experimenting with the A-plus, hoping to create room atop the crowded scale. Experts say we'll sort the great from the good by running GPAs out farther beyond the decimal point.

In national surveys, faculty say they feel pressured more to boost grades than to keep them constant. Some of their colleagues urge them to resist inflation, but students, parents and campus higher-ups can subtly or bluntly lean on them for grading generosity.

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A respondent in one national survey—voicing what faculty say privately—suspected his academic department lost out on university teaching awards that rely heavily on student evaluations. Strict grading doesn’t win much love from the student body.

Studies have shown that the higher the grades students expect they’ll get in a course, the stronger the evaluation they’ll give an instructor. College teaching standards hardly turn on those marks from students alone—evaluations from other faculty, published research, the ability to win grants can trump them—but they matter.

Students also tend to shop for courses that produce the most A’s and the fewest F’s.

“Everybody looks to find where they can get easy grades,” said Kurt Diable, an MU student from Liberty.

Professors who find too few students taking their classes risk their status at a school and their ability to stay on the faculty.

A 2000 study found that adjuncts gave higher grades than their peers. Those short-term or part-time instructors shoulder a growing portion of the teaching load. In 1971, they represented about 1 in 5 instructors. Forty years later, they made up more than half.

“In most cases, (adjunct instructors are) evaluated solely on student evaluations,” New York University education professor Jonathan Zimmerman wrote in an essay last month. “Who can blame them for trying to gin up their scores? After all, their livelihoods are at stake.”

Grade inflation—yesterday’s B student becomes today’s A-minus scholar—reflects a change in campus culture, said Stuart Rojstaczer. He taught environmental science, geophysics and civil engineering at Duke University before leaving to write a novel and study how grades have risen. His recently updated research shows them rising 0.1 points per decade without pause for 30 years. His findings conclude A’s are now three times as common as in 1960.

MU, in a way that few universities reveal, lists all the grades given in its courses from 1997 on. An analysis of those numbers reveals the average grade rose from about a B (slightly below 3.1) to B-plus (just shy of 3.3) over the last 18 years. (MU notes that the figures could exaggerate grade inflation because they include graduate classes—a growing part of the university and a level where A’s have long been the default score.)

Rojstaczer said MU’s grade inflation puts the school at about half the national average.

The first national spike came in the 1960s and ’70s, he said, as professors worried that grading someone too low might jeopardize the student’s ability to stay in school. Kicked out of school, they could get drafted into the military. That leveled off for a time when the draft disappeared.

But grading rose again in the late 1980s and early ’90s. The latest ballooning of B’s into A’s, Rojstaczer said, reflected a cultural change.

“Students became customers rather than acolytes,” he said. “When you treat a student as a customer, the customer is always right. And the student customer wants a higher grade.”