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Cleveland named interim superintendent

Board hopes to hire new head by August

By Drew Taylor
Staff Writer

On Thursday, Gov. Robert Bentley asked the state board of education to take a page from the Bible in the way they treat Philip Cleveland, the newly appointed interim superintendent for the Alabama State Department of Education.

"We hope that this board will allow him to not just be a placeholder, but allow him to look at the Department of Education while he's there and maybe, do like John the Baptist did and prepare the way for the next person that comes along," Bentley said during the board meeting Thursday.

"We hope the board gives him the authority to do that."

On Thursday, the board approved Cleveland to serve as interim state superintendent, filling in for Tommy Bice, who retired as state superintendent on March 31 after filling that post since 2011.

Cleveland, who will begin his new duties Friday, is the deputy state superintendent for career technical/workforce development and guidance and counseling for the department. Previously, he was involved in career technical education for Blount County Schools and Wallace State Community College.

"I am honored to serve at the pleasure of the State Board of Education as the interim superintendent,"

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said in a written statement. “My focus will be improving efficiency in state government and providing increased support for K-12 children of our great state.”

In his selection as interim superintendent, Cleveland will not be a candidate for the permanent position, but could serve up to two six-month terms. Cleveland’s annual salary was also set to $192,000, but will revert to his deputy superintendent salary once a full-time candidate is chosen.

District 1 board member Matthew Brown said that of all the candidates he discussed with people in his district, Cleveland was the one that came the most lauded.

“I think that shows Dr. Cleveland will be able to jump right in and keep going with what we have at a critical time,” Brown said.

During the meeting, the board also set dates for selecting a full-time superintendent. The board will advertise the position from April 18 through June 6. It is set to interview finalists for the position on July 11-12.

The board also set the negotiable salary of the new superintendent to range between $200,000 and $250,000.

The board has set Aug. 1 to be the potential selection date for the new superintendent.

— Reach Drew Taylor at drew.taylor@tuscaloosanews.com or 205-722-0204.
Alabama Board of Education names Philip Cleveland interim state superintendent

By: Mike Cason

The state Board of Education today named Philip Cleveland interim state superintendent, replacing Tommy Bice, who retired last month.

Cleveland is the deputy state superintendent for career and technical education and workforce development.

He assumes his new duties on Friday.

Cleveland is a former teacher, high school principal and community college vice president and president.

He has degrees from Auburn University and Alabama A&M University in agriculture business and education and a doctoral degree in education from Nova Southeastern University.

As interim, Cleveland will not be a candidate for the permanent position. He could serve up to two six-month terms.

The board today set his annual salary at $192,000, just above that of the highest paid deputy superintendent.

That was to meet a requirement that the superintendent be the highest paid employee in the Department of Education.

"My focus will be improving efficiency in state government and providing increased support for K-12 children of our great state," Cleveland said in a statement.

Gov. Robert Bentley, who is president of the state BOE, said Cleveland has valuable experience in workforce training.

"He works very well with the Legislature and that's very important," Bentley said.

"I think he's a great selection and I think he'll do a good job."

The board discussed the search and qualifications for a permanent superintendent today.

The department plans to post an application its website by April 18 and receive applications through June 6.
Board to pick interim superintendent today

By Drew Taylor
Staff Writer

A new interim leader of Alabama’s public schools is expected to be selected today by the state board of education.

The Alabama State Board of Education will meet at 10 a.m. to discuss the candidates for interim superintendent for Alabama schools.

Board Vice President Jeff Newman said there are six applicants being considered and it is important to pick someone special to fill the post on a interim basis until a new superintendent is selected. The interim superintendent will succeed Tommy Bice, who served as superintendent from 2011 up until his retirement on March 31.

“I don’t think there is a more important decision we can make than placing someone here,” Newman said.

Those that have applied for the interim superintendent position include Earl Gardner, Jeffrey Langham, Larry Dichiara, Mark Martin, Phillip Cleveland and Tara Foster.

Gardner serves as the director of the Education Research and In-service Center at the University of North Alabama, a position he has held since 1998. He spent the early part of his career as a teacher, working in the Lawrence County Schools, Florence City Schools and Kilby Laboratory School at UNA from 1972 to 1981. He has worked at UNA since 1981.

Langham began work with the Alabama State Department of Education in January 2015 as an assistant state superintendent. From 2005 to 2015, he was the superintendent of Elmore County Public Schools.

Dichiara is the president of SOY Education Associates in Auburn and was the chief administrative officer and acting superintendent of Selma City Schools from 2014 to 2015. He previously served as superintendent of the Phenix City School System from 2004 to 2013 and worked in the Lee County School District from 1981 to 2004 in a variety of roles.

Martin was a teacher at in Atlanta Public Schools from 2003 to 2006 before becoming principal at Langston Hughes Academy in New Orleans from 2007 to 2014. He is currently studying at Harvard Graduate School of Education, where he is working to get his doctorate degree in education leadership.

Cleveland is the deputy state superintendent for career technical/workforce development and guidance and counseling for the Alabama State Department of Education. He also involved in career technical education for Blount County Schools and Wallace State Community College.

Foster is the interim assistant principal at Carrie A. Tuggle Elementary School in Birmingham. Throughout her career, she has taught several Alabama schools in Mobile, Maylene, Midfield and Brighton.

District 5 board member Ella Bell said she would like to see a superintendent that has a good relationship with educators statewide, as well as a good relationship with the Alabama Legislature.

“My primary characteristics are I want that person to be able to show me, without question, the integrity of their professional career,” Bell said. “I want to make sure that they not only have the competence, skill and ability to do a good job, but that they have integrity.”

Reach Drew Taylor at drew.taylor@tuscaloosanews.com or 205-722-0204.
Leni’s Law would expand Carly’s Law

Mike Cason mcason@al.com

The Alabama House of Representatives this week passed a bill that would effectively legalize the use of cannabidiol, which comes from the same plant as marijuana, for seizure disorders.

The bill, by Rep. Mike Ball, R-Madison, would expand on Carly’s Law, passed two years ago to allow a UAB study on the use of cannabidiol for seizure disorders.

Ball said Carly’s Law was a good step but wants those who did not qualify for the study to have the opportunity to try cannabidiol for potential benefits.

Cannabidiol, also called CBD oil, is legal in some states but not in Alabama. It’s made from cannabis, the marijuana plant, but has a much smaller amount of THC, the substance in marijuana that produces a high.

The House passed the bill by a vote of 103-0.

Ball’s bill would restrict THC content to 1 percent. He hopes to see it amended in the Senate to allow 3 percent, a level he said is needed for effectiveness.

Ball said even at 3 percent it would not be practical for anybody to use cannabidiol for a recreational high.

A Senate version of the bill, by Sen. Paul Sanford, R-Huntsville, would allow 3 percent.

At a public hearing last month, Ball’s bill drew opposition from doctors who said the state should wait on more conclusive research and said the bill would allow the use of cannabidiol that is not screened for quality or content like the product given to patients in the UAB study.

The pharmacy grade medicine used in the UAB study, Epidiolex, contains 0.2 percent THC.

Attorney General Luther Strange also opposed the bill, saying the state should not get ahead of the research.

The bill provides an affirmative defense against prosecution for marijuana possession if the cannabidiol is used for a debilitating condition that causes seizure disorders.

Ball’s bill originally allowed the use of cannabidiol for a wide range of symptoms, including severe pain, nausea and any condition resistant to conventional medicine. It was amended in committee to cover only seizure disorders.

Ball said he hopes the bill can be changed again to expand the allowed uses because of the potential help it could provide for other conditions.

Ball has named his bill Leni’s Law, after Leni Young, whose family moved from Alabama to Oregon so she could receive cannabidiol.

Leni’s father Wayne Young, testified by Skype at the March public hearing that Leni had improved markedly since taking cannabidiol.

Carly’s Law was named after Carly Chandler, whose Birmingham-area parents, and others spent many hours at the State House lobbying for the bill.
Gerald Dial proposes change to Open Meetings Act; bill would allow university trustees to meet privately to discuss hires

By: Seth Boster

Trustees at Jacksonville State University and all of Alabama’s public four-year universities would be able to meet in secret to discuss high-level hirings if proposed amendments to the state’s Open Meetings Act are made law.

An act signed by Gov. Robert Bentley last year allowed trustees from the University of Alabama and Auburn University to meet out of the public eye to discuss such matters. A bill sponsored by Sen. Gerald Dial, R-Lineville, would extend that provision beyond those campuses.

“I just want other colleges to have that same opportunity,” he said in a phone call earlier this week.

Dial, president pro tempore of Troy University’s board of trustees, said his proposed amendment was “fair” to potential job candidates. He explained his belief that colleges are at a disadvantage when hiring processes are totally public.

“It could adversely affect the quality of candidates you bring in,” he said. “It might deter the process; some candidates might be interested in a job but don’t want to get their name in the paper.”

The Alabama Press Association is not fighting the bill, which came before a Senate committee earlier this week and could reach the Senate floor next week. Felicia Mason, the association’s executive director, said the proposed amendments were part of negotiations that made the Open Meetings Act possible in its current form; the legislation initially failed in 2014, a year that saw several Alabama Supreme Court rulings weaken the previous Open Meetings Act.

Amendments passed in 2015 prohibited “serial meetings,” in which public officials meet in small groups to discuss issues before public meetings. Dial’s proposal allows trustees to hold serial meetings in regard to hires.

“With any major piece of legislation, there’s give and take on both sides,” Mason said.

Brad English, the state press association’s primary lobbyist, who worked to pass the 2015 amendments sponsored by Sen. Cam Ward, said including the aforementioned provision for Alabama and Auburn was “a compromise.” English said he expected Dial’s bill this session and had agreed to not oppose it.

“Any attempt to change the open meetings law from this point on, we will fight,” English said.

Jacksonville State trustees reached Wednesday spoke positively about Dial’s proposal, including Sen. Vivian Figures, D-Mobile.
"I don’t see a problem with it," she said, adding that she understood the state press association was “in support” of the bill. “It’s putting us on the same playing field of the other two larger institutions that have a right to do this.”

Jim Bennett, chairman of JSU’s board of trustees, said he generally favors open meetings regarding any public matter.

“But this has a sensitivity to it,” he said.

“It’s obvious reasons,” he said of why job applicants would want their names protected. “If folks back home are aware, it could damage their relationship with their current university or constituency.”

As chairman of the search committee last year that eventually recommended John Beehler as JSU’s president, trustee Ronnie Smith said Dial’s proposed amendment would be a positive.

“Anything he’s doing to allow the process to move forward and protect the anonymity of candidates, I would support,” Smith said.

He reflected on the meetings he sat in with the presidential search committee last year, meetings to identify the four finalists that eventually came to campus for public interviews. During the meetings, committee members referred to candidates as numbers rather than naming them in the presence of a reporter. The reporter was occasionally asked to leave the room.

“That was whenever we discussed character,” Smith said.

Trustees explained that there were some cases when privacy was beneficial.

“I don’t like the word ‘private,’” said Mason, with the state press association.

Dennis Bailey, the association’s counsel, said he worried there would be more pushes to change the Open Meetings Act in future legislative sessions.

“It seems,” he said, “that the trend is to try to exempt people from open meetings and open records.”
New committee to investigate allegations against Bentley

Melissa Brown and Kim Chandler  The Associated Press

The Alabama House of Representatives is expected to vote next week to establish a 15-person investigatory committee to probe the possible impeachment of Gov. Robert Bentley.

Rep. Ed Henry, R-Hartselle, said this week he will propose a new rule to create the committee, which would have subpoena power and could meet after the Legislature adjourns. He added the House could vote on it by next Wednesday or Thursday.

Henry would like to impose a six-month deadline on any committee investigation.

Bentley last month acknowledged making sexually charged remarks to a female aide, who has since resigned. The admission came after former Alabama Law Enforcement Secretary Spencer Collier, a day after being fired by Bentley, accused the governor of having an affair and of interfering with law enforcement investigations. Bentley denies allegations of a physical affair and misuse of his office.

Bentley said Tuesday there is "no basis" for impeachment.

Henry had initially filed articles of impeachment accusing Bentley of "willful neglect of duty, incompetence, corruption and moral turpitude," but said on Wednesday the legislature quickly realized it had no framework to conduct an impeachment process.

""We never left square one," Henry said. "What became crystal clear was that we do not have a mechanism to deal with this. We've been sitting on square one for the last eight days ... and now we can move to step two."

House Speaker Mike Hubbard said on Wednesday that he and the "vast majority of the House" think impeachment is "premature" at this juncture.

""We have to be careful about these things," Hubbard said. "We don't know of any wrongdoing, we don't know any of the facts yet."

Hubbard is currently facing 23 felony ethics charges of using his political offices to benefit his businesses. Bentley is expected to be a witness at his trial next month.

Henry is confident he has the votes to establish the investigatory committee, and said the public’s appetite to pursue impeachment is only growing.

He said a committee would be an "information gathering" body and have no power itself to move impeachment forward. Legislators can call an impeachment session at any time outside of the regular session and likely will if the committee finds probable cause, Henry said.

Henry said the legislature believes it "inherently" has subpoena power but acknowledges that will likely be challenged. A bill currently in the Senate would allow committee to enforce subpoenas through the circuit courts.

Alabama voters in November, as part of a piece-by-piece rewrite to the Alabama Constitution, will vote on changes to the part of the Alabama Constitution that deals with impeachment. The proposed change clarifies that it requires a two-thirds vote in the Alabama Senate to remove someone from office.
Bentley scandal: Rebekah Mason didn't disclose husband's income from UA to ethics commission

By: Leada Gore

Rebekah Caldwell Mason did not disclose all the sources of her husband's income to the State Ethics Commission while serving as Gov. Robert Bentley's Communications Director, according to an analysis of economic interest documents by AL.com.

Mason's final Statement of Economic Interest, filed May 1, 2014 to cover 2013, lists her husband Jon Mason's job as the director of the Governor's Office of Faith Based and Community Initiatives, also known as Serve Alabama. It also lists her consulting firm, RCM Communications. It does not, however, list Jon Mason's consulting firm, JRM Enterprises.

While officials at the ethics commission could not comment on a particular filing, a spokesperson confirmed that any income earned by a spouse — whether it was paid by a government or private entity — has to be included on a financial disclosure form.

According to records obtained by AL.com, JRM Enterprises — a Tuscaloosa-based advertising, marketing and design company founded in 2005 — has received a total of $245,600 since from the University of Alabama since 2010.

In 2013, UA paid JRM $96,200. On his economic interest form covering 2013, Jon Mason listed JRM as producing income of between $10,000 - $50,000. However, Rebekah Mason's form for the same period lists only RCM, her company. She responded not applicable on the sections related to other sources of income for herself or her spouse.

In 2012, JRM earned $30,000 from UA. Rebekah Mason listed JRM under spouse income in that year's economic interest form. Jon Mason did not report any income from JRM on his 2012 form.

Jon Mason did not report income from JRM or UA on his 2011 disclosure forms, despite receiving two payments from the university in January and February of that year. Jon Mason was hired as Serve Alabama director in January 2011.

Rebekah Mason was not required to file an ethics form for 2011. She joined the governor's staff in February of that year and earned a salary of $57,811. However, in early 2012, the Alabama legislature voted to raise the salary threshold for those required to file a report from $50,000 to $75,000.

Rebekah Mason filed ethics disclosure forms for 2012 and 2013, her two years as Gov. Bentley's communications director, before leaving her post in early 2014 to serve as the communications director for the governor's reelection campaign. After Bentley won his second term, Mason was employed as his senior political advisor and was paid by his campaign and the Alabama Council for Excellent Government, a 501 (c)(4) set up by UA Board of Trustees Legal Advisor Cooper Shattuck to promote the governor's agenda.

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She was not required to report any sources of income during that time.

Mason's name was linked to the governor after Dianne, his wife of 50 years, filed for divorce in August 2015. Last month, Gov. Bentley admitted to making "inappropriate comments" to Mason though both have denied having a physical affair.

An audio tape released after the governor's statements including Bentley discussing touching Rebekah Mason's breasts and buttocks.

Neither John nor Rebekah Mason responded to requests for comments on this story. Rebekah Mason currently faces an ethics complaint filed by Rep. Johnny Mack Morrow, D-Red Bay, alleging she served as an unregistered lobbyist on behalf of the governor.

Ethics Commission

Statements of Economic Interest, due by April of each year, are required from a wide variety of state and municipal workers, including all elected officials, candidates, county administrators, building inspectors, police and fire chiefs, principals, school board members and superintendents and directors of state agencies.

According to the Code of Alabama, filers are required to report combined household income and list the name of each business and income generated in a set of increments ranging from less than $1,000 to at $250,000 or more. Filers are also required to list any business earning at least $1,000 in which they or their spouse is an "officer, director, trustee or consultant."

Each person filing to form has to affirm that the information true and correct. Failure to file a form by the deadline is subject to a fine up $10 a day, capped at $1,000. If the Ethics Commission finds a person intentionally violates financial disclosure requirements, they are subject to fines and misdemeanor charges.
William W. Winternitz M.D.

By: Staff

The rich, long life of William W. Winternitz, M.D. will be celebrated Saturday, April 16, 2016, at The University Club in Tuscaloosa at 2:30 p.m. A reception will follow. Heritage Chapel Funeral Home & Cremations, a Dignity Memorial Provider, is handling arrangements. Born in New Haven, Conn. June 21, 1920, he died October 10, 2015, at home in Tuscaloosa. He is survived by his wife of 32 years, Madeleine M. Hill; three children, Dr. William W. Winternitz, Jr., Helen W. Winternitz and Paul K. Winternitz; four grandchildren, Paul Phelps, Jill, Jana and Jamison Winternitz; and many nieces and nephews. He was preceded in death by his first wife, Mary P. Winternitz; parents, Drs. M.C. and Helen Winternitz; sisters Elizabeth Thompson, Jane Mellors and Mary Cheever; and brother Thomas Winternitz.

Completing studies at Andover Academy, he attended Dartmouth College where he was Phi Beta Kappa and graduated magna cum laude. Following in his parents’ footsteps, he received his medical degree from Johns Hopkins University and was tapped for Alpha Omega Alpha. After serving in the U.S. Army, he returned to Hopkins as resident on the Osler Service.

Dr. Winternitz began his academic career in 1950 at Yale University School of Medicine. Later completing a fellowship at University College Medical School in London, he returned to the United States in 1960 and joined a newly established medical school at the University of Kentucky. There he was chair of the endocrinology division and later, director of clinical research.

In 1977 he was recruited by his former dean at Kentucky to The University of Alabama College of Community Health Sciences, also a newly established medical school. As chair of Internal Medicine and later Director of Student Affairs, he was instrumental in the evolution of the College’s outstanding program of medical education.

He was widely recognized as a skilled diagnostician, a compassionate physician and an exemplary teacher. He received a number of teaching awards including the Outstanding Commitment to Teaching Award from the UA Alumni Association in 1989. At CCHS he was twice named Outstanding Teacher by graduating medical students and from the residents received the Gold Stethoscope award. In 1992, he was presented the prestigious Laureate Award for Lifetime Achievement from the American College of Physicians and at the CCHS Rural Medical Conference in 2008 received the Distinguished Service Award in recognition of his "outstanding commitment to health care in rural Alabama."

He completely enjoyed academic medicine which enabled him to combine his passion for medicine with his love for teaching. He relished his role as a doctor whether reading a journal or diagnosing a patient from the mountains of eastern Kentucky. His ideal was to be both doctor and humanist. To his students, he provided insight and a model of medical practice; from them, he drew energy.

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He was unfailingly generous with his gifts of time and resources. He was a member of the Rotary Club of Tuscaloosa and a Paul Harris fellow, served as President for the state Diabetes Associations in both Kentucky and Alabama, and for many years regularly volunteered for clinics at the county health department. In retirement, he liked to stay involved with the College and current with medical developments.

Bill embraced life. Devoted to family, he relished the chance to introduce younger members to the natural world that he so thoroughly enjoyed. He was a steady supporter of his wife and her community service projects, often joining her volunteer activities such as making midnight runs to copy grant proposals or teaching third-graders to use a stethoscope. Numerous and varied pets shared his household through the years, and his passion for growing things was evident in the greenhouses of orchids and begonias he tended for forty years.

As a staunch health enthusiast, he enjoyed outdoor sports, particularly hiking the mountains of his beloved New Hampshire until he was 91 years old. He will be remembered for his kindness to all things living, whether a very sick patient or an orphaned crow. He had an encyclopedic knowledge of the sciences and liberal arts which he marshaled for discussions and story-telling. His quick wit would lighten any conversation.

Bill loved people of all ages and backgrounds but especially enjoyed interacting with students on campus and at the Rec Center until a week before his final illness.

The family wishes to express gratitude to Jones Fowler for his invaluable support the past few years.

If one wishes to make a contribution, please consider the W.W. Winternitz Geriatric Fund, (The University of Alabama CCHS, Box 870326, Tuscaloosa, AL 35486) or Hospice of West Alabama (3851 Loop Rd., Tuscaloosa, AL 35494).

Condolences may be offered at www.heritagechapeltuscaloosa.com.
Pig to human kidney transplants on horizon?

Researchers at UAB hopeful it'll be possible in a decade

Amy Yurkanin ayurkanin@al.com

During the next five years, researchers at UAB hope to genetically modify pig kidneys that can be used in humans — filling the supply gap for tens of thousands of patients on the transplant waiting list.

The school recently recruited a leading researcher from Indiana University to lead the effort to develop human-compatible kidneys from pigs. Dr. Joseph Tector joined the medical school faculty April 1.

Last week, school officials announced a $19.5 million grant from biotechnology company United Therapeutics Corporation to launch the program.

About 100,000 people in the United States are waiting for a kidney, and about 3,400 of them live in Alabama, according to UAB. Every year, thousands of people die while waiting for kidneys, and others rely on costly dialysis treatments.

Tector said the goal of the program is to work on gene modifications, then breed the modified pigs and prepare their kidneys for transplant.

"It's going to allow us to have our own one-stop shop from A to Z," he said.

Animal-to-human organ transplants have been

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attempted in the past with no success. Baby Fae, an infant in California, received a baboon heart in 1984, but died 21 days after the transplant due to rejection.

Tector said new technology, including CRISPR genome editing systems, might make it possible to modify pig genes so the animals' organs become compatible in human patients.

"So one of the big problems is that there wasn’t the ability to engineer the pigs like there is now," Tector said. "It took three years to knock out one gene. Knocking out one gene every three, four or five years is too slow. Now that you can knock out a number of genes in one interaction — that opens a lot more possibilities."

Late last year, a team at Harvard working on animal-to-human transplants modified DNA in an astounding 62 places, which eliminated several genetic barriers to pig kidney transplants.

The FDA regulates animal-to-human transplants, and recognizes possible threats such as the transmission of infections from animal hosts to human patients, which could subsequently spread to the population. One of the reasons researchers selected pigs, Tector said, was the relatively low risk of disease.

Human patients already receive pig tissue to repair heart valves and damaged skin, he said. Making the leap to solid organs such as kidneys could happen within the next decade, he said.

"Right now, pig grafts appear to be rejected in the same way a human transplant would be," Tector said. "We are optimistic that we can try and help people in the next several years."
Alabama Power, Protective Life donate a combined $1 million to UAB football

By: Mitchell Kilpatrick

The UAB football team is getting some major support from the Birmingham business community.

Alabama Power Company and Protective Life, both based in Birmingham, have each committed $500,000 to go toward the UAB Athletic Foundation’s $15 million goal for a proposed Football Operations Building. The facility will house offices, team meeting and film rooms, training facilities, locker rooms, and weight rooms.

The proposed Operations Building was given the green light by the UA System Board of Trustees in February. UAB Athletic Director Mark Ingram hopes to start building the facility this summer so that it will be completed by the time UAB football returns in the fall of 2017.

Protective Life was the first major corporation to donate such a large sum to the facility, donating their $500,000 last month. The Birmingham business community has shown great solidarity toward UAB over the past year.

“When the future of UAB Football was in question, the Birmingham business community, recognizing the importance of UAB athletics to the renewal of Birmingham, stepped up and provided the funding needed to keep the program alive”, said Protective Life CEO and University of Alabama System Trustee Johnny Johns. “But the job isn’t finished. UAB Football cannot reach its potential without quality facilities for coaches and players. That is why community support for the Football Operations Building project is so important. We hope our gift will encourage others to do what is necessary to ensure that UAB football can be successful and sustainable in the future.”

This week, the Alabama Power Foundation joined Protective Life in donating $500,000 of their own. Together, these two companies have knocked out $1 million of the facility’s $15 million goal. The UAB Athletic Foundation has lined up a few other major gifts that will make the football facility that much closer to reality.

“We join with the many organizations getting behind this project because it has broad implications in expanding UAB’s growing economic and cultural contributions to our region,” said Myla Calhoun, Alabama Power’s vice president for Charitable Giving. “UAB has been central to Birmingham’s resurgence, and UAB Athletics is seizing an opportunity to build excellence across its programs that will be felt in very positive ways across our city.”

UAB has had a tumultuous year, but the Birmingham business community has rallied around the school and is now investing heavily in its future. Athletic Director Mark Ingram is grateful for the support the school has received and what it can mean for the future of UAB football.

“We are all very excited about the broad interest this project has generated in a relatively short time,” he said. “And we will be announcing many other exciting gifts in the coming days and

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weeks. It is clear that leaders in Birmingham believe in the importance of UAB and UAB Football.”

UAB’s football program was shut down at the beginning of December last year, making the university the first Division 1A athletics program since 1995 to abandon the sport. After six emotional months of anger, calling for Ray Watts’ removal, and #FreeUAB, the football program was reinstated.

The proposed Football Operations Building will help bring the UAB football program to greater heights when it returns in 2017. Head coach Bill Clark, who recently signed a top Conference USA recruiting class, says the importance of this new facility cannot be exaggerated.

“We already have excitement in and around the program and are working hard toward 2017,” Clark said. “Watching shovels hit the dirt and steel come out of the ground will boost the energy even more — in our recruiting, on the practice field, in the meeting room and in the weight room. Our return is very real, and this facility is a tangible symbol that we are coming back to be stronger than ever.”
Regions gives another $500K installment for UAB program

By: Michael Seale

Birmingham's largest bank has chipped in another $500,000 toward the Regions Institute for Financial Education at the University of Alabama at Birmingham.

According to last week's meeting agenda from the University of Alabama System Board of Trustees, the board approved an installment of $500,000 to the Regions Institute for Financial Education Endowed Professorship in the Collat School of Business at UAB, part of the bank's initial $2 million pledge to the program.

The Regions (NYSE: RF) Institute for Financial Education was designed in January 2015 to improve financial literacy and responsibility through a variety of courses and programs.

The institute's purpose is to develop and facilitate financial education programs in conjunction with Pathways to Success, a college access grant awarded to Birmingham City Schools projected to reach a cohort of approximately 4,000 students over seven years.

It also works with with GEAR UP Alabama, a college access grant awarded to the UAB School of Education reaching an estimated 10,000 students in Alabama's Black Belt over seven years as well.

In addition to those programs, the institute is also facilitating two workshop series for UAB students: financial education boot camps and student athlete workshops.
‘Hero Fund’ helps bring genomic medicine to low-income patients

The HudsonAlpha Foundation received a generous $1,050,000 anonymous donation to establish the Hero Fund. This fund will help patients who need, but cannot afford access to genomic medicine.

In November 2015, the HudsonAlpha Institute for Biotechnology opened the Smith Family Clinic for Genomic Medicine, LLC. The Clinic uses whole genome sequencing to diagnose patients living with rare, undiagnosed or misdiagnosed diseases. The Hero Fund will provide financial assistance to qualified Clinic patients.

"We consider the patients at the Smith Family Clinic for Genomic Medicine heroes," said Howard Jacob, PhD; executive vice president for genomic medicine at HudsonAlpha. "They fight every single day, battling devastating disease, ineffective or no treatments and no answers."

"The donor's intent is to help as many patients as possible, so we have been tasked with raising matching funds," said Lynne Berry, executive director of the Foundation. "Your 'gene-erosity' makes it possible to help those in need."

To learn more or to support the Hero Fund, visit support.hudsonalpha.org/hero.*
UAH Business Incubator

Plans for a $12 million business incubator at the University of Alabama in Huntsville (UAH) got a boost recently with a $500,000 grant from the U.S. Dept. of Commerce Economic Development Administration. UAH was among 25 grant awardees, totaling $10 million.

The EDA investment funds the university’s Virtual Proof of Concept Center (POCC). The POCC will serve as a strategic approach to utilize university resources at UAH to bring “shelved” technologies into the marketplace through identification and funding of entrepreneurs and by providing a range of services to convert ideas, research and prototypes into viable commercial products.

U.S. Sen. Richard Shelby's office was instrumental in assisting UAH during the application process, said Dr. Ray Vaughn, UAH vice president for research and economic development.

“We sincerely appreciate all the advice and assistance we have and continue to receive from Sen. Shelby and his unwavering support of UAH and the Huntsville community,” Dr. Vaughn said. “We are extremely pleased about the news that EDA awarded this i6 Challenge grant in support of our Innovation to Invention Center.”
Theory of Everything

For the first time, scientists have observed ripples in the fabric of spacetime called gravitational waves, arriving at the Earth from a cataclysmic event in the distant universe. This confirms a major prediction of Albert Einstein’s 1915 general theory of relativity and opens an unprecedented new window onto the cosmos.

Physicists have concluded that the detected gravitational waves were produced during the final fraction of a second of the merger of two black holes to produce a single, more massive spinning black hole. This collision had been predicted but never observed.

The gravitational waves were detected on Sept. 14, 2015 by both of the twin Laser Interferometer Gravitational-wave Observatory (LIGO) detectors, located in Livingston, La., and Hanford, WA.

Research scientist Dr. Tyson Littenberg at the University of Alabama in Huntsville (UAH) Center for Space Plasma and Aeronomic Research (CSPAR) helped the LIGO team develop sophisticated computer algorithms that comb through data and extract physical information from a detection.

“[I] knew within a few hours of the detection that we had something big. Really big,” he said. “The significance cannot be overstated. Gravitational waves are the last missing confirmation of Einstein’s general theory of relativity – our most fundamental understanding of how physics works in the macroscopic world.”

The LIGO discovery has broad connections in the fields of fundamental physics, astrophysics and astronomy. For more information, visit bit.ly/UAHgravity •
Serious concerns exist for cybersecurity

By: Rayford B. Vaughn, Jr.

This paper outlines serious security concerns associated with industrial control systems that are often found in critical infrastructure applications. The 10 concerns were developed based on more than six years of research using a unique industrial control systems security laboratory and sponsorship by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, the National Science Foundation, and the Department of Defense. The concerns are not presented in any particular order as each is quite serious and introduces realistic attack vectors into a critical infrastructure application.

All industrialized nations have recognized the need for protection of national infrastructures that society depends on to maintain quality of life and guarantee the safety and security of its citizenry. In the United States, a Presidential directive (PDD-63) issued in May 1998 set up a national program of "Critical Infrastructure Protection." In Europe, the "European Programme for Critical Infrastructure Protection" (EPCIP) refers to the doctrine or specific programs created as a result of the European Commission's directive EU COM (2006)786, which designates European critical infrastructure that, in case of fault, incident, or attack, could impact both the country where it is hosted and at least one other European Member State.

However, while governments have recognized the importance of critical infrastructure, very little has been done to actually secure the underlying component elements of the controlling structures (e.g., human-machine interface software, radio links, development of prevention/detection tools, and secure protocols) beyond point-mitigation strategies. A comprehensive approach to control system security has not been established nor is third-party validation of the security functionality a common occurrence. Of special concern is the likely relationship between vulnerabilities and attack vectors in industrial control systems (ICS) versus automated weapon systems, which use similar control functions and control paths.

Since 2007, the author has been engaged in the research reported in this essay and has demonstrated both significant and exploitable vulnerabilities and strategies that are plausible, affordable, and reasonable to prevent or mitigate such attacks. Additionally, the author and a graduate student identified the first industrial control systems hacker who was convicted and jailed in the United States and is currently serving seven years in federal prison for implanting malicious code and manipulating a control system operating an HVAC system within a hospital which served as proof of attack viability and ease. This paper outlines 10 serious concerns (based on the author's experience and opinion) with industrial control system security that should be, at the very least, considered when investigating the cybersecurity aspects of ICS implementations and perhaps weapons systems reviews.

The top 10 cybersecurity-related control system concerns are described briefly in the paragraphs that follow:
Controlling software is often flawed
An ICS is normally monitored by an operator using a software package known as a Human-Machine Interface (HMI). Existing commercial products have been shown to have significant vulnerabilities that include fragile authentication, authentication bypass, and poor use of the underlying operating system security features. When software is built without adhering to established secure software engineering principles, the introduction of vulnerabilities is an assured result. Hundreds of such vulnerabilities have been reported and continue to be discovered. Without implementation of strong secure software design and implementation and competent third-party evaluation, this weakness is likely to continue.

No forensics trail
If or when a security relevant event occurs in ICS, there is generally no audit trail of what caused the event. There is no device similar to an airplane "black box" that can replay events that may have caused anomalous behavior in ICS systems or even significant events such as a power outage or gas pipeline explosion. While some audit files do exist, a comprehensive audit trail does not. Being able to recreate an event is fundamental to establishing cause and effect.

No third party validation
In government use of IT software with access to sensitive data, some third-party validation of the assurance level of the software being employed is required under ISO Standard 15408 (aka, the Common Criteria). Software in ICS environments is not subject to validation by any third party but probably should be. Such validation from an assurance standpoint could help in removing vulnerabilities and improving security architectures. This concern further implies that there is a need for architectural principles that evaluators would use as a baseline to evaluate against. Such architectural principles do exist for standard IT systems but have not been adapted for the control systems environment. Again, many of the information assurance principles embedded in the international Common Criteria and earlier U.S. Trusted Computer System Evaluation Criteria still apply.

Protocols are not standard or robust
The Internet protocol, TCP/IP version 4 or version 6, has some protection built in against certain kinds of network attacks or is at least standard enough in implementation that intrusion detection devices and firewall rules can anticipate and detect malformed packets that should be discarded. Protocols in ICS environments are often very vendor specific, are not robust, and are subject to basic attacks that are easy to implement. Examples of such protocols include MODBUS, DNP3, and many others prevalent in ICS.

Lack of tools for prevention, detection, and response
Because protocols are very vendor specific and not developed with resilience in mind, there has not been a large market for prevention, detection, and response tools that can be employed in the ICS space and the market has, so far, shown little desire to purchase and/or implement them. This would suggest that legislation might be needed to require cybersecurity defense strategies, implementation of prudent defense measures, and strong operational procedures within an organization.
Lack of awareness training in the ICS community
Very little awareness training or a requirement for such training exists in the ICS owner/operator community. Offering such awareness training is often problematic due to difficulties in obtaining access to the owner/operator community and the funding necessary for training expenses. While interest and awareness of the need seems to be growing, the ability to train the owner/operator workforce and to implement the result of the training is problematic today. Additionally, there are few such training programs available today, which the problem further exacerbated by introducing high registration fees and travel expenses.

Lack of vulnerability assessments in critical infrastructure ICS
Few red teams exist for this environment or are allowed to work within the ICS community. The Army has such a team at the Engineering Research Development Center in Vicksburg, Mississippi, as does Sandia National Laboratory in New Mexico. The author has heard that additional teams are being formed, but these are primarily for government applications. More such specialized teams are needed for the commercial sector.

Lack of information sharing
Critical infrastructure owner/operators are not generally willing to share vulnerability information or disclose details useful to others. Oftentimes security vulnerabilities or attacks go unreported. While the government has established a series of Information Sharing and Analysis Centers (ISACs) to facilitate such sharing, the results are somewhat limited. A more recent attempt by the government to address this can be found in the Department of Homeland Security's implementation of Information Sharing and Analysis Organizations (ISAOs). DHS indicates that organizations such as traditional critical infrastructure sectors need to be able to share and respond to cyber risk in as close to real time as possible. However, many companies have found it challenging to develop effective information sharing organizations. In response, President Obama has issued Executive Order 13691 directing the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to encourage the development of ISAOs. This order intends to develop a means for granting government clearances to private sector individuals; promote coordination with ISAOs via the DHS National Cybersecurity and Communications Integration Center (NCCIC); and, select a non-governmental organization to serve as the ISAO Standards Organization, which will identify a set of voluntary standards or guidelines for the creation and functioning of ISAOs.

Supply chain concerns
The hardware and software components of ICS implementations often come from unknown or untrusted origins. This clearly introduces a concern with the vulnerability to introduction of malicious functionality. This concern is further exacerbated by the lack of any third-party evaluation of ICS products and the lack of protection/detection tools.

Educational opportunities in this area
Curriculum exists for IT professionals and for industrial engineers, but very little overlap between the two exists. Formal classes that involve both communities together are needed.

Conclusion
This paper has outlined 10 weaknesses that need to be addressed with respect to enhancing
critical infrastructure security by improving the cybersecurity posture of industrial control systems. Some of the concerns are technical while others are procedural. Some will likely required Congressional legislation in order to address them whereas others can be addressed now. The suggestion is made that industrial control systems are similar in design and architecture to weapons systems and additional investigation in that area is needed.

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Dr. Rayford Vaughn is the Vice President for Research and Economic Development and a distinguished professor of computer science at The University of Alabama in Huntsville. He had a 26-year career with the U.S. Army where most of his service was as a software engineer and computer scientist. His teaching and research interests are software engineering and computer security. He earned a Ph.D. in computer science from Kansas State University.
E-Sail Technology To Use Solar Wind For Interstellar Space Travel

By: Alyssa Navarro

Next-generation spacecraft sailing to interstellar space may soon rely on harnessing solar wind to produce momentum, as scientists from NASA begin experimentation in Alabama for an advanced propulsion system.

Designed for very long distance missions, NASA's HERTS E-sail technology (Heliopause Electrostatic Rapid Transit System Electric Sail) can potentially halve the time it takes for spacecraft to go into interstellar space. It could send spacecraft even to the "edge" of our solar system, known as the Heliopause, at a speed faster than ever.

After initial trials are over, the University of Alabama in Huntsville (UAH) will use computer models to examine NASA's results.

How the E-sail Technology Works

The E-sail propulsion system is expected to consist of at least 10 electrically charged, bare aluminum wires that radiate from the inside of the spacecraft to make a circular "E-sail."

Lead E-sail engineer Bruce Wiegmann said the sun ejects electrons and protons into the solar wind at very high speeds of up to 750 kilometers per second (approx. 1.6 million miles per hour), and they will take advantage of this solar power.

The E-sail's special wires are capable of electrostatically repelling rapid-moving protons of the solar wind, with the momentum acting as the spacecraft's thrust. Each tether would only be one millimeter (0.039 inch) thick but 20 kilometers (12.42 miles) in length.

"The E-Sail would use these protons to propel the spacecraft," said Wiegmann.

Spacecraft with the E-sail would be able to rotate at one revolution per hour, with centrifugal forces expanding the special wires into position. It would then be navigated by controlling each wire's voltage, changing the force applied to different portions of the propulsion.

The tests at the Marshall Space Flight Center in Huntsville will try to discover the rate of electron and proton collisions with a positively charged wire.

Implications for the Future

NASA's Voyager mission is currently exploring the interstellar medium. The use of the E-sail technology could become a breakthrough for these kinds of "ambitious missions," said UAH scientist Gary Zank.
Astronomers expect the new propulsion system to be expeditious. Voyager 1 took 35 years to reach the Heliopause, but HERTS E-sail could do it in a shorter amount of time. Wiegmann said their investigations reveal that spacecraft with E-sail could travel to the Heliopause in just 10 years.

"This could revolutionize the scientific returns of these types of missions," said Wiegmann.

What's more impressive is that the propulsion system could be used for shorter missions, too. Wiegmann said the design is extremely flexible and adaptable. It could be used for missions in the Heliopause, within the inner interplanetary system, as well as on the outer interplanetary, he added.

The HERTS study was funded in 2015 by the Space Technology Mission Directorate (STMD). It was one of the Phase II NASA Innovative Advanced Concepts (NIAC) projects.
Researchers aim to design missions using novel type of long-distance space propulsion

By: Karan Gosal

Alabama in Huntsville (UAH) will study the results of experimental testing at NASA'S Marshall Space Flight Center in Huntsville. The tasks to be performed with the help of computer models aim to develop an engineering tool to design missions using a new type of long-distance space propulsion.

The Heliopause Electrostatic Rapid Transit System Electric Sail (HERTS E-Sail) will enter basic research testing at Marshall. The propulsion system does not use propellant. It uses solar wind to travel into interstellar space. The researchers said that the system could send spacecraft to solar system’s edge, heliopause.

Dr. Gary Zank, director of UAH's Center for Space Plasma and Aeronomic Research (CSPAR), mentioned that the distance to the heliopause and interstellar medium is three times the distance from earth to Pluto.

It is expected that the new propulsion system would reduce the time to half it takes for missions to enter interstellar space. Dr. Zank said that it could be a breakthrough propulsion technology for such type of ambitious missions.

The HERTS E-Sail propulsion system has wires or tethers that extend from the spacecraft through which an electrical current is passed. “This generates a magnetic field that couples to the solar wind and leads to charged particles in the solar wind exerting a force on the spacecraft system”, affirmed Zank.

He further explained that the sun releases protons and electrons in the solar wind at very fast speed. The kinetic pressure exerted by the solar wind is converted by the HERTS system to spacecraft motion.

The solar wind flows at speed of 300 to 500 kilometers per second. Coupling the spacecraft to the solar wind can lead to quite a substantial amount of force on a small spacecraft. Currently, the research team is developing a theoretical model to investigate the results of the NASA experiment.

According to a report in Phys by Jim Steele, "The interstellar medium is currently the region that the Voyager spacecraft are exploring. This could be a breakthrough propulsion technology for these kinds of very ambitious missions," says Dr. Zank, who in an earlier phase of the project helped design a spacecraft payload for an extended HERTS mission.

"Because the solar wind is a supersonic flow, the kinetic pressure exerted by the solar wind is converted by the HERTS system to spacecraft motion," Dr. Zank says. "The solar wind flows at typical speeds of 300-500 kilometers per second, so coupling the spacecraft to the solar wind can yield quite a substantial force on a small spacecraft. It does however require very long wires or
tethers, a kilometer long or even more, which makes their thickness, weight and deployment characteristics challenging."

"The space plasma physics interaction with many multiple kilometer length bare, positively charged wires is very complex and has not been adequately modeled," says Bruce M. Wiegmann, the Marshall principal investigator for the HERTS study. "This E-Sail engineering model development is one of the key products for Phase II of this study. The engineering model being developed at UAH relies heavily upon the data being collected from testing at one of Marshall's plasma chambers, and this experimental test data will be used to adequately benchmark the codes being developed."

"When NASA HQ reviewed the various Phase II submissions, and selected the HERTS proposal for further investments, they clearly stated that a merit of the study was in the development of a spacecraft engineering model, which would quantify how much thrust could be produced in varying E-Sail systems," Wiegmann says.

In a statement provided to ABC News, "The last spacecraft to reach the heliopause - the outer region of the solar system where interstellar space begins - was the Voyager 1, which took almost 35 years to make the journey. Scientists hope the development of HERTS could result in an E-Sail that could make the trip in less than one-third of that time."

"The sun releases protons and electrons into the solar wind at very high speeds - 400 to 750 kilometres per second," said Bruce Wiegmann, an engineer in Marshall's Advanced Concepts Office and the principal investigator for the E-Sail. "The E-Sail would use these protons to propel the spacecraft. "Our investigation has shown that an interstellar probe mission propelled by an E-Sail could travel to the heliopause in just under 10 years.

CNET News report added, "The Heliopause Electrostatic Rapid Transit System E-Sail doesn't look much like a sail at all -- more like a giant naked umbrella made of 10 to 20 aluminium spokes, protruding from the centre of the spacecraft. Each of these spokes is extraordinarily thin, just the width of a paperclip, and very long, about 20 kilometres (12.5 miles). These would be pulled into position by centrifugal forces caused by the slow rotation of the craft."

The E-Sail's positively charged spokes would repel the protons electrostatically, which would in turn propel the craft. This is currently being tested in NASA's High Intensity Solar Environment Test system. This is a controlled plasma chamber that simulated plasma in space, and the team is testing the rate of proton and electron collisions with a positively charged stainless steel wire, which will degrade very little and allow for longer testing.
New, fast solar wind propulsion system is aim of NASA, UAH study

By: Jim Steele

Scientists at The University of Alabama in Huntsville (UAH) are set to use computer models to investigate the results of experimental testing at NASA's Marshall Space Flight Center in Huntsville to develop an engineering tool to design missions using a new type of long-distance space propulsion.

The Heliopause Electrostatic Rapid Transit System Electric Sail (HERTS E-Sail) is entering basic research testing at Marshall. The propulsion system, which uses no propellant, would harness the solar wind to travel into interstellar space. It could send spacecraft to the edge of our solar system, the heliopause, faster than ever before.

Some of the missions contemplated are very long-distance voyages, says Dr. Gary Zank, director of UAH's Center for Space Plasma and Aeronomic Research (CSPAR) and chair of the university's Department of Space Science, who points out that the distance to the heliopause and interstellar medium is three times the distance from Earth to Pluto. Scientists hope the new propulsion system can halve the time it takes for missions to enter interstellar space.

"The interstellar medium is currently the region that the Voyager spacecraft are exploring. This could be a breakthrough propulsion technology for these kinds of very ambitious missions," says Dr. Zank, who in an earlier phase of the project helped design a spacecraft payload for an extended HERTS mission.

The HERTS E-Sail propulsion system has exposed wires or tethers extending from the spacecraft through which an electrical current is passed, Dr. Zank says.

"This generates a magnetic field that couples to the solar wind and leads to charged particles in the solar wind exerting a force on the spacecraft system," he says.

The sun releases protons and electrons into the solar wind at very high speeds.

"Because the solar wind is a supersonic flow, the kinetic pressure exerted by the solar wind is converted by the HERTS system to spacecraft motion," Dr.

Zank says. "The solar wind flows at typical speeds of 300-500 kilometers per second, so coupling the spacecraft to the solar wind can yield quite a substantial force on a small spacecraft. It does however require very long wires or tethers, a kilometer long or even more, which makes their thickness, weight and deployment characteristics challenging."

Currently, Dr. Zank and UAH post-doctoral student Xiaocan Li are developing a theoretical model using sophisticated kinetic simulations to investigate the results of the NASA experiment and the extension of that laboratory simulation to conditions appropriate to the solar wind.

See next page
"The simulations will use one of the most advanced kinetic codes yet developed," says Dr. Zank. "It was developed at the Los Alamos National Laboratory, where Xiaocan Li did much of his doctoral thesis work."

Computer modeling at UAH will be a three-step process, according to UAH research scientist Dr. Kenneth Wright, who is leading the testing at Marshall's High Intensity Solar Environment Test system, a chamber that will simulate the plasma environment of space. Dr. Wright is funded through a sub-contract with the Jacobs Engineering and Science Services and Skills Augmentation (ESSSA) Group at Marshall.

The first phase will model the data from the chamber experiment. A second phase will use the model with actual plasma properties present in the solar wind. Then a third phase will transform the model into an engineering tool.

"We want to parameterize it enough to get a realistic, simple tool that we can use in mission design," Dr. Wright says.

"The space plasma physics interaction with many multiple kilometer length bare, positively charged wires is very complex and has not been adequately modeled," says Bruce M. Wiegmann, the Marshall principal investigator for the HERTS study.

"This E-Sail engineering model development is one of the key products for Phase II of this study. The engineering model being developed at UAH relies heavily upon the data being collected from testing at one of Marshall's plasma chambers, and this experimental test data will be used to adequately benchmark the codes being developed."

During the tests, which are expected to be conducted for two or three months, scientists and engineers from UAH and Marshall will examine the proton and electron interaction with a positively charged 1-millimeter stainless steel tube that will represent a wire of the E-Sail.

"I'm working at Marshall to do the testing with Jason Vaughn and Todd Schneider of the Space Environments and Effects team," says Dr. Wright.

Optimizing spacecraft mass means that the flight system will probably utilize aluminum wires, Dr. Wright says. However, the laboratory experiment will use stainless steel since the mass of the test object is not a primary concern.

The experiments focus on measuring what is happening within a "sheath" created when the positively charged wire interacts with negative electrons and deflected protons. The interactions inside the sheath are what create the propulsive force, as the repelled protons prompt an opposite reaction to push a spacecraft away from the sun and toward the heliopause.

"Right now, we're just trying to understand ion deflection in the region surrounding the positively biased wire," says Dr. Wright.
The electron interaction information will be used to develop specifications for an electron emitter that must be part of the spacecraft in order to return the collected electrons by the positive wires to space.

The HERTS study, funded in 2015 by NASA's Space Technology Mission Directorate (STMD), was one of seven down-selected Phase II NASA Innovative Advanced Concepts (NIAC) projects.

"When NASA HQ reviewed the various Phase II submissions, and selected the HERTS proposal for further investments, they clearly stated that a merit of the study was in the development of a spacecraft engineering model, which would quantify how much thrust could be produced in varying E-Sail systems," Wiegmann says.
Alabama's 2 most 'underrated' universities?

By: Leada Gore

Alabama is home to some outstanding universities but there are two — at least according to a recent ranking — that are even better than advertised.

Business Insider has ranked the nation's 50 most underrated colleges and universities. The rankings were determined by comparing U.S. News and World Report's ranking of the best universities and liberal arts colleges along with PayScale's 2015-16 College Salary report, which ranked schools based on graduates' mid-career salaries. In its rankings, Business Insider was looking for schools that had relatively low rankings on the U.S. News list but high mid-career salaries.

Two Alabama universities made the list.

At number 44 was Auburn University.

"Though known for their intense school spirit, Auburn graduates also do well academically. The school is a land, sea, and space grant university and receives special funding for projects that benefit the greater good, such as developing a storage facility for nuclear waste or hosting the country's first wireless engineering program," Business Insider noted.

The average mid-career salary for an Auburn graduate was $89,800.

Landing all the way up at number seven was the University of Alabama in Huntsville. UAH's mid-career salary was $87,104.

"UAH students benefit from the proximity of federal employers like NASA, Redstone Arsenal, and Cummings Research Park for high-earning jobs in engineering, aeronautics, and other science fields. Grads earn an average starting salary of $49,000, which jumps all the way to nearly $90,000 by mid-career," Business Insider said.

The nation's most underrated college was Pace University in New York, where the mid-career salary topped $95,000.
$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.
Board approves tuition rate hike for fall 2016

State residents will pay $117 per credit hour

By Ed Enoch
Staff Writer

Tuition will increase this fall for Alabama community college students. The increase was approved by the system’s board of trustees on Wednesday and will offset increases in the community colleges’ operational costs.

"I don’t like the fact that we have to increase tuition. I have been on record many, many times," System Chancellor Mark Heinrich said.

The board voted 6-1 in favor of the increase. Tuition rates per credit hour will increase $2 to $117 for Alabama residents and $232 for nonresidents beginning in the fall.

The increase will generate about $4 million to be shared among the 26 campuses statewide. The tuition increase will not affect Marion Military Institute or the Alabama Technology Network.

The annual increase was established by the Alabama Board of Education, which formerly oversaw the two-year system, in 2009 following successive years of proration. The two-year board must decide annually whether to continue with the scheduled increases.

"We are in the process, at this point, of making some pretty significant changes in the system, and I hope it will result in a very different recommendation next year," Heinrich said.
Tubby Smith spices up new UAB-Memphis series

Kevin Scarbinsky

If you were excited about the renewal of the UAB-Memphis basketball rivalry—the schools will play a home-and-home series the next two seasons—you should be even more excited now.

Memphis has a new coach, and his name is Tubby Smith.

Yes, that Tubby Smith, the coach who’s won a national championship and taken five different schools to the NCAA Tournament. The same Tubby Smith who suffered one of the biggest shocks in recent tournament history.

At the hands of UAB.

Who can forget that second-round game in Columbus, Ohio, in 2004? Kentucky was the tournament’s overall No. 1 seed. UAB was the No. 9 seed in its first tournament trip under Mike Anderson.

The Blazers toppled Smith and the Wildcats 76-75 on a Mo Finley jumper with 12 seconds left to send UAB to its first Sweet 16 in 32 years. Afterward, UAB point guard Squeaky Johnson delivered a gem of a synopsis when he said, “Kentucky’s not used to losing to guys named Squeaky and Mo.”

UAB had more success against Kentucky in that game than it’s had against Memphis in the last decade. The last UAB win over the Tigers came on March 2, 2006, during Anderson’s last season with the Blazers, in a regular-season game in Bartow Arena.

Since then, Memphis has won 15 straight games over UAB.

Mike Davis, who followed Anderson as head coach, never beat Memphis, going 0-12 against the Tigers during his six years at UAB. Anderson lost his last game against Memphis at UAB in the finals of the 2006 C-USA Tournament, and Jerod Haase dropped both meetings with the Tigers.

The rivalry had gone dormant with Memphis leaving Conference USA for the American Athletic Conference after the 2013 season, but it’ll resume Dec. 10 at the FedEx Forum in Memphis. The Tigers will return that game and play at Bartow Arena the following season.

The series is a natural given the history between the programs. The late Gene Bartow coached them both, leading the Tigers to the 1973 national championship game and the Blazers to the 1982 Elite Eight. The schools were Great Midwest and C-USA rivals from 1990-2013.

Although Memphis dominated the series in its later years, the teams played some memorable games, especially with John Calipari coaching the Tigers. UAB had undefeated No. 1 Memphis on the ropes in Bartow Arena in 2008, leading by seven with 90 seconds left, but a furious comeback kept the Tigers unbeaten with a one-point win.

Haase had vowed to upgrade UAB’s non-conference schedule before he left for Stanford, and this two-game series with Memphis shows he was serious. But instead of Haase matching wits with Josh Pastner, it’ll be Rob Ehsan vs. Tubby Smith.

Ehsan, who wants to play more up-tempo than Haase, will be in his first season as a head coach. Smith, whose teams are known for grinding, will be in his 26th season overall at his sixth different program. When they meet in December, Ehsan will be 34 years old, Smith 65.

It’ll be a serious contrast, but new coaches aside, it’ll be good to see UAB and Memphis on the same floor again. It would be nice to see the Blazers actually beat the Tigers for a change.

Memphis has hired Tubby Smith as its new men's basketball coach. AP File
Football  College

UAB to face Texas A&M in '18

UAB will play at Texas A&M in 2018, the school said on Monday.

The game will take place at Kyle Field on Sept. 22, 2018 as part of a one-game deal. This will be UAB’s second SEC opponent as it returns to football in 2017. The Blazers play at Florida that fall.

"We are making the most of the time we have to prepare for 2017 and are building our program to be stronger than ever," head coach Bill Clark said in a release.

"As our team improves on the field, in the weight room, on the recruiting trail and in the classroom, we are also moving toward exciting news in fundraising and facilities projects that will be game changers. "Scheduling games our players and fans can look forward to is another important part of the big picture, and we are excited for the opportunity to play Texas A&M in one of the premier venues in college football."

UAB's 2018 schedule now includes a game at Texas A&M and a road game at Coastal Carolina.

Auburn, UAB in talks

Auburn and UAB have been in discussions for a future football game between the two schools. UAB athletics director Mark Ingram told a group of reporters at the APSE regional meeting in Birmingham on Monday.

Ingram said that he heard from around eight or 10 schools right before UAB announced its return to football last June 1. Auburn athletics director Jay Jacobs is one of his friends, but Ingram noted that he didn't think Auburn had a football opening until 2019.

"I've had good conversations with Auburn," Ingram said. "Jay Jacobs, the athletic director, is a good friend of mine. He and I have talked about it. It's about finding the right year."

The schools played in 1996, a 29-0 Auburn win. The schools are in the midst of a four-game basketball series. UAB will host Auburn in Bartow Arena this fall.

— Drew Champlin
By Becky Hopf
Special to The Tuscaloosa News

It wasn’t enough just to be one of the twenty-best teams in the country.

After finishing 17th in The Association of Collegiate Angler’s Cabela’s School of the Year rankings last year, John Davis and members of the University of Alabama Bass Anglers, the school’s club team, sat down and did some number crunching.

“We realized how much a difference it would have made if we had gotten just a couple more participating in the big tournaments. We needed to all be more dedicated,” said Davis, the club’s president.

Dedicated, they became. So much so that this month the team has received not only its highest ranking ever but the dream ranking of every club: the University of Alabama is the No. 1-ranked college team in the Cabela’s School of the Year Race. Alabama leads the standings with 1,481 points. Close behind is Mississippi State at 1,466 points. Among the top five also, at No. 4, is the University of North Alabama.

“We’ve been really close the last couple of years. Last year were finished 17th, and the year before we finished fifth,” said Davis, a junior from Birmingham who has been on the team for the past four years.

“It’s been exciting for us. Last year we were kind of disappointed with how we finished. One of the big problems with our lower finish last year was we just didn’t have enough participation at the bigger tournaments. So we all got together and decided that we wanted to set winning school of the year as a goal for us. We have a bunch of guys who are dedicated to trying to win school of the year titles, so it was definitely an exciting moment for all of us to realize that all of our hard work is finally paying off.

Among the team’s members are Tuscaloosa’s Blaine Junkin, Northport’s Richard Krout and Brookwood’s Drew Grow.

“I think one of the things that helps out a lot is where we are, in Tuscaloosa and Central Alabama in general,” said Davis. “We have a lot of opportunities to fish different style lakes and rivers, like the Tennessee River, the Coosa River, the Warrior. And we also have guys from out of state who can bring some new things in. And we do a good job of pairing guys who like to fish together and guys who fish well together.”

Davis, himself, has played a major role in Alabama’s top ranking. In 2015, he and teammate and Payton McGinnis finished seventh at nationals. This year the pair finished second of 214 boats in the BASS Southern Regional on Lake Martin.

The first weekend of April, Ethan Flack and Caiden Sinclair finished fourth of 203 boats in a tournament on Kentucky Lake. In March that duo qualified for next year’s Fishing League Worldwide collegiate championships. Three boats have already qualified for the national championships. Anderson Aldag and Lee Mattox, Sinclair and Hunter Gibson as well as Davis and McGinnis are among those.

The team sends anywhere from one to 11 boats to compete in about 25 tournaments per school year.

Though it is not a requirement, most of the anglers on the team participated on high school fishing teams. Many, like Davis, chose to further their education at Alabama because of the success of its fishing team. Davis said a lot of collegiate team anglers hope to make a career in the industry and are aided by the contacts they make.

“For the most part the team is made up of guys who have tournament fishing experience, from high school fishing or they fished in club or regional tournaments before they got into college,” Davis said. “We do have some who have gotten most of their tournament experience since they joined the team.”

Currently, there are about 30 members, most of whom are underclassmen, meaning the nucleus will return next season.

The final ranking comes after points are totaled following the national championships in July. The team that wins school of the year will receive a sponsor prize pack “worth thousands of dollars,” according to the ACA, as well as a featured segment on their team on Cabela’s Collegiate Bass Fishing Television show.
ALABAMA BASKETBALL

Pelphrey hired as an assistant

By Cecil Hurt
Sports Editor

Almost 30 years after Wimp Sanderson tried to recruit him as a player, John Pelphrey is finally a part of the University of Alabama basketball team.

UA head coach Avery Johnson made it official on Wednesday as he announced Pelphrey as the associate head men’s basketball coach for the Crimson Tide. Pelphrey will who replace former assistant coach Scott Pospichal, who departed from UA after one season to seek a position nearer to his home in Texas.

Pelphrey has a long list of qualifications for a spot on the Crimson Tide staff. He has been an SEC player at Kentucky, finally choosing his home state Wildcats in spite of Sanderson’s efforts. He has been an assistant coach under Eddie Sutton and Billy Donovan. He has been a head coach, both in the state of Alabama (he coached the South Alabama Jaguars from 2002 until 2007) and at the SEC level at Arkansas. He has even served, like Johnson,

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PELPHREY
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as a television analyst, working last season for the SEC Network.

“I am very excited to welcome coach John Pelphrey, his wife Tracy and his entire family to the Alabama program,” Johnson said in a release from UA. “John brings a wealth of coaching experience to our program and we are fortunate to have someone of his caliber join our staff. We are glad he is back in the Southeastern Conference where he has spent a majority of his career as a player and a coach. He has a vast amount of knowledge about the game, is a very good teacher of the game and will be a great fit in our program.”

Pelphrey is expected to meet with local media later this week, but was also quoted in the UA release.

“My family and I are very humbled and excited about the opportunity to be a part of Avery Johnson’s basketball staff and family,” Pelphrey said. “I have so much respect and admiration for Avery in the approach he took to get to know us. He really made my wife Tracy and I feel wanted. I am looking forward to serving and support coach Johnson, our staff and the student-athletes in any way that I can to help this program keep moving forward. The University of Alabama is a wonderful institution with a proud tradition. It is an honor to now be a part of it and the Tuscaloosa community. Roll Tide and Buckle up!”

Pelphrey is married to the former Tracy Lyon and they have a son, Jaxson and a daughter, Grace.

He joins Bob Simon and Antoine Pettway as the full-time assistants on Johnson’s staff and is expected to take part in recruiting efforts for UA during the current signing period.

—Reach Cecil Hurt at cecil@tidesports.com or 205-722-0225.
Tide competes in Texas, where a spot in the NCAA Super Six is on the line

By Sean Landry
Special to The Tuscaloosa News

The University of Alabama gymnastics team has one last fence to clear on its season-long steeplechase. Friday night’s NCAA national championships semifinal, in which Alabama must finish in the top three to progress, is the last stumbling block between the Crimson Tide’s perennial self-described goal: to be on the floor on the last night of the season, competing for a national championship.

“I equate to a horse that’s been on a long ride when they see the barn,” Tide coach Dana Duckworth said. “It’s a full sprint, whatever I’ve got left. Whatever’s in the tank is gone full throttle, because this is it.”

At this stage of the season, Duckworth said, the team’s preparation is done. It ranks in the top six on every apparatus, peaking at No. 3 on bars, it’s just under a month removed from its season-high score, a 197.75 at the SEC Championships, and just over a month out from its season-low, a 196.225 at LSU.

“The ladies are excited, just like ‘Can we leave now?’ They’re just ready,” Duckworth said. “They’re ready in every aspect. I feel, and I think they would say, the mental preparation has been done, the physical preparation has been done. It’s time to go all in, go out and have fun, do what we do best, and go light it up. They’re just ready. I know we’re all ready.”

SEE GYMNASTICS, C4

GYMNASTICS
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The Crimson Tide is the second-seeded team in its semifinal, behind Oklahoma and just ahead of Utah and UCLA. If the team escapes its semifinal, it’s likely to meet some familiar SEC foes in the Super Six finals on Saturday, with the afternoon semifinal hosting Florida, LSU, Georgia and Auburn. While Alabama’s season-high score ranks behind Oklahoma, Florida and LSU (and behind the Sooners’ and Gators’ regional qualifying score), Duckworth said his team still hasn’t reached its potential in competition.

“We’re right there,” Duckworth said. “We’re on the brink. We are on the brink. I’m excited for them. I know our staff, our staff knows that we can put it together. There have been teams we have had that truly have amazing heart but on paper may not be as talented. We have had teams that have been truly one of the most talented teams, but lacked heart. I don’t want to go out on a limb and set us up, but this team has a combination of both.”

The national championship meets mark the culmination of the first season since 2011 with no national champions on the squad and Duckworth’s second as a head coach. While the team has stumbled on the hurdles of meets away to Auburn, LSU and UCLA this year, Duckworth said the team isn’t worried about conversations about a seventh team national championship, or a streak, or a legacy.

“To me, I think we did a better coaching job overall where we are today this year than last year, because of how much we learned, because the monkey off your back with the whole ‘Protect the legacy,’ Duckworth said. “So I’m excited. I don’t know what’s going to happen but I feel really good about it. We’ve just got to go do our thing.”
Selling out Sewell-Thomas

Fourth game of season to bring in record fans

By Ben Jones
Sports writer

The new Sewell-Thomas Stadium has already had its share of moments since it reopened for the University of Alabama’s baseball season in February. Another big one is just around the corner.

Saturday’s home game against Ole Miss has already sold out, associate athletic director Chris Besanceney said on Monday. The other two games on Friday and Sunday are close to selling out as well, he said.

“It feels like every Friday is kind of a new opening day for us, because you’re constantly getting new fans that are coming in,” Besanceney said.

The sellout for Saturday means that four of the first 15 weekend games at Sewell-Thomas Stadium will be sellouts.

Alabama has had three sellouts at the rebuilt stadium this year. Its first two games against Maryland were before announced crowds of 5,867 and 6,449, respectively, and its SEC opener against Tennessee drew 5,867.

Saturday’s game, scheduled to start at 5:00 following the A-Day game, could be the biggest yet. Several fans who travel to Tuscaloosa for the football team’s final scrimmage will have their first chance to see the rebuilt stadium in person.

It’s a major series in the SEC race as well. The Rebels are ranked in the top 15 in every major poll and are as high as No. 4 nationally in the initial RPI rankings released Monday. Alabama and Ole Miss are tied in the conference standings, both two games away from first place in the SEC West.

The stadium includes more than 4,500 fixed seats, but official capacity for the stadium is much higher than that because of several other fan areas, such as the student seating area in right field. A patio on the third base line can be used to hold bleachers for additional seats as well.

Alabama will host three more weekend series against SEC teams following the Ole Miss series, with home dates against Mississippi State, Auburn and South Carolina. The Bulldogs and Game-cocks are currently in first place in the SEC West and East divisions, respectively.

“Those will be premium games for us and we knew that also,” Besanceney said. “Looking around the league, that’s the trend in the SEC is that people do vary well on the weekends and that’s what we planned on all along, was to have good ticket sales on the weekend. The weekday games, if you draw well, that’s a plus.”

TWO OUTS? SO WHAT?
That’s the saying painted on the foul pole in right field at Rickwood Stadium, and Alabama softball players must have been paying attention last weekend.

The Crimson Tide battled .455 (15-of-33) with two outs in a three-game series against Mississippi State. Alabama swept the Bulldogs by driving in 20 of its 23 runs with two outs. UA outscored the Bulldogs 23-2.

Fourth-ranked Alabama (35-7) has won five games in a row and eight of its last nine, with the only loss coming at then-No. 1 Florida in a series two weekends ago where the Crimson Tide took two out of three games.

Alabama will visit Southern Miss (20-22) in Hattiesburg, Miss., tonight for a 6 p.m. game, the start of a four-game road swing. UA will visit 11th-ranked Texas A&M for a weekend series. Alabama’s next home game is set for Wednesday, April 20, vs. South Alabama.

INJURY UPDATE
Second baseman Demi Turner, who was batting .421 before sustaining an elbow injury on a steal attempt at LSU a month ago, could be back before the end of the regular season. UA head coach Patrick Murphy said last weekend that he is hopeful that Turner could return by the last series of the regular season, when Alabama hosts Georgia on May 6-8.

Murphy said Turner may be available as a pinch hitter by that time, but that will be determined by doctors and the continued progress of her rehabilitation.

Chandler Dare moved in from the outfield to take Turner’s spot at second and in the No. 2 spot in the batting order. She is batting .425, with 32 runs scored and 22 RBIs. Dare is also a perfect 15 for 15 on stolen base attempts, leading UA in that department. As a team, the Crimson Tide is 72 for 82 on steal attempts.

— Tommy Deas
A-Day's impact big in several ways

That, under normal circumstances, tremendous talent should make it even harder to recruit more talent. Yet Saban has done just that.

So when Saban took some time on Thursday to discuss the recruiting impact that an A-Day crowd can have, it wasn't just a sales pitch. It was the voice of authority.

Saban started the A-Day pitch on an almost wistful note, talking about how no one in the media (or, by extension, the entire world) thought he would be at Alabama long enough to coach in 10 A-Day games. That led into a riff on how the 2007 A-Day Game, the one that unexpectedly blew the roof off the way that intraquad games were viewed, was a key element in attracting Saban's first full-year recruiting class, the 2008 Julio Jones/Mark Ingram/ Marcel Dareus group that set a tone for all that has followed in the decade.

See Hurt, C3
While it has been rare over these 10 years to have a chance to say that Nick Saban didn’t have a plan about something, the impact of the 2007 A-Day was, in some ways, an accidental discovery, like Velcro or barbecue nachos. The game was promoted, in a way, but there weren’t billboards or pregame rap concerts.

The attraction was Saban himself, as if seeing him would provide real, physical confirmation that he actually was Alabama’s coach and not just a rumor.

That, combined with a sense that there was real hope after several years in which things were bad by anybody’s standards and therefore catastrophic by those of Alabama football, turned the whole thing into a sort of secular pilgrimage. There also wasn’t the option of sitting at home and watching it on television.

It wasn’t simply the preserve of the obsessed, anxious to see every player, no matter how obscure. It was a day for the casual fan, the kids, the guy who worried less about the battle for third-team cornerback and more about having fun.

“I know a lot of people try to do that now,” Saban said on Thursday: “For us, we want to sustain recruiting success, which is probably the key, the foundation to being able to continue to be successful. We also need to make the spirit and enthusiasm that we show every opportunity we get — which includes A-Day — that makes it special to be a player here.”

Thus, A-Day is a way in which a fan can actually help with recruiting in a tangible way that doesn’t involve contact — regarding recruits on Twitter. It’s also a mirror for fans — who would blow their stack in September at the sight of a complacent, self-satisfied team can show that they haven’t become complacent and self-satisfied themselves — even after 10 unexpected years.

— Reach Cecil Hurt at cecil@tidesports.com or 205-722-0225.
Excuse us while we claim the Masters champ as one of our own

Kevin Scarbinsky  kscarbinsky@al.com

It turned out to be a great weekend for golf for the state of Alabama. It just didn’t turn out like we were expecting Sunday morning. We were hoping Vestavia’s Smylie Kaufman would be the hero at Augusta National. Instead former Jacksonville State Gamecock Danny Willett stole the show and made history as the second golfer with state ties to win the Masters.

Bubba Watson, a juco All-American at Faulkner State in Bay Minette, was the first. He did it twice in 2012 and 2014.

The rest of the world may see him as the second English golfer to earn a green jacket, joining Nick Faldo in an exclusive fraternity, but we’ll be glad to tell them Willett is a guy who spent two years sharpening his game at Jacksonville State under long-time coach James Hobbs.

Don’t judge us. You ride your Masters coattails where you can. Especially since a potential final-round duel between the native son Kaufman and defending champion Jordan Spieth never materialized.

Instead Kaufman duelled with the reality of playing in the final group on the final day at his first Masters, and reality won. After he missed a short birdie putt on the first hole that would’ve put him in a tie for the lead, it was all pine straw and bogeys from there.

A day after shooting a 69, the only sub-70 score of the second and third rounds, Kaufman ballooned to an 81. After starting the day one shot out of the lead in solo second place, he finished in a tie for 29th at 7-over par, 12 shots behind Willett.

SEE SCARBINSKY, B4

SCARBINSKY
FROM B1

But more on the champ in a moment.

At least Smylie had company in his misery. His playing partner Spieth dueled with the meanest little par-3 in the world, the 12th hole at Augusta National, and his dream of winning a second straight green jacket drowned right there, along with two of his golf balls. Spieth took a quadruple-bogey 7 to spit up his chance of repeating.

Meanwhile, while fewer people were watching, Willett was putting together one of the finest final rounds in Masters history. He made five birdies and didn’t make a bogey for a virtually spotless 67.

For the sake of symmetry, he did it 20 years after Faldo posted the same Sunday score to clinch his third and final Masters victory. Faldo’s brilliance that day was overshadowed by Greg Norman’s meltdown, just as Willett’s performance is destined to get lost to a degree in the wake of Spieth’s splashdown.

It shouldn’t. Willett’s win is all the more memorable because it appeared he was willing to give up his spot in the field for something more lasting than a trophy, a sport coat and a check for $1.8 million.

Not long ago, Willett said he wouldn’t play the Masters if his wife hadn’t given birth to their first child before the tournament began. The baby’s due date was Sunday.

Instead his wife Nicole gave birth to their son, Zach, by C-section 12 days ago. Willett made the trip to Augusta and made it count.

This state has been able to claim major champions, as natives or former college golfers, from Hubert Green, Larry Nelson and Jerry Pate to Stewart Cink, Graeme McDowell, Watson and Jason Dufner.

That distinguished roster shows Alabama’s long been a great golf state. The 28-year-old Willett and the 24-year-old Kaufman are just two of the latest examples.

Kaufman was born and raised here and made it to the final pairing in the final round of his first Masters. No doubt it won’t be his last shot at a major title.

Willett passed this way for a brief period. He starred for Jacksonville State in 2006 and 2007. The Masters was his first win on American soil since the 2007 Ohio Valley Conference championship.

“I knew Danny was a special player when he came here as a 17-year-old kid,” said Hobbs, the JSU coach. “There was just something special about him. Now he has a green jacket and, to me, it has a little red lining inside of it.”
SATellite CAMPS

Sankey explains stance on NCAA ruling

SEC Commissioner discusses teams practicing out-of-state

By Aaron Suttles
Sports Writer

The SEC wants the University of Michigan off its front lawn. Keep 'em out of the backyard, too.

At least that's the perception that many have of the NCAA's recent decision to outlaw universities from holding football camps away from their home campuses, otherwise known as satellite camps.

But that's not the case, SEC Commissioner Greg Sankey said Monday afternoon to a group of reporters at the Associated Press Sports Editors southeast regional meeting on UAB's campus.

Sankey said the timetable makes it appear the SEC is targeting Michigan coach Jim Harbaugh's plan to caravan around the South, holding satellite camps, or as Sankey called them "recruiting-tour events."

"It is unfortunate to me, because I tried to explain a timeline that has nothing to do with another conference, and it's unfortunate that this conversation has become that specific," Sankey said. "That's incorrect in understanding the full scope of our discussion about recruiting tours."

"This is not a conversation that has simply been limited, for our purposes, to the last 12 months. This was different than maybe inviting a coaching friend to come work at a camp. It became very intentional marketing events for recruiting purposes, and we've all agreed to a recruiting calendar, so the basis (of opposition) was that we were creating tryouts - tryout events, evaluation opportunities - that were outside the traditional football recruiting calendar."

The satellite camps, as they've become to be known over the last couple of years, were a source of

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conflict for SEC head coaches, who preferred not to have to travel away from their campuses to hold camps.

The main source of voiced opposition to the recent ruling comes from the Big Ten, which saw two of its programs — Penn State and Michigan — hold these camps within the past two years.

Alabama head coach Nick Saban recently said he didn’t understand what all the fuss was over, stating he doesn’t see the value of spending the resources of he and his coaching staff’s time for a camp that hasn’t proved any tangible benefit.

Sankey said he doesn’t agree with the national sentiment that the ruling harms potential student athletes’ ability to get recruited, citing the evaluation period, when assistant coaches are allowed to visit prospective student-athletes on and off campus.

“If people want to have discussions about expanding the evaluation period that should be a piece of the holistic conversation,” Sankey said. “We shouldn’t be creating ad hoc recruiting events that more and more involve intentional marketing efforts, sponsors involved.”

“One of the concerns that we have is that these (satellite camp) events become fund-raising endeavors around college coaches,” Sankey said. “We are not to be involved in fund-raising for programs associated with prospects. We’re just not. Yeah, that potential was there. That was a concern.”

The commissioner pointed out that the SEC only had two of the 15 votes that ended satellite camps.

“It’s not as if we simply controlled the outcome,” Sankey said. “The ACC and the SEC have been in lockstep on this issue over time — again, dating back years, related to how we’re going to conduct football recruiting. Obviously it takes more than just the Southeastern Conference to accomplish this change.

“We were clear in articulating our concerns and I would say that people saw the potential problems that we could be creating — or allowing to continue — outweighing any benefits associated with these recruiting tours.”

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