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Alabama Academy of Honor inducts five new members

By: Mike Cason

The Alabama Academy of Honor inducted five new members today, recognizing them for achievement in civil rights, civic leadership and business.

The academy, created by the Legislature in 1965, includes 100 living members, plus the living governors of Alabama. The academy elects new members.

The five new members are civic leader Walter A. Bell; former U.S. District Judge U.W. Clemon; Ann D. Florie, former executive director of Leadership Birmingham; D. Paul Jones, Jr., former chairman and CEO of Compass Bank; and W. Stancil (Stan) Starnes, CEO of ProAssurance Corporation.

The new members were recognized and spoke at an induction ceremony today at the State Capitol.

Here is some of the biographical information on the new inductees included in the program at today’s ceremony:

Bell was born in Buena Vista, Alabama, son of a third-generation farmer who moved the family to Mobile during World War II. Bell graduated from Central High School.

After high school he attended community college in California and served for six years in the California National Guard and was deployed during the Watts riot in Los Angeles and the People Park riot in Berkeley.

Bell moved to Indiana in 1973 and became community relations director for the Indianapolis Urban League. He wrote news articles and speeches, hosted two weekly radio shows and a monthly television show. In 1976, he produced a stage play, "The Life and Times of Frederick Douglass."

Bell returned to Mobile in 1978 and founded the Mobile County Urban League, launching a 40-year career of involvement in civic, charitable, educational and economic programs.

Gov. Bob Riley appointed Bell to serve as Alabama Insurance Commissioner. From 2008 to 2015, Bell was chairman of the Swiss Re America Holding Corporation, a $17 billion subsidiary of the Swiss Reinsurance Company.

Bell graduated from Spring Hill College and served as a trustee there for 13 years. Bell’s son, W. Kamau Bell, is host of the Emmy-winning CNN show, “United Shades of America.”

Clemon was born in Fairfield in 1943, the son of sharecroppers who migrated from Mississippi.

As a student at Miles College, he participated in the Birmingham campaign for civil rights launched by Martin Luther King Jr., the campaign that led to confrontations with Police Commissioner Eugene “Bull” Connor. After obtaining a law degree from Columbia University, he represented black plaintiffs in major civil rights litigation against the Jefferson County school
board, United States Steel Corporation, Pullman Standard Corporation and the city of Birmingham.

President Jimmy Carter appointed Clemon in 1980 to be Alabama’s first African-American judge. He retired from the bench in 2009 and resumed practicing law.

Florie, a native of Weldon, Ark., received a bachelor’s degree in political science from Newcomb College of Tulane University.

Florie was the founding executive director of Region 2020, which promoted cooperation and citizen involvement in a 12-county area in affordable housing, education, arts and culture, transportation and land use.

She served as executive director of Leadership Birmingham. Florie is an appointed member of the Jefferson County Personnel Board and serves on the executive committee of the Birmingham Business Alliance and the board of directors for the Public Affairs Research Council of Alabama.

She was on the Mountain Brook Board of Education for 10 years.

Jones, born in 1942, received degrees in business and in law from the University of Alabama. He began practicing law with the predecessor to the Birmingham law firm Balch & Bingham in 1967.

In 1978, Jones joined Compass Bancshares (then Central Bancshares) as senior vice president and general counsel. He served as president of the Alabama Bankers Association. Jones was a director for the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta from 1993 to 2009.

Jones became chairman and CEO of Compass in 1991, a position he held until his retirement in 2008. Compass grew under his leadership to operate 622 offices in seven states and was ranked as the 26th largest bank in the nation based on deposits.

Starnes graduated from Shades Valley High School in 1965 at the age of 16. He obtained a business degree from the University of Alabama. In 1972, Starnes graduated first in his class with a law degree from Cumberland School of Law at Samford University.

In 1975, Starnes and his father established the law firm now known as Starnes Davis Florie. Starnes defended physicians and others in health care cases, including national and international clients. He wrote the Alabama Medical Liability Act, passed by the Legislature in 1987, as well as amendments to the law.

In 2007, Starnes was named chairman and CEO of ProAssurance Corporation, an insurance company that operates in all 50 states and focuses on health care issues.
Judge Frank Johnson Jr. became the central defender of civil rights in America

Steve Flowers

Those of us who are baby boomers remember the tumultuous times of the 1960s. We lived through the civil rights revolution. Those of us who grew up in this state witnessed the transpiring of racial integration first hand. Most of the crusades and struggles occurred here in Alabama, especially Montgomery.

A good many of the landmark civil rights court decisions were handed down in the federal court in Montgomery. The author and renderer of these epic rulings was one Frank M. Johnson Jr. Johnson served as a federal judge for the Middle District of Alabama for 24 years, beginning in 1955. Johnson's judicial decisions brought death threats to him and his family from whites opposed to integration. He was vilified by most white Alabamians at that time and became George Wallace's favorite whipping boy. Wallace referred to him as a "lying, scalawagging, carpetbagging integrationist."

Frank Johnson Jr. was born in Winston County on Oct. 30, 1918. Winston County attempted to stay neutral during the Civil War. It was a Republican stronghold in an overwhelmingly Democratic Alabama. In contrast to the Black Belt planters in south Alabama, the people who settled north Alabama were small farmers. The land they settled on was hilly and not as conducive to growing cotton. Rather than large plantations and slaves, the fiercely independent hill country farmers had 40 acres and a mule.

Therefore, when the winds of division between North and South began to blow in the 1850s, an obvious political difference between north and south Alabamians arose. In 1860, there were only 14 slave owners in Winston County. With the election of Abraham Lincoln, the crucial decision of secession arose. Contrary to what most present-day Alabamians think, it was not an easy unified decision that we should leave the Union. A secession convention was held in January 1861, in Montgomery. The vote was extremely close. The delegates split 54-46 for secession. The Black Belters from south Alabama were for creating a confederacy of southern states to protect their slave ownership and way of life. The hill farmers from north Alabama preferred to not secede. These north Alabamians voted against secession from the Union at that time.

Shortly after the secession convention, citizens of Winston County met at a local establishment, Looey's Tavern. These yeoman farmers of the hills were obviously reluctant to leave the Union for the cause of the planter and his slaves. Legend has it that on July 4, 1861, the good people of Winston County decided to secede from Alabama and remain in the Union. That is why the county is known in Alabama political history and folklore as the "Free State of Winston."

That same sort of independent streak was a hallmark of the Johnson family who were some of the earliest settlers of Winston County. Judge Johnson's father served as one of the few Republicans in the Alabama Legislature in the first half of the 20th century.

Frank Johnson Jr. studied law at the University of Alabama and graduated at the top of his law school class in 1943. He then distinguished himself as a U.S. Army officer in World War II. He was wounded at Normandy and received the...
Purple Heart. After the war, he settled in Winston County and began practicing law in Jasper. Although the Democratic Party dominated southern politics, Johnson was a lifelong, Winston County Republican. He led Dwight Eisenhower's campaign for president in the state in 1952. After Eisenhower became president, he rewarded Johnson with a federal judgeship.

In 1955-1956, shortly after taking his seat on the bench, Johnson became involved in a formative event of the civil rights movement. Rosa Parks was arrested for violating a Montgomery ordinance requiring racial segregation on the city buses. In response, the African-American community organized a boycott of the bus system and nominated the Rev. Martin Luther King as their leader. Johnson ruled that the Montgomery ordinance violated the due process clause of the 14th Amendment. The ruling was the first of many by Johnson that eliminated racial segregation in public accommodations such as schools, parks, libraries, bus stations and airports during the 1950s and '60s. Johnson's decisions were legendary and groundbreaking. He became the central defender of civil rights in America from his federal bench in Montgomery. He was elevated to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit in 1979, and was reassigned to the 11th Circuit Court of Appeals when it was established in 1981. In all, he served more than 40 years on the federal bench. The federal courthouse in Montgomery is named in his honor.

Judge Johnson died in 1999. His 100th birthday would have been this Tuesday. Steve Flowers served 16 years in the Alabama Legislature. Readers can email him at www.steeflowers.us.
What’s next for Medicaid?

The answer could depend on who wins governor’s race

Howard Koplowitz  hkoplowitz@al.com

No matter who wins the November election between Gov. Kay Ivey and Tuscaloosa Mayor Walt Maddox, the state’s Medicaid program faces major changes — possible new work requirements for recipients or expansion of the federal-state health insurance program for low-income individuals.

So why is Medicaid important? One group says how Medicaid’s future plays out is important to the future of hospitals, particularly those in rural areas that depend on that flow of money for their low-income patients.

SEE MEDICAID, A4
Medicaid

FROM AL

There were more than 1.2 million Medicaid-eligible Alabamians in 2016 - the most recent year for which statistics are available - at a state cost of $1.9 billion. Federal funds make up nearly 70 percent - or $4.4 billion - of the remaining amount of Medicaid dollars for the state.

Of the state money, $722 million was allocated from the general fund and $1.2 billion was earmarked from "other state share sources," according to the Alabama Medicaid Agency. The lion's share of the state-federal dollars - 35 percent, or $2.2 billion - was spent on hospitals.

When AL.com readers recently voted on which election issues are important to them, Medicaid ranked eighth among 18 issues - just ahead of such issues as jobs and the economy, and crime and public safety. The poll garnered more than 9,800 votes.

WORK REQUIREMENT

Ivey, who is seeking her first full term after replacing Gov. Robert Bentley, has opposed expansion of Medicaid. She has set in motion a process that would require "able-bodied parents and caretakers" on Medicaid to demonstrate 35 hours of "employment-related activities," ranging from holding a job to seeking employment, in order to maintain their Medicaid benefits. The governor has said a work requirement would decrease the state's share of the Medicaid budget, while the Alabama Medicaid Agency said the potential policy change would also lead to healthier Medicaid recipients.

"Unemployment has been shown to have a negative impact on physical and mental health outcomes. Alabama Medicaid seeks to implement programs for the able-bodied (parent or caretaker relative) eligibility group that will require unemployed or underemployed adults to become gainfully employed, or participate in training opportunities to enhance their potential for full employment. This change will put Alabamians on a path to better health outcomes," the agency said in February when it announced public hearings.

Critics of the plan say taking care of children or elderly parents already constitutes work.

Maddox could not be reached for comment about whether he agrees with Ivey's position; the platform on his campaign website is vague, saying his plan to expand Medicaid could be more palatable to Republicans who object to the proposal by adding a work requirement but does not say whether that requirement should be extended to caretakers.

The state ended the second of its two public comment periods on the issue in August. A spokeswoman for the state Medicaid agency said there is no timetable to implement the policy, but the office expects that the requirements would be in effect one year after the federal government approves the waiver.

EXPANSION PLAN

Should Maddox emerge victorious in November, he has vowed to make expanding Medicaid a day-one priority, promising to sign an executive order on that front.

"Our former and current governors have sold Alabamians a bill of goods by falsely claiming that expansion of Medicaid equates to government handouts to able-bodied people who won't work," the Democratic gubernatorial candidate says on his website. "This lie completely mischaracterizes the nature and importance of the expansion, which would secure much-needed additional services to vulnerable populations that are unable to work and provide new coverage to almost 200,000 hardworking Alabama citizens who cannot afford health insurance."

Maddox argues that expansion would also save the state's hospitals, preserve jobs and create 30,000 new jobs.

While speaking to the Barton Club in September, the mayor said Alabama would lose in economic benefits if it failed to expand Medicaid. And Bentley opposed Medicaid only because of politics.

"You know why we didn't expand Medicaid? Because it was Obama's plan," he said. "People running for election (at the time) were running on Obamacare."

IMPACT ON HOSPITALS

The Alabama Hospital Association, a nonpartisan trade organization state hospitals, sided with the Medicaid debate.

Expansion "would be a significant moment in the state's fragile health care structure and would help the hospitals," said Dan Maddox, the association's executive vice chief policy officer.

The trend of Alabama hospitals shuttering facilities has been 2011 - will continue if Medicaid is not implemented, the association said.

The group also cited a June report that found hospitals in states that Medicaid were 84 percent shuttering facilities than those in Mediicaid states.

"Plus, the economic impact has been tremendous; Louisianna hospitals have added 19,000 jobs; nearly 50 percent in Ohio have been able to hold their health and substance abuse state has seen a 17 percent increase in state revenue," the association said.
Alabama a decade after the Great Recession

Recovery slow, but state on a hot streak

William Thornton  wthornton@al.com

Two months without producing a vehicle. It may be a hard time to remember now at Lincoln's Honda manufacturing plant, in the midst of two expansions totaling $140 million, but it happened: For 60 days at the beginning of 2009, employees reported to work, had training, did maintenance, but no finished vehicles left the plant. Demand had dried up under staging gas prices and an economy off the rails.

SEE RECOVERY, A2
Recovery

There were no layoffs, but in the midst of discussions on bailing out Detroit's "Big Three" automakers, workers were nervous, as were many all over America. Factories and farms, large businesses and small across Alabama have similar stories from that time.

The Great Recession, the most significant economic downturn in seventy years, had arrived in Alabama.

A decade later, have we fully recovered?

Earlier this year, MarketWatch said Alabama was one of seven states that still had 2 percent fewer employed than it had in 2007, when economists say the period actually started. Since then, the state has reached more than two million employed, and saw its numbers dip down to pre-recession levels.

“The recovery has pretty much mirrored the recovery of the U.S. economy in being the slowest since World War II,” Ahmad Ijaz, executive director at the University of Alabama’s Center for Business & Economic Research, said.

To know where we are, it’s necessary to remember the road getting here.

On Sept. 29, 2008, the Dow Jones Industrial Average dropped more than 777 points, its largest fall up to that time. The following days into October were a bloodbath, the moment the recession triggered a worldwide economic meltdown.

Within two weeks, the average dropped another 733 points, and another 678. The fall of Lehman Brothers, the failure of a bank bailout bill in Congress, and worsening financial instability fed the collapse. Within five months, the stock market fell more than 50 percent, wiping out almost $7 trillion in shareholder wealth.

Homeowners nationwide lost $3 trillion in home equity, and 1 in 6 were underwater on their mortgages. The recession arrived in Alabama with a vengeance. In October 2008, Alabama’s unemployment rate stood at 5.9 percent. Exactly one year later, that same number had exploded to 11.8 percent, a rate Alabama maintained through the close of the year. The state’s gross domestic product — the total value of goods produced and services — fell by $6 billion in just two years.

Alabama shot up to fourth among states in bankruptcy filings. The state lost 16 percent of its construction jobs in just two years.

It’s a different story 10 years later. Alabama’s unemployment rate is now at 4.1 percent. There’s plenty of other numbers — GDP, investment, state revenue generated, economic development — that paint a rosier picture of the state’s economic health.

James Barth, a Lowder Eminent Scholar in Finance at Auburn University, says it’s pretty clear that the current good times nationally have made it here.

“Most parts of the country have recovered, even Detroit, which had it much worse than Alabama,” he said. “I’m looking out my window and seeing construction taking place. You see that in Huntsville, Montgomery, Birmingham.”

But do the residents of Alabama truly feel recovered?

“When you look at unemployment, it’s roughly what it was before the recession,” Keivan Deravi, a professor of economics at Auburn University at Montgomery, said. “But it’s been a very unbalanced recovery. Unemployment numbers are much more impressive than two years ago, but wages have not grown that much. I’m not saying there’s anything unhealthy. It’s just the new normal. It was a pretty hard crash. It took a long time to get our feet.”

Median household income, according to the latest numbers, is still more than $1,000 less than it was before the recession, based on the latest available figures, while the cost of living has risen steadily over the last 10 years.

Still, Alabama’s cost of living is less than other states, a factor which has helped lead to the state’s recent hot streak in economic development announcements, like the $1.6 billion Mazda Toyota plant in Huntsville earlier this year.

“The cost of doing business in Alabama is lower than in other states,” Barth said. “The cost of the state’s economic recovery is lower, which makes it attractive.” Jennifer Green, of Jacksonville State’s Center for Economic Development and Business Research.
Birmingham native will receive Fred L. Shuttlesworth Human Rights Award

Jonece Starr Dunigan jdunigan@al.com

A Birmingham native who became a global human rights activist will soon receive the highest honor given by the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute.

Angela Davis will be awarded the Fred L. Shuttlesworth Human Rights Award on Feb. 16, 2019. Davis will also deliver the keynote speech during the 14th annual event. The award recognizes individuals for their significant contributions to civil and human rights. Davis has been deeply involved in social movements worldwide.

"We are thrilled to bestow this honor on Angela Davis, and excited about her return to her hometown of Birmingham, which is the very launching pad of the modern human rights movement," BCRI President and CEO Andrea Taylor said. "Arguably, she's one of the most globally recognized champions of human rights, giving voice to those who are powerless to speak."

Born in Birmingham on Jan. 26, 1944, Davis grew up in the city's Dynamite Hill, an early "mixed" neighborhood where bombings were often the response to black families moving in, thus the name. She joined many groups, including the Black Panther Party, while she was a graduate student at the University of California in San Diego during the late 1960s. In the early 1970s, she was placed on the FBI's "Ten Most Wanted List" and spent 18 months in jail and on trial before her acquittal in 1972.

Davis is now at the University of California Santa Cruz as distinguished professor emerita of history of consciousness — an interdisciplinary Ph.D. program — and of feminist studies. She has authored 10 books and has lectured around the world.

In recent years, a persistent theme of her work has been the range of social problems associated with incarceration and the generalized criminalization of communities most affected by poverty and racial discrimination.

Previous winners of the Shuttlesworth award include:

> Actor and humanitarian Danny Glover
> Congressman John Lewis
> Rev. Joseph Lowery
> Civil rights icon Dorothy Cotton
> Legal activist and founder of the Equal Justice Initiative Bryan Stevenson
> Ambassador Andrew Young
> Attorney Vernon E. Jordan, Jr.
> Actor Harry Belafonte
> Longtime Birmingham Mayor Richard Arrington

"We believe the late Reverend Shuttlesworth would also have been proud to see this award in his name bestowed upon her," said Taylor.
Loans, grants available for rural internet

Programs aim to help bridge the digital divide

By Jason Morton
Staff Writer

Small towns and internet service providers are eligible for a number of grants and loans to help bring broadband web services to rural Alabama.

A number of these programs were highlighted Thursday during a grant-writing workshop hosted by U.S. Rep. Terri Sewell at the Houston H. Harte Center on the campus of Stillman College.

"Everywhere I go, people are always talking about how technology is bridging the gap and offering opportunities for folks," said Sewell, D-Birmingham. "I know that in the rural parts of my district, reliable high-speed internet is a problem and we want to help ... by at least addressing where the state and federal governments have resources that will help communities bridge that gap so we're all connected."

The U.S Department of Agriculture and the Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs both offer grants and loans that can assist municipalities, businesses, nonprofit organizations and other entities to enhance internet connectivity speeds for their respective audiences.

Andrew Hayes, field agent representative for the USDA's Telecommunications Program, outlined a number of federal aid programs that can help bridge the digital divide in rural and sparsely populated areas.

These included the Telecommunications Infrastructure Program, which granted 35 loans totaling almost $622 million in fiscal years 2016 and 2017.

With another $287.7 million either approved or in the process for fiscal 2018 and another 22 loans pending for almost $290 million, this program goes toward

See INTERNET, B2
new telecommunications systems — or the enhancement of existing systems — in towns and cities with typically 5,000 residents or fewer.

Another federal program is the Telecommunications Farm Bill Broadband Program, which awarded one loan for $4.1 million in fiscal 2016 and 2 loans for $24 million in fiscal 2017.

For fiscal 2018, $29.9 million is available for the program that, so far, has awarded one loan for $19.9 million, Hayes said.

More restrictions apply for this program, such as requirements on the number of currently unserved households must be included, but the loans can range from $100,000 to $25 million.

“For all of our loans and grants, we’ll give money to just about anybody but individuals and partnerships,” Hayes said.

Maureen Neighbors, ADECA’s Energy Division Chief, outlined a new program funded by the Alabama Legislature for fiscal 2019.

While the deadline to apply for the Broadband Accessibility Fund is Oct. 24, Neighbors said she anticipates additional funding will be available in future fiscal years in order to reach more communities.

It’s currently limited to cities and towns with 25,000 residents or fewer and can be paired with similar federal aid in certain circumstances.

At least $7.4 million is available for fiscal 2019, which began Oct. 1, Neighbors said ADECA is hoping to be able to disperse it all.

But with the speed at which the program came together and earliness of the deadline, some changes may be needed in future years to include all communities that apply, she said.

“This has been somewhat of a fluid process,” Neighbors said. “We’re finding a number of areas that we’ve missed.”

Regardless of whatever loan or grant programs is pursued, Sewell urged those within her congressional district to reach out to her office for support.

Sewell said she and her staff are willing to sign letters of support or offer other levels of assistance to ensure that any requested loan and grant is secured.

“When you’re applying for grant opportunities, your congresswoman wants to be your partner,” Sewell said. “We are your partner in trying to secure the resources our communities need to succeed.”

Information on how to contact Sewell is available at the congresswoman’s website, https://sewell.house.gov.

Reach Jason Morton at jason.morton@tuscaloosanews.com or 205-722-0200.
Alabama must expand Medicaid

Sen. Gerald Dial for AL.com

I was born in Delta, Alabama, and I have spent the majority of my life in Lineville, working as a teacher, a coach and as a state senator in the Alabama Legislature. I served my country in the Alabama National Guard as a Brigadier General and have a strong sense of duty for the state of Alabama. I know the joys and the challenges of life in rural Alabama, and I am committed to keeping our rural areas strong.

As a retiring legislator and a former chairman of the State Senate Health Committee, I can appreciate the struggles our lawmakers face in trying to fund key state services. However, I also understand the importance of quality health care in our local communities, and I believe that by not expanding Medicaid we are missing a huge opportunity to strengthen our local economies.

For years, we have used state dollars to recruit industries to locate in Alabama, and we have been very successful. We now have an opportunity to support existing health care jobs and make sure every Alabamian has access to care when and where they need it. Medicaid expansion will keep our rural hospitals open, save hundreds of local jobs, and provide basic insurance coverage to almost 300,000 Alabamians. These are our friends and neighbors, hardworking Alabamians who don’t earn enough to afford health insurance. They work in our local restaurants, retail shops and build our houses. Medicaid expansion would enable them to continue working while keeping their family healthy.

What happens if Alabama passes up this opportunity? More hospitals will close. Already, six rural hospitals have closed since 2011, and 88 percent of the remaining rural facilities continue to operate but are losing money every day, providing care to thousands of uninsured individuals. Many have had to eliminate services, cut staff and, if nothing changes, a number of them will likely have to close their doors. And when a community loses its hospital, it also loses doctors, pharmacies, and other providers, devastating the community not only in terms of access to health care, but in job and economic losses.

I realize we don’t have all the answers on how Medicaid expansion will be funded, but I do know that for every $1 the state invests, the federal government will return $10 to the state. That’s a good deal for Alabama and one that we can’t afford to pass up. And remember, federal funding comes from tax dollars we are already sending to Washington, dollars currently funding expanded Medicaid programs in 33 other states and in Washington, D.C.

Instead of sending our money out of state, let’s invest that money in Alabama’s health care industry. We’ve got to find a way to keep our state’s health care system viable. I’m afraid that the cost of doing nothing is too great.

Dial, R-Lineville, represents District 13 in the Alabama Senate.
UA names new VP of research

Russell Mumper will also oversee economic development

By Ed Enoch Staff Writer

The University of Alabama has named an administrator from the University of Georgia as its next vice president for research beginning in January. University of Georgia Vice Provost Russell J. Mumper was announced as the new vice president for research and economic development on Monday following a national search.

"I am thrilled to join the University of Alabama," Mumper said in a statement released by UA. "I have been very impressed by the quality and impact of the faculty's research and creative endeavors, and the university's boldness and aspiration to continue to innovate and promote economic development. The University of Alabama is a remarkable place."

Mumper replaces Carl A. Pinkert, who stepped down at the end of 2017.

"Dr. Mumper has demonstrated, at multiple institutions, that he has the broad-based knowledge and leadership skills necessary to significantly grow and sustain impactful research and economic development enterprises," UA President Stuart Bell said in a statement released by the university.

"I'm confident he is the ideal candidate to build on the University of Alabama's unique strengths and enhance our research prominence."

Mumper has served as vice provost for academic affairs at UGA since 2014. He was a faculty and administrator at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill. He also was previously a faculty member at the University of Kentucky. Mumper earned his bachelor's degree in chemistry and his doctorate in pharmaceutical sciences from the University of Kentucky. He has also worked in the pharmaceutical and biotechnology industry.

Mumper will be tasked with leading UA's research and economic development efforts as part of the five-year strategic plan.
AU, UA team up for $2M project

Auburn University researchers are working on a bio-based additive to make diesel fuel burn cleaner as part of a $2 million U.S. Department of Energy project that will see researchers at the University of Alabama help test the blend.

The $2 million project led by Auburn is part of about $10 million in funding from the DOE for the co-optimization of engines and fuels. The department is providing $80 million for 42 projects to support advanced vehicles technologies research.

Cornell University, Virginia Tech and corporate partners Microbiol Biotech Inc. and Eco-Engineers are collaborating on the project.

The project focuses on a process to efficiently produce a bio-based fuel additive called butyl acetate, an organic compound that occurs naturally in various fruit but can also be produced in a lab.

The traditional petrochemical-based production is energy consuming and not environmentally friendly, said Yi Wang, principal investigator for the project and assistant professor in the Department of Biosystems Engineering in Auburn University’s College of Agriculture, in a statement released by Auburn.

Auburn researchers have developed a process using a genetically engineered strain of the bacteria Clostridium that has resulted the highest butyl acetate production that has ever been reported in a microbial host. A patent has been filed from this work.

"In this project, we will further enhance BA (butyl acetate) production through systematic genome engineering," Wang said. "CRISPR (Clustered Regularly Interspaced Short Palindromic Repeats) technology has been used by many different labs, but we are one of the pioneering labs who have developed the customized CRISPR system that can be applied to the solventogenic clostridial strains, which are notoriously difficult to manipulate genetically."

The additive can be blended with diesel fuel to reduce soot and greenhouse gas emissions and yield cleaner engine operation in cold-weather conditions.

"We anticipate that adding BA (butyl acetate) to diesel fuel will reduce pollutants and costs associated with meeting environmental regulations," Wang said.

Engineering researchers at UA and Cornell University will test the fuel blend produced by Auburn researchers to study how the mix performs in diesel engines used in commercial trucks.

"Our engine facilities and capabilities complement well with Auburn’s ability to produce the fuel," said Joshua A. Bittle, assistant professor of mechanical engineering at UA, in a statement released by UA.

See PROJECT, B2
Blends with different amounts of butyl acetate will be studied by the engineering researchers at UA.

The experimental results will be provided to Auburn researchers to refine the fuel production.

“We are providing research support from the end-user side,” said Ajay K. Agrawal, the Barfield Endowed Chair professor in mechanical engineering at UA, in a statement released by the university. “We will find out how this fuel mix improves engine emissions and efficiency both inside the engine cylinder and in an actual engine during a typical drive cycle.”
UA instructor placed on leave

Officials evaluating reports of inappropriate messages

By Ed Enoch
Staff Writer

The University of Alabama has placed the director of its Center for Ethics and Social Responsibility on leave while it evaluates reports that he previously sent inappropriate messages to a woman working with a community service nonprofit he founded.

"Stephen Black has been placed on leave pending further evaluation of the situation arising from his prior role at Impact America," the university said in a statement.

Black is not teaching nor interacting with students while on leave, according to the university.

Black is the director of the Center for Ethics and Social Responsibility at UA and the founder of Impact America, an AmeriCorps program in which recent college graduates and students work to meet community needs. The center is among the special academic enrichment programs at UA and gives students opportunities to engage in community service experiences for academic credit and reflect on the ethical considerations of their experiences, according to its website.

Black could not be reached for comment on Tuesday.

The claims against Black were first reported as part of a CBS News report on complaints about sexual harassment in the CBS LEAVE

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In a statement released in response to the CBS report, Impact America's board of directors confirmed the incident occurred. Impact America said the AmeriCorps member who was working with the organization resigned in May because of unwanted attention from Black.

Black is no longer associated with the organization following leadership and organizational changes in the wake of the incident, according to the statement from the nonprofits board of directors.

The woman said Black tried to pursue a romantic relationship with her and ignored her attempts to turn down his advances, which caused her emotional and mental distress, according to the CBS report. "We deeply regret the circumstances that led to her resignation. There is no tolerance at Impact for any behavior that makes a team member feel uncomfortable. This experience, however, tells us that we have work to do to better reinforce that imperative," the board said in a statement released by the Impact America Monday.

Impact America responded by replacing Black as president, hiring a human resources director and added better training and reporting functions for employees and volunteers on harassment and discrimination.

Black is the grandson of former U.S. Supreme Court Justice Hugo Black.
Students to spend fall break assisting in hurricane recovery

By Ed Enoch
Staff Writer

As the University of Alabama campus readied for its short fall break Wednesday, a group of UA students boarded buses bound for the Florida Panhandle to spend the time helping with the recovery in the wake of Hurricane Michael.

"We are just the hands that can pull stuff out of the way," senior Abby Greenwell said.

About 40 students with Bama Beyond will spend fall break from Thursday to Sunday helping in Panama City, Florida. The group is part of the Center for Service and Leadership on campus and uses breaks during the academic year for community service projects.

Greenwell, a native of Killen, joined as a sophomore after seeing an ad about a planned trip to Greensboro.

The group typically spends its breaks in the fall, winter and spring helping in other communities, Greenwell said. Students went to Houston last year to help after Hurricane Harvey.

The students will be working with Operation Blessings International and staying at Lighthouse Church in Panama City Beach, Florida.

Michael made landfall on Florida's Panhandle as a strong category 4 storm with 155 mph winds on Oct. 10 to the east of Panama City, Florida.

The college students will help clear debris in the storm-wracked community, Greenwell said.

Greenwell and others in the groups cited the impact community volunteers had played in their lives.

"When I was growing up, I had a lot of people in the community who helped my family out," said sophomore Abigail Steele.

Greenwell noted the response from outsiders to the April 27, 2011, tornado in Tuscaloosa.

"We just had an outpouring of love and support from every corner of the country," she said.

"We just want to pay that support forward."
University tops itself again

With $224 million in donations

The University of Alabama saw another historic fundraising year with more than $224 million gifts and pledges from 62,300 donors, which topped last year's total by more than $100 million.

"We are tremendously thankful for the devotion of our alumni and friends who have helped us reach such a historic milestone," UA President Stuart Bell said in a statement released by the university. "The 2017-18 fiscal year was truly remarkable and has created a strong foundation for the growth

See DONATION, A8
The $224.3 million includes gifts the university has received and gifts that have been pledged over several years.

During the 2017 fiscal year, the university received $120 million from 58,000 donors.

"There is no doubt that there is an incredible level of excitement toward all that the university is accomplishing but also toward the vision for the future of the institution," Vice President for Advancement Bob Pierce said.

Pierce said he believes the excitement is inspired by the projects and vision laid for the institution by the campus leadership.

"Many of our large gifts would not happen without our donors' full confidence in Dr. Bell's leadership and that academic leadership of the programs being supported," Pierce said.

Pierce hopes the annual giving continues to grow. Pierce said he feels like the university is beginning a historic period of growth for advancement - much like the enrollment boom that saw more than a decade of steady growth. UA has grown from an enrollment of 20,333 in 2003 to 38,392 in 2018.

UA received two of the largest donations in its 187-year history this year:
- The University of Alabama School of Law in September received a $26.5 million donation from business executive and attorney Hugh F. Culverhouse Jr.
- In July, Marillyn A. Hewson, chairman, president and CEO of Lockheed Martin Corp., and her husband, James, made a gift of $15 million to UA to benefit the Culverhouse College of Business.

The university is also in the early stages of planning for its next campus capital campaign. The athletics department announced a 10-year, $600 million campaign this summer. The Crimson Standard campaign includes upgrades to Bryant-Denny Stadium, Coleman Coliseum and more.

"Just from a facilities standpoint, you can see what this charitable giving is going to do enhance the university," Pierce said, noting fundraising efforts for a new performing arts center, a new alumni hall, a new academic building for the business college, and upgrades to the athletic facilities. "I think that is resonating with donors."

In the spring, the university plans to launch its second Bama Blitz, a one-day effort that raised $1.8 million during the first event.

"That will become a new tradition at the University of Alabama," Pierce said. "We are already making plans for next April to have another round of focused projects that will be supported with smaller gifts from a broad number of donors."

The projects for the second Bama Blitz have not yet been identified, Pierce said. The projects will address different needs across campus. Last year, one of the more successful projects was the purchase of playground equipment for programs, Pierce said. Another was an effort to send a group of students to a national conference.

"It really runs the board," Pierce said.

The university is also planning for a campaign in the spring the will focus on giving by employees.

"I think that will be our first opportunity in a long time to not only focus on UA employees giving back to the institutions but also the opportunity to recognize and thank employees for giving back," he said.

Reach Ed Enoch at ed.enoch@tuscaloosanews.com or 205-722-0209.
Discount will be available for students, faculty and staff

Staff report

The University of Alabama and ride-sharing company Lyft on Monday began a partnership to provide transportation around campus.

According to a news release, UA students, faculty and staff can use Lyft's app to request a ride with a 15 percent discount within a 2-mile radius of the campus bus hub. Eligible UA recipients will receive an email with details on how to obtain the discount.

In addition to the 15 percent discount, which can be accessed any time of day, Lyft and UA will offer an additional 10 percent discount from 9 p.m. to 3 a.m. on Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays for a total 25 percent discount.

UA's contract with Lyft was initiated by the Student Government Association in an effort to provide the university community with a convenient mode of transportation while traveling outside of the university's Crimson Ride and 348-RIDE service areas.

"We’ve had the whole team of UA leaders getting involved," Price McGiffert, president of the UA Student Government Association, said in the news release. "Our partnership with Lyft is going to make a big difference with our students and create another easy way to access transportation."

Chris D’Esposito, UA’s director of Transportation Services, said Lyft will provide “another tool in that toolbox” to provide UA students with transportation options.

“It’s a seamless way for our students to access the downtown and surrounding communities while complementing our existing transportation options,” D’Esposito said.

Jake Darby, general manager for Lyft, said the ride-sharing company will fill a need “whether students need a ride to class early in the morning or a reliable ride home late at night...”

Because of road closures and heavy traffic, the additional 10 percent weekend discount will not be available on the last three home football games, Nov. 10, 17 and 24. The 15 percent discount will still apply on those dates.
The University of Alabama's Capstone Agency recently won PRSSA's Best Student-Run Firm award for the second time in its history.

BY SHAHRITAR EMAMI
STAFF REPORTER

A
fter touring the College of Communication and Information Sciences as a high school student, Maret Montanari knew a degree in public relations would fit perfectly with her outgoing personality.

It's so empowering that our members are cultivating an environment where we are learning and breaking boundaries in this industry and going where other student-run firms haven't gone before.

MARET MONTANARI

"I discovered that I enjoyed the creativity to it and the ability to work with people and build relationships and represent a company," Montanari said. "Through my time here at Alabama, I realized that there's just so much to the public relations industry, and I don't think I'll ever be bored in it, and that's just something that I really want in my career."

Now Montanari is a senior public relations major and firm director for Capstone Agency, a student-run communications firm at the University that collaborates with clients in Tuscaloosa and across the nation.

Capstone Agency was recently named the top student-run PR firm in the nation by the Public Relations Student Society of America (PRSSA) for the second time in its history on Oct. 8. The first time the agency was named the nation's top student-run PR firm was in November 2016. While this is the second time Capstone Agency has won the award, it cannot be won by the same agency two years in a row.

The PRSSA National Conference PRSSA-affiliated student-run public relations firms nationwide. PRSSA gives affiliated student firms the opportunity to apply for awards that showcase its work, which is how the students of Capstone Agency applied for the Best Student-Run Firm award.

"To me it's a huge testament to our members," Montanari said. "It's so empowering that our members are cultivating an environment where we are learning and breaking boundaries in this industry and going where other student-run firms haven't gone before."

Established in 2001, Montanari said Capstone Agency is one of the first student-run firms to provide integrated communications marketing.

Montanari said 116 students make up the agency, and students in it have diverse backgrounds and majors outside of public relations.

Katrina Waechli, Capstone Agency media coordinator and a senior specializing in sports entertainment public relations, started out as a business student at the University.

While Waechli enjoyed the business side of things, she said public relations allowed her to be more creative. The aspects of storytelling and creating messages for clients are what she said she enjoys most about the public relations industry.

"It's an integrated communications firm, so it's not specific to the public relations major," Waechli said. "We have business majors, computer science majors, majors throughout the communications school, so a lot of people have different interests and skill sets that it brings a lot to the table."
Agency assistant media coordinator and a sophomore majoring in public relations, said her field of study is becoming more comparable to a business degree.

"With the uprise of social media and all these different ways of connecting with people, public relations has become more popular as a way to adapt your business to meet the ever-changing technology and world of communication," McClenny said.

This is McClenny's first semester with the agency. She said the application and interview process took place during the first week of September.

McClenny heard about the agency during the fall of her freshman year at the University through a promotion by College of Communication and Information Sciences. But aside from knowing it is a student-run firm, McClenny said she did not know much else about Capstone Agency.

Before joining Capstone Agency, McClenny was part of the University's MOSAIC Magazine staff, where she worked on the digital media team during the 2017-2018 school year. Over the past summer, McClenny worked as the digital media coordinator for an investment firm in her hometown of Tallahassee, Florida. After two attempts, that experience was what scored McClenny a coveted spot on the firm's PR team.

Montanari said the agency has fall and spring applications, and it hasn't yet determined when the spring applications will open.

"I've had so many wonderful learning opportunities, and I'm so excited that as I transition out of the agency, that means other people are going to get to have those same opportunities," Montanari said.

This year, some of those opportunities include working with clients such as Alabama Power, LessThanUThink and Higher Education Partnership. Montanari said she hopes her legacy will encourage others to pursue their passions and be passionate about what they are doing on campus.

"Honestly, I am a very sentimental person, and it makes me incredibly sad to think that my time just here at Alabama and Capstone Agency are coming to an end," Montanari said.

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MORE INFORMATION

Students interested in applying can follow Capstone Agency on social media and bookmark its website for application updates.

Follow Capstone Agency:

WEBSITE: capstoneagency.org

FACEBOOK: Capstone Agency

TWITTER: @CapstoneAgency

INSTAGRAM: @capstoneagency
UA football player charged with DUI

By Stephanie Taylor
Staff writer

Tuscaloosa Police arrested a University of Alabama football player on charges of driving under the influence and leaving the scene of an accident after a hit and run crash Sunday morning.

Hunter Ray Brannon, 20, was booked into the jail at 5:32 a.m. The offensive lineman from Cullman has seen no playing time this season and did not travel to Knoxville for the game Saturday.

TPD officers were called to the crash near Arby's on University Boulevard, said department spokeswoman Lt. Teena Richardson.

The victim, 19, told officers that the driver of a white Chevrolet Silverado was "doing doughnuts" in the...
roadway before striking his vehicle, she said.

"The suspect asked the victim not to contact the police, then left the scene," she said.

The victim provided police with the tag number, she said. Officers stopped Brannon around Hackberry Lane and Bryant Drive. He received minor injuries, but refused medical treatment.

Head coach Nick Saban issued a statement Sunday morning:

"We are very disappointed any time a player makes a choice that leads to this kind of behavior," he said. "We are still in the process of gathering all of the details on the situation, and we will evaluate what we need to do in terms of appropriate discipline as we move forward."

Brannon was being held in the Tuscaloosa County Jail Sunday morning with bond set at $1,000.

Brannon was one of the top offensive linemen in the state in the 2017 recruiting class. He arrived at Alabama as a three-star recruit by Scout and Rivals. 

Sports writer Ben Jones contributed to this report.
Branding is all the rage in higher ed

A few weeks ago, we directed some attention to the phenomenon of grade inflation in America in the past half-century. Today students are thought of as "custom- ers" and "clients," rather than acolytes in search of knowledge, at least in theory. I'd like to examine another novelty in higher education, "branding."

My wife was reared in cattle ranch country deep in central Florida, and of course her dad, her grandma, and the ranch hands branded all their cattle. That's what I thought of as branding. You've probably seen as many Westerns as I have, and the little dogies must be rounded up and the letter or symbol of the ranch they belong to seared into their skin with a branding iron.

Or maybe you go far enough back to remember an actor named Ronald Reagan hosting a popular television show sponsored by GE, whose "brand" or slogan was "Progress is our most important product."

Branding, in fact, is part of modern marketing. You determine the nature and strength of whatever you want to sell and invent a brand that the public will associate with your product. Many of you will remember the "Marlboro man," for example.

Branding now has become a part of the language of higher education paralleling the grade inflation phenomenon. As universities compete for students they develop their own brand that distinguishes them from thousands of other colleges and universities.

The University of Alabama has a complete Division of Strategic Communications that manages and promotes the university's brands worldwide. This is serious business. At stake is any university's success in competing for the best students coming out of the high schools of America.

As Wikipedia notes, "many universities and colleges now operate in a business-like market where students are 'customers' and other schools are competition."

"Shoot, we're used to that at UA. If Auburn and LSU aren't competition, who is? But, of course, we are not talking sports or trash, but true competition in the marketplace for students: how best to attract them (branding and slogans) and how best to keep them. Strategies include grade inflation and looking after their needs to ensure their happiness, not to speak of their mental and psychological well-being, which is very tender among a good portion of the student population these days.

Yale conducted a survey regarding "trigger warnings" and found that 63 percent favored required professors to use "trigger warnings" to alert students that something, somewhere would be coming up that might offend or challenge them.

Today we have "safe spaces," which Wikipedia

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BRANDING

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defines as "spaces created for individuals who feel marginalized to come together to communicate regarding their experiences with marginalization."

Or, how about this from the Oxford English Dictionary: "a place or environment in which a person or category of people can feel confident that they will not be exposed to discrimination, criticism, harassment or, any other emotional and physical harm." Hello, welcome to the real world.

On the other hand, your university experience is meant to challenge you with new ideas and perspectives. The free exchange of ideas is part of freedom of speech, and critics of safe spaces and trigger warnings, such as John Ellison, dean of students at the University of Chicago, wrote that "we do not support so-called trigger warnings, we do not cancel invited speakers because their topics might prove controversial and we do not condone the creation of intellectual safe spaces where individuals can retreat from ideas and perspectives at odds with their own."

You may think Alabama football is just a sport, but every time UA wins a national championship, there is a spike in applications. People want to be associated with a winner, and Alabama's shining winner is football. UA's current branding centers on the slogan, "Where Legends Are Made," but it goes beyond just famous athletes to highlight alumni who have succeeded at the highest levels. It's a well-done effort, promoting the university across a variety of platforms.

UA is not alone. The nature of higher education today requires branding to keep up with the "competition." Harvard, viewed as the college gold standard, has trademarked such taglines as "Ask what you can do" and "Lessons learned" to help recruit students and donations.

What's in a name, a brand? It is an emblem of sorts, kind of like our national motto, "In God We Trust." It catches your attention and has meanings that sometimes transcend its simplicity. Good branding.

Larry Clayton is a retired University of Alabama history professor. Readers can email him at larryclayton7@gmail.com.
Motorists warned about road work

Construction will affect parts of McFarland Blvd., I-20/59

By Jason Morton
Staff Writer

After closing a portion of Skyland Boulevard during University of Alabama's game in Fayetteville, Arkansas, construction crews are back next week as the Crimson Tide takes its annual bye week.

This time, the closure stands to affect more motorists as McFarland Boulevard, directly under the interstate, will be closed in both directions, said John D. McWilliams, spokesman for the Alabama Department of Transportation's West Central Region.

McFarland Boulevard under I-20/59 will then remain closed around the clock from 11 p.m. Friday until 5 a.m. Monday, with law enforcement on site to assist with traffic.

These closures will be similar to those that shut down Skyland Boulevard under I-20/59 at night during the weekend of Oct. 6 for the installation of girders to support a new, expanded bridge.

"Placing the girders over Skyland Boulevard went smoothly. Everyone did a great job,"

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ROADS

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McWilliams said, "Motorists understood what was taking place and we hope to have similar results next week."

McWilliams said the McFarland Boulevard motorists will begin to be affected on Monday when the left turn lane of McFarland Boulevard eastbound onto I-20/59's northbound lanes will be partially closed starting at 8 p.m. and lasting through 5 a.m. Thursday.

"However," McWilliams said, "the turning movement will be allowed."

The interstate entrance and exit ramps at Exit 73 - the McFarland Boulevard exit - will remain open at all times as will the interstate lanes during daylight hours.

This changes, though, when the sun goes down.

I-20/59 SOUTHBOUND

Between 8 p.m. and 5 a.m. on Tuesday, Wednesday, Saturday and Sunday, the far left lane of I-20/59 southbound will be closed and the right lane will have a rolling roadblock between 11 p.m. and 5 a.m.

The rolling roadblock will be in 20 minute intervals and use vehicles, most likely from law enforcement agencies, to stop traffic. After 20 minutes, these vehicles will move out of the way and let traffic flow continue as normal before moving back into place before closing it off again 20 minutes later.

I-20/59 NORTHBOUND

On Thursday and Friday, the left lane of I-20/59 northbound will be closed from 8 p.m. to 5 a.m. while the right lane will be subjected to a similar rolling roadblock from 11 p.m. to 5 a.m., including the same 20-minute intervals to allow traffic to move.

This work is part of the $83.4 million project to widen the northbound and southbound sides of I-20/59 to three lanes from about a mile north of Exit 76 to just south of the McFarland Boulevard bridge.

Intended to improve safety, mobility and commerce within the area, this project began in January is expected to be completed by December 2020.

Reach Jason Morton at jason.morton@tuscaloosanews.com or 205-722-0200.
How does Alabama QB commit Taulia Tagovailoa deal with Tua's celebrity?

By: Josh Bean

Thompson quarterback Taulia Tagovailoa couldn't stop smiling, as teammates, teachers and even Alabaster Schools Superintendent Wayne Vickers wanted a photo with the star quarterback.

The Alabama quarterback commit received his jersey for the 2019 All-American Bowl -- formerly known as the U.S. Army All-American Bowl -- during a ceremony at Thompson today.

"It's a blessing for God," the Thompson senior said. "It's an award for all of us, our whole team and the school, the team and all that." For Taulia, the shadow cast by his brother, Alabama starting quarterback Tua Tagovailoa, remains omnipresent, even today.

While introducing Taulia and recounting his high school career, an All-American Bowl representative pointed out Tua played in the same all-star game a few years ago.

That's life for Taulia, as Tua has emerged as the Heisman Trophy front-runner and has led Alabama ranked No. 1 while averaging a nation's-best 53.1 points per game. Winning and winning big at Alabama has made Tua an even bigger celebrity than he was after leading Alabama in last year's national championship game comeback.

Taulia seems comfortable in the spotlight at Thompson and in his brother's shadow.

"It's great," Taulia said. "I feel blessed and lucky, because not too many younger brothers can say they have an older brother who goes to Alabama and he's doing all these great things. Also, it motivates me to be better. I can learn a lot of new things from him.... It's just been a blessing."

Taulia has completed 192-of-296 passes for 2,693 yards and 26 touchdowns against four interceptions in seven games this season for Thompson (6-1). He's also run for two touchdowns.

Tua is 88-for-123 passing for 1,790 yards, with 21 touchdowns and no interceptions, in seven games for the Crimson Tide (7-0). He also has two TD runs. So, who's having the better season? "Well, they're undefeated, so you have to give it to him," Taulia said.

Taulia thanked everyone he could think of -- his parents, teammates, Thompson coach Mark Freeman and his sisters -- during short remarks during today's ceremony, adding "we've got business to finish."

He later confirmed he was referring to winning the Class 7A state title. "I wouldn't want to do it with another bunch of kids," Taulia said. "These are my brothers. We grind together. We know God has a plan for us, and whatever his plan is, we're going to do it to best of our abilities."

Thompson (6-1) plays at Mountain Brook (7-0) on Friday. The All-American Game, presented by American General, is scheduled for Saturday, Jan. 5, in San Antonio. The game will be televised by NBC.
Lyle Henley was a natural fit to lead UAB’s Strength and conditioning program

Evan Dudley For AL.com

Amid the brisk chill of an early January morning in Birmingham, the silence is broken only by song birds and the exhausted gasps of the UAB football team.

The players ascend every set of stadium steps followed by a soul-crushing dash up and down the spiral stair-wells of Legion Field. It destroys the ego while building up self-confidence and trust in oneself and teammates.

It’s called “Paying the Price of the Old Gray Lady” and it’s one of the cornerstones of the UAB strength and conditioning program led by UAB’s Director of Athletic Performance, Lyle Henley.

After reinstating the football team more than three years ago, head coach Bill Clark was adamant in installing a progressive strength program and sought Henley’s services. He has worked as a strength coach, owned and managed an athletic training facility and has been an NFL combine trainer with 17 former first-round picks under his tutelage.

“What does a great strength coach mean to your program?” Clark posited. “Lyle is — I always laugh because he looks like a MMA fighter, but he could be a doctor. Brilliant psychologist who understands about getting to the next level. He does so many things for our program and we couldn’t be where we are without him.”

Henley grew up in Warren, Arkansas, a small logging town in the southern portion of the state, and was a member of the Louisiana Tech football program from 1994-1998. He began his career at linebacker before moving to tight end his senior year and was a member of the Bulldogs squad that defeated Alabama in a rain soaked homecoming at Bryant-Denny Stadium in 1997.

After graduating from Louisiana Tech, Henley moved to Tuscaloosa and was a graduate assistant strength coach for the Alabama football program from 2000-2002.

“It was unbelievable,” he said. “I had always been on the other side of the coin at the smaller school playing the bigger school. It was cool and I got to see it from a different perspective as far as the big fish in a small pond and small fish in a big pond kind of deal.”

Henley returned to his alma mater as an assistant strength coach in 2002 and two years later was promoted to head strength coach, a title he held for two seasons before founding The Athlete Factory in the Mobile area.

It was there Henley and Clark met as the latter was serving as the defensive coordinator for South Alabama. The two struck up a relationship and kept in touch after Henley sold his growing business to DI Sports Training in 2012 and was subsequently named the Director of DI NFL Combine Training.

When Clark was named head coach of Jacksonville State, he hired Henley as a consultant to his strength program and the two became intrigued with working with one another again in the future. Clark took the job at UAB the following year, but the program was shuttered after one season and former strength coach SaJason Finley left for Southern Miss.

Henley contacted Clark shortly after the program was reinstated to express interest in the possible opening and was hired five months later in February 2016 as the head strength and conditioning coach. The lure of laying a new foundation was all it took for Henley, who was sold on Clark’s vision for the entire program.

“The next thing about it was it had never been done before,” Henley said. “From a training perspective, it was not such a bad deal. You got time constraints when you’re training guys and it’s not the best way to always train because you’re under the pressure and the gun of having to get the guys ready so you have to fast forward through some of the initial phases.

“We knew we were going to get to spend a long time with them in some developmental phases. A lot of these kids were junior college so they didn’t come from the best training backgrounds, and that helped us start from ground zero and keep them in that phase for a long time. Our strength level shot through the roof and I think you’re seeing now that big senior class of guys that are as strong as anyone we play or stronger.”
‘ON THE CUTTING EDGE’

The first year of Henley’s tenure was spent training about 60 players in the Olympic training facility on campus in Wallace Gymnasium, but the design process for the Football Operations Complex was in full swing with Henley and Clark playing large roles in the design of the training facilities.

“We got to spend a lot of time designing this weight room and all the stuff in it,” Henley said. “We actually got to prototype most of this equipment because what we were able to do is go through and handpick instead of picking a magazine up and say we like this, this and this.

“We actually got to go to Legend Fitness and spend a week with them and tell them how we wanted to train. They designed the equipment off our ideas and that’s some of the newer stuff that you see being sold now through them after a year of us testing and seeing what works and what doesn’t work.”

Legend Fitness is top of the line in weight training equipment but Henley had more in mind than just picking up heavy things and putting them back down. All apparatus are equipped with iPads installed with personalized player logs with predetermined workout sessions and two EliteForm 3D cameras that test bar speed, velocity speed and power output, among other various physical yields.

“That’s how we’re able to assign different loads and prescribe different weights throughout the season depending on how the guy is on a day-to-day basis,” Henley said. “We’re constantly evaluating and changing things based upon what is happening to his body on the field and off the field.

“It’s very dynamic. We’ll look at the iPad and if a guy is in the right training zone, it flashes green and we’re good. If it flashes red, we start asking questions and assessing a guy. If we have to back off a little, we back off. That’s how we get guys to peak at the right time and how we’ve been able to keep guys relatively healthy the last couple of years.”

Although Henley’s professional career has been marked by successes in innovation and creation, he says in the end it still comes down to the basic fundamentals of coaching.

“It’s finding different ways and trying to stay on the cutting edge without going outside of the philosophy of the way you think,” he said. “Finding ways to relate to the kids, finding ways for guys to find out the intent of doing things, whether it be different types of bar speeds or different types of buy-in mentality of how a guy is training. It’s an ever-evolving way of trying to get the guys to buy in to what you’re doing.”

‘HE KEEPS US HUNGRY’

Now in his third year, Henley believes the fruits of the program’s labor have come to a culmination. There is trust instilled between his staff and the athletes, a production on the field and perpetual energy inside and outside the operations facility.

“It’s not just noticeable to him and coaches, however, as the players continuously laud the training program under Henley.

“He just has so many exercises and workouts that at my past schools I never saw before,” defensive lineman Garrett Marino said. “You trust him a lot and don’t question what you’re doing.”

The fervent ideologies of Henley are also infectious among the team.

“He’s very passionate about his job,” cornerback D.A. Williams said. “I feel like every time we come into the weight room, it’s that intensity that helps us get stronger. All these younger guys and the vets, having a guy like that makes us want to come in here and get better. He keeps us hungry.”

The stereotypical image of a strength coach is that of a muscled-up maniac screaming at players during death-defying workout sessions. But Henley doesn’t prescribe to that philosophy and seeks to build his players and program through intense positivity and attention to the finer details of athletic training.

“I try to lead in a positive way,” he said. “I always try and stay positive with the guys. They’re getting stressed, coaches are rolling them from all corners and they got a lot of pressure on them. But then you have to be — a do the same way with my kids, the same way I treat my two kids is the same way I treat the players. I’ll always be their coach or a father first, and their friend second. I have a good relationship with them but it’s been a earned relationship.

“I’ll scream and yell when I have to but I’m not a guy you’ll see bouncing all over the place. We bring energy during the games and in here I like to coach. I’m watching for form and technique and different things like that but you have to have energy. So it’s to find a way to have positive energy is the way I always want to coach.”
BIRMINGHAM BANK ADDS HUNTSVILLE LEADER TO BOARD

A Huntsville executive has been elected to the board of directors of one of Birmingham's largest banks. ServisFirst Bancshares and its subsidiary, ServisFirst Bank, has elected Irma Loya Tuder to its board of directors.

Tuder, who has more than 30 years of experience in strategic business planning and execution, executive leadership, financial management and business operations, has served on the ServisFirst Bank Huntsville board of directors since 2009.

Tuder is the founder, former CEO, and board chairperson of Analytical Services Inc. (ASI), a nationally recognized business providing management and technical solutions to federal government agencies. Prior to starting the company, which was acquired by Arctic Slope Regional Corporation Federal Holding Company as a wholly-owned subsidiary in 2007, Tuder spent five years as a controller in private industry and five years in public accounting.

As a company leader, Tuder was recognized as Alabama's Small Business Person of the Year, and her former company, ASI, received numerous honors.

Tuder has served on several advisory boards throughout her career and currently is a member of the Notre Dame Institute for Latino Studies Advisory Council, HudsonAlpha Institute for Biotechnology board of directors, and the University of Alabama at Huntsville (UAH) President's Advisory Council, Foundation Board and Business School Advisory Board. She also chairs the St. John Paul II Catholic High School board of trustees.
The Tuscaloosa News
Thursday, October 25, 2018

Study finds no cancer cluster at Auburn

The Associated Press

MONTGOMERY – Alabama health officials announced Wednesday that a study did not find evidence of an eye cancer cluster at Auburn University, despite a rash of reported cases of the rare and deadly cancer that drew national attention earlier this year.

The Alabama Department of Public Health said the study "based on the best available information" did not find higher than expected rates of uveal melanoma among former students and university employees. The study conducted with Auburn University came after a number of cases of the rare cancer were reported among former students.

Justin T. George, director of cancer epidemiology, said the study looked at identified cases among people who attended or worked at Auburn since 1980.

Allyson Allred, who has been battling the cancer since 2001, has worked to connect other survivors who lived in Auburn.

"The fact that Auburn University and the Alabama Department of Health are not calling (it) a cluster doesn't change the fact that too many people are dying from this disease and we must find the cause so we can find the cure," Allred said.

From 2006 through 2015, there were 316 cases of uveal melanoma among Alabama residents for an average of 31.6 new cases each year, the department said.

A limitation of the Auburn study is that cancer registries across the country do not capture where a person attended college. Researchers used a list of Auburn University students and employees that had reported being diagnosed with this disease.

Allred said a task force submitted about three dozen names. The health department said 17 people met the criteria to be included in the study.

George said researchers remain comfortable in the finding. He said the cancer would have to occur in substantially higher numbers to qualify as a cluster.
Study Shows Continuing Need for Student Housing at Auburn

By: Associated Press

A new analysis shows that there's still a demand for student housing near the downtown area in Auburn.

The Auburn City Council hired Danter & Associates several years ago. The aim was to learn more about the market potential for student housing amid concerns of overbuilding, The Opelika-Auburn News reported.

The firm's 2018 updated analysis suggests that there is still a demand for purpose-built student housing, particularly within a walkable distance to the Auburn University campus.

The demand for more student housing in the area is driven by several factors, the recent analysis found. They include the growth in Auburn's student enrollment and changing tastes and expectations of the student body.

"Vacancy rates for both purpose-built student properties and conventional apartment properties are very low and rental rates have increased consistently indicating a strong demand and limited supply," Kevin Cowper, city of Auburn assistant city manager, wrote in a memorandum to the city council.

The 225-page study found that there are 3,190 purpose-built student housing units and 8,964 bedrooms in 18 properties in Auburn. The vacancy rate among purpose-built student housing properties is 2.9 percent, which is below the 5.9 percent rate reported in 2015 and the 8.1 percent rate in 2013.

"The 2.9 percent vacancy rate is considered extremely low and would indicate that the market is limited by a lack of supply, rather than lacking demand," the study states, adding that vacancy rates are lower for newer properties closer to campus.

There are four student housing projects under construction: The Standard, 191 College, Twin Cities and Uncommon Auburn. An additional purpose-built student housing property, The Union, is approved for construction but has not broken ground.

"While there is long-term market capacity to absorb these beds, the new properties will increase the market share of purpose built student housing to a much higher level," Cowper wrote.

Cowper referenced a number of factors that are contributing to demand for purpose-built student housing: Increased enrollment at Auburn University; socio-economic characteristics of the student population; low supply of on-campus housing options; and a trend toward urban living within walkable distance to campus and in close proximity to downtown.
Team president Jay Heaps brings strong soccer resume to Birmingham Legion FC

By James Ogletree
Special to The Tuscaloosa News

BIRMINGHAM – In the center of the offices of Birmingham Legion FC sits a pingpong table – the site of a heated battle between Jay Heaps, the fledgling soccer club's president/general manager, and Chandler Hoffman, who will be announced as the club's first-ever signing later in the afternoon.

Throughout the match Heaps oohs, aahs, moans and groans as he fires returns back at Hoffman or dumps the occasional one into the net. At one point the bouncing of the ball ceases and his bright orange Nike VaporMax shoes come to a halt as he chirps a hearty greeting to an employee, but then it's quickly back to the all-important task at hand.

"The guarantee is (Heaps) wants to whoop him," Legion FC executive vice president Doug Hicks said. "He's cheery, but if he loses, he's not going to take it lightly."

When Heaps tells people he's competitive to a fault, they sometimes counter that he enjoys only the thrill of victory, but the former Major League Soccer All-Star is quick to correct them. Since he was a kid, what he's loved the most is the challenge to improve and the pivotal moments that demand greatness.

While Heaps was earning national collegiate player of the year honors at Duke, he was also a walk-on for the men's basketball team. His fiery, competitive spirit caught the eye of one of the most venerated coaches in sports history: Mike Krzyzewski.

"He had the most guts of any athlete I've seen at Duke over 36 years," Krzyzewski said in a 2015 MLS documentary. "I love watching him play, because this guy will rip your heart out. ... There's a little bit of me in him. I knew that he would be a natural coach."

See HEAPS, C5
After becoming the second overall pick in the 1999 MLS draft, Heaps played 11 seasons in MLS, nine of which were spent with the New England Revolution.

Having been profoundly impacted by Krzyzewski's ability to transfer his emotions to his players, Heaps had long known he wanted to coach after his playing days were done, but he faced the uphill battle of convincing owners to look past his lack of coaching experience.

That's where Krzyzewski stepped in. The five-time national champion gave a sparkling recommendation to Revolution owner and founder Robert Kraft, citing Heaps' passion for soccer and drive to win.

Kraft was won over. Heaps coached the Revs for six seasons, reaching an MLS Cup final in 2014, where New England lost to LA Galaxy.

Fast forward to December 2017: Three months after Heaps was fired by the Revolution, he met with a group of Birmingham businessmen regarding a front-office position – despite having never occupied a front-office position.

But, impressed by his soccer acumen, leadership and character, they hired him to oversee their vision: a second-division soccer club that can energize a soccer fan base in the community.

"I saw an opportunity in a club to really build something," Heaps said. "I wasn't expecting to fall in love with a city so quickly. ... I knew my heart was here when I left that meeting."

"You hear 'we want to have a team that people identify with,' but this was different. This was, 'we're doing this for these people.' This was putting up serious investment to make sure this is done right in the city we live in, believe in, work in and have our families in."

Heaps' first big move as the president and GM of Birmingham Legion Football Club was hiring Hicks, who has spent 25 years in the NBA, NHL and MLS as a business, marketing and branding specialist – a fitting complement since Heaps had no experience in those realms.

When they met through a mutual friend, Heaps and Hicks realized they possessed nearly identical beliefs about how to build a premier soccer club.

"I want it to be top-down culture, from the ownership group, general manager, president, coach, all the way down to the players into the fans. The fans can feel that," Heaps said emphatically. "That's where the really great teams come from."

That top-down mentality is deeply ingrained in everything Legion FC does. The club's name refers to its fan base and also alludes to Birmingham's soccer history at Legion Field.

Portrayed in the club's insignia is a hammer and anvil, a nod to the city's industrial background and Legion FC's predecessor, the third-division Birmingham Hammers; a shield, which represents unity among the players; and the club's colors – molten gold and attack black.

Three sparks reside above the hammer and anvil in another nod to manufacturing. They stand for the club's three pillars: pride, passion and community.

Legion FC's official jersey sponsor, Birmingham-based beverage company Red Diamond, and its first player signing, Birmingham-born Hoffman, reflect the community values, but Heaps said none of that is to pander to the fans.

"You want to make sure your first player encompasses all that you believe in in a club," Heaps said at Hoffman's introduction. "This is all good and fun, but this is one heck of a player. That is why we signed him."

Hoffman and the rest of his future teammates will first suit up for Legion FC in March 2019. For Heaps, Hicks and the rest of the staff, having Red Diamond's logo on their chests brings new meaning to "play for the name on the front of the jersey": They're playing for the city they all call home and for the people who make it possible.

"Our fans feel like they are a part of this club. And they should. They are," Hicks said. "Whether that means they're holding up a scarf, banging a drum or helping us at a volunteer event, they are a part of this thing. And in the end, we will represent Birmingham in the best way we know how."
How UAB football prepares for road trips

By: Evan Dudley

Ryne Nicholson doesn't get much sleep on Saturday nights.

He arrives at the UAB football operations complex long before the twilight of Sunday morning and awaits the arrival of Kenny Taylor. Nicholson begins loading around 120 game jerseys and pants into massive industrial washing machines when he hears the warning beeps of the equipment truck backing up to the loading dock on the 11th Street side of the complex.

Taylor finishes parking the truck and meets Nicholson for a quick chat before leaving the latter to it. His assistants and interns will begin to file in once the sun creeps over the horizon so only a few hours separate the end from the beginning of his work week.

Nicholson, a Tennessee native and graduate of the University of Tennessee and East Tennessee State, was named the Director of Football Equipment for the Blazers in May - after serving as the assistant manager to football and head manager of the women's basketball and baseball programs - and has developed his own system in that short amount of time to ensure the program's equipment needs are met on a daily basis while preparing logistics and strategies for upcoming road games and beyond.

"It's pretty much just a continuation," he said. "Sunday is the start and Thursday night after we pack the bags after practice, that's our finish line. We have all week to do that on top of balancing a budget and every regular duty including coaches' laundry, staff laundry and player's workout laundry in the mornings or any helmet or cleat problems. That's our race time."

Taylor pulls out his cellphone and dials Nicholson's number. The equipment truck left the operations complex several hours ago following Thursday's practice and federal regulations demand that Taylor pull over and rest before finishing his trek. He relays his intentions to Nicholson, who then confirms his arrival time the next morning at the opposition's stadium.

It's a week-long endeavor that brings Nicholson and his staff to this point of their game week duties. They fly with the team to each away game and are prepared to setup for game day on Friday morning as soon as the equipment docks at that week's destination.

"We have a pack list and we just check it off," he said. "We make sure everything is done to where we have to restock expos, sharpies and pens to armbands, underwear and compression; you name it. I always tell them it's better to over pack than to under pack because I'd rather bring back 10 t-shirts than be without. You got to pack backup cleats, backup helmets, backup shoulder pads, knee pads and thigh pads, coacher's gear and backup to that, backup shoes, footballs and kicking net. I'm a guy who likes two of everything, I know that can't be done everywhere, but you just never know."
Nicholson also carries the burden for what may be one of the more important pieces of equipment on gameday.

Said Nicholson: "Backup gum. Coach likes to chew gum on the sideline so I bring him backup gum."

Staying ahead of schedule is the name of the game for Nicholson. Jerseys and pants are washed and cleaned on Sunday and Monday with select uniforms sent off for mending purposes due to rips or tears suffered in the game. What wasn't used the previous week - such as different uniform pants and helmets - is loaded onto the truck early, along with any standard equipment used each game.

Nicholson keeps his list updated during the week and makes amendments when circumstances require as to keep from falling behind and rushing to complete load-out on Thursday.

"The travel list will change a little bit but not more than two or three people," he said. "We have a really good idea who we take on the road so that helps on away games. I'd rather hurry up and wait that way I can touch on other things or just relax because it's a grind. I can also double and triple check myself throughout the week and space it out."

The man who makes it all possible, in Nicholson's opinion, is Taylor. The UAB program employs Armstrong Relocation for its trucking needs and Taylor has been the driver for the Blazers' equipment truck since 2014. He usually makes the drive solo but longer trips require a second driver and he has carried a student intern with him on occasion to help with unloading.

"He's great," Nicholson said. "It's a little continuity. This is only my second year so he's been through a little more Conference USA schools. He knows the routes and he knows what to do to get there to and from. We have constant communication throughout the week with Tuesday being my contact with him. We like to get in a scheduled routine but there are updates and you have to be ready for sudden changes."

If all goes according to plan, there will be no headlines in the Sunday paper detailing the equipment staff's tireless efforts or underperformance during the game. That's exactly how Nicholson likes it because if nobody is talking about them, that means they did a good job.

"We want to be noticed while going unnoticed," he said. "Nobody really knows what we do but we are a part of helping the whole thing run. They've done a great job about that and we just try to be as efficient as possible."

Nicholson sits relaxed at his desk on a Tuesday afternoon as the majority of the equipment has already been loaded on the truck. A few members of his staff are at a work bench repairing various helmets while players enter the room and retrieve their practice gear for the day.
Aside from game day preparations, the staff is heavily involved during practice keeping player gear and jerseys clean and ready to use each day of the week.

"Their helmets, jerseys, cleats and everything stay at their locker," Nicholson said. "They'll turn in their laundry on a loop afterwards, their locker number 1-120, and we'll wash and dry and then we'll put it back out. If guys have to workout in the morning with their designated group, they'll just come in and pull their loop."

"For example, D.A. Williams is 1 on the field and 1 in the locker room so everything he owns is labeled 1. But Anthony Rush is 47 on the field and he has locker 49, so he's 49-47. His locker in here and locker out there all matches up to be numbered that way."

It's not just keeping practice gear clean, however. Nicholson and his staff also help run the organized practices. A responsibility not unknown to him after working for the Tennessee Titans as a member of the grounds crew before coming to UAB.

"It's more than just making sure they have a helmet," he said. "We're pulling hoses off in 7-on-7, we're shagging balls and sometimes guys will be "fill-in" players for formation checks. They'll never have the ball thrown to them but they'll be the X-Y-Z receiver or something like that."

Like most aspects of the UAB football program, the equipment department has benefited significantly from the operations complex built prior to the 2017 season. It has been specifically suited for videography, recruiting and equipment needs, and is arguably one of the finest on Conference USA and on-par with some Power 5 programs.

The locker system itself is as organized as any you'll find in a Division I program and high-density space savers make efficient use of storage keeping all equipment contained within a defined space. There is also work benches for equipment repair and adjustment such as helmets and cleats.

A far cry from what previous staffs had to endure before the renaissance of UAB football.

"It's great to have this facility because we could still be operating out of Bartow," Nicholson said. "You can get caught up in it and wish you had more sometimes but then you just sit back and realize that you're blessed to have what he have. Three washers and dryers, double monitor computers, loading dock, I even got a TV here so it's my second home. You kind of have to pinch yourself a little bit and be like, 'this is real life.'"

One unique aspect of Nicholson's work is the uniform. The Blazers may not have the plethora of combinations that the Oregon Ducks have but green, gold and a dragon lends itself to numerous possibilities.
One of the more high-profile combos has been that of the "Ice Dragon" road design. An all-white design with a "icy" Blazer logo emblazoned on the helmet harkens imagery of the Game of Thrones book series. Not to mention the often overlooked "scales" located within the design of the shoulder stripes.

While uniform decisions ultimately come down to head coach Bill Clark, a few suggestions from Nicholson have made it to the field during his time with the Blazers but most are not approved by the end of the process.

"Coach and I have worked side by side with a few uniforms that weren't passed through but we have something in store for next year," he said. "It's the 150 year college football anniversary and I think we're going to cook up something for the Blazers. Obviously we're not going to come out wearing purple but we got some twerks and things we like to do. We all have creative minds and coming up with new ideas - like a red facemask with flames - but the green and gold is working."

Not that Nicholson's favorite cold blooded reptilian design won't make a return later this season. As the man who holds the keys to the kingdom of gear, he might have something to say about it.

"The Ice Dragon is not done this year, it's going to come back."
UAB ready for improving but winless UTEP

By: Evan Dudley

With each new week, the UAB football team seems to defy odds and continue to exceed the expectations once placed on the program.

The latest was an 11-point comeback victory over North Texas that gave the Blazers its sixth win of the season, bowl eligibility and an inside track at the Conference USA West division title with three games coming up against divisional opponents.

UAB is undefeated in conference play and can wrap up the division with a win in each of those division games - possibly two depending on the craziness that is CUSA football - but face an improving UTEP team this week that has lost all three of its conference games against UTSA, North Texas and Louisiana Tech by an average of 6.5 points.

"Coach (Dana) Dimel has been in the biggest games in the biggest leagues," head coach Bill Clark said. "There is not a lot separating any of us in this league. We're going to have to be ready. After our game, I saw that in our players. They were excited. As we say, it's another championship game for us. We should have a great week of practice and plan on playing against a good football team who is improving. I know they're hungry for a win."

The Miners are currently winless on the season - 0-19 since the beginning of the 2017 season - and the obvious expectation is UTEP will extend its losing streak to 20 games following its showdown with the Blazers in the Sun Bowl.

UAB is no stranger to this set of circumstances and is all too aware the asking price of underestimating an opponent, having lost each time to winless teams in Charlotte (2017) and Coastal Carolina (2018).

"Somebody stopped me after the Rice game and said, 'You could be undefeated,'" Clark said. "I asked my son that and he said, 'Dad, we wouldn't be where we are if that hadn't happened to us.' That's the line you walk between confidence and arrogance."

"When we went to Coastal, we sat around and watched them play South Carolina on a Saturday and got to believing that. It's game-to-game, it's home games. It brought us to reality. They're sick of hearing that. Then they're going to hear Charlotte. Charlotte was the same team last year. They were getting beat by a touchdown. It's all those things. We have to prepare like I know we will. I hate to use negatives as a reminder but they work. That keeps us grounded for sure."

The Blazers are now on a five-game winning streak since that loss to Coastal and Clark attributes a lot of that success to the way the team has practiced.
Linebacker Chris Woolbright, who leads the team with 35 total tackles, agrees with that assessment and says the intensity and focus in practice - regardless of opponent - has carried over to the field.

"We treat every team the same," he said. "We prepare for them in practice and treat them all like they are the No. 1 team in the country. We prepare for the worst situations possible and we keep working. Hopefully we can go into the game playing our best and nobody on the team thinks we can slouch off on them. We remind our self what happened last year when we went to Charlotte and this year when we went to Coastal and slept on them."

UTEP opened the season with a home loss to FCS foe Northern Arizona and followed that up with a 28-point loss at UNLV and a shutout loss at Tennessee. The Miners have steadily improved - particularly the defense in holding North Texas and Louisiana Tech to 27 and 31 points respectively - and have been in a position to win or tie in three of their last four games.

It's that kind of stable development that keeps Clark and the Blazers fixated on the task at hand rather than falling for the same trap a third time.

"Offensively, they're a zone read. Zone read or any option is an equalizer," Clark said. "The things their coach did at Kansas State were amazing. He's a guy that's used to taking less and doing more with it. That's the kind of coach he is. Defensively, they're very multiple. They gave North Texas fits. That gives me respect for them. They're desperate to win. They're playing well. He says that they're confident. That's the way we're going to treat them."
The Birmingham News
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For Blazers, it's about more than the game

Evan Dudley

It was a usual Monday for the UAB football team except for one tiny difference: a small 5x7 card in each player's locker.

A short note printed on each card detailed the story of a young child fighting against an indomitable opponent. Senior receiver Collin Lisa took a moment to absorb the story of Axel Neilson, a 3-month-old child who has already been through two surgeries due to intestinal and stomach ailments.

It hit Lisa hard, and he took a moment to collect his emotions before truly realizing the indelible effect of the program's commitment not only on himself but to Children's Harbor and the patients it serves.

Lisa and his teammates will honor the names on every card Saturday as the Blazers suit up against North Texas with each child's name on their alternate gray uniforms.

"You look at these cards and learn these kids' story," Lisa said. "It's crazy to see how strong they are, how strong the parents and the rest of family members are and how positive they are every day. It's impressive how strong those families are."

"It makes you keep things in perspective. Playing football, you can get mad about a lot of things. You can get mad about playing time and reps or this, that and whatever; but there are little kids out here fighting life-threatening diseases and you see the positivity they have."

College football has as many traditions as there are instructions of higher learning, but the Blazers' is becoming one of the more meaningful in the country. It's similar to that at Iowa, where fans and players wave to the University of Iowa Children's Hospital located across the street from Kinnick Stadium.

Senior safety Broderick Thomas, who is the second-leading tackler on the team, says it's become an integral part of the culture at UAB and is as much a part of their identity as the product on the field.

Thomas' honoree, Clayton Davis, a 6-year-old at Bryan Elementary just north of Birmingham, battles chronic kidney disease with Focal Segmental Glomerulosclerosis, a scarring of kidney filters.

"It's just a different culture when you're playing for somebody else and you actually don't have your last name on the back," Thomas said. "That's somebody else's kid so it makes you feel like you got to play even harder."

Many college football teams reside in smaller communities, but the Blazers call the growing Birmingham metro area home. The university has one of the finest medical research centers in the world and is one the city's largest employers. The commitment of donors and everyday citizens following the dismissal of the program in 2014 led head coach Bill Clark and his team to find a way to show their gratitude while giving up a portion of themselves for those in worse circumstances than just not having a football team.

"It shows the city how appreciative we were when the program shutdown," Lisa said. "It's not just the university, it's about the city, the medical center and all the little kids. It's way more than just the game of football here."

In last year's Children's Harbor game against Louisiana Tech, it seemed destiny played a hand during the contest as the Blazers refused to yield and blocked a potential game-winning field goal as time expired. Grabbing a win was exhilarating for the program — it was the first win in program history over the Bulldogs — but Thomas says sharing that moment and emotion with the children they represented was the true victory for the Blazers.

"It's just a special moment at the end of the day," he said. "Playing for somebody else, you never know who is watching you and you never know who you can touch in this world through this game."
Fairfield senior Damien Miller often claps along with the band in the lead-up to a kickoff or punt.

Once the ball is kicked, though, the cheering crowd and the band's blaring horns fade into the background. Miller said he suddenly hears silence.

"I have to keep telling myself, I'm going to score this one, I'm going to score this one," Miller said. "I know I'm not going to score every one I touch, but I have to keep telling myself, so when I get it, I just take a step and see how they react and I act on it from there."

Miller, a UAB defensive back commit, has returned six kicks for touchdowns this season — four kickoffs and two punts. Two other return touchdowns, a punt and a kickoff, have been nullified by penalties.

Watch Miller discuss his kick-return strategy:

The 6-foot, 185-pound Miller needs one more kickoff-return TD to tie the AHSAA single-season record of five, according to the online record book, but he has a long way to go to reach Parrish's Jason Clay's single-season record of 11 combined kick-return TDs set in 1998.

Not bad for a guy who didn't return kickoffs for Fairfield until this season. Yes, second-year coach Keon Handley admits he probably should have used Miller in the return game in 2017, while Miller admits he surprised himself with the kick-return success.

"Looking at the offseason, I was impressed with his work," Handley said. "He was a lot more explosive and violent out of his burst. We felt like he could make a difference in the return game."

Damien and his twin brother, Damon, were expected to anchor the Fairfield defense from their defensive back spots, but Damon suffered a season-ending knee injury earlier this season.

Fairfield also played two games with just 15 players after most of the roster was suspended for an off-field incident against Wenonah.

That's left the Tigers (3-4 overall, 3-2 in Class 5A, Region 4) battling for a playoff spot with remaining region games against Pleasant Grove on Friday and Briarwood Christian next wee.

If Miller can continue his kick-return success, it would definitely help the playoff dream become a reality. Handley expects future opponents to kick away from Miller or simply kick the ball out of bounds.

"I always thought if I got the ball, I could score," said Damien, who also has a touchdown reception this season. "Last year, I didn't tell coach (Handley), but I was thinking, 'I could really score if I could get the ball.' So, this year, I was like, 'I'm going to score every time I touch it.'"

"When I was in little league, the first one I got, I returned it (for a touchdown)," he recalled. "They didn't kick it to me the rest of the season. I just look for the hole and use my ability. It's just fun to have the ball in my hands."

Handley praised special teams coordinator Shepherd Skanes for refining Miller's return abilities and added he has learned to trust Miller's instincts in the return game.

"It's one of those situations where you have to trust the kid's instincts and let him be the athlete he is," Handley said. "It's almost to the point now that I'm looking at the officials and the officials are looking at me like, 'We need to line for field goal, huh?' When they kick it to him, he's going to the house."
Alabama women’s basketball coach Kristy Curry said on Friday that this year’s team needed to play with the lights on, uniforms tucked in and against another opponent. She got her wish on Sunday as the Crimson Tide pummeled the Faulkner Lady Eagles.

The game was never close. By the end of the first quarter, Alabama had built a 19-point lead and added on to it every quarter, eventually winning 100-44.

"I thought we had a little bit of nerves in some spots," Curry said. "Even from our first group that has some experience to our freshmen, these experiences are just invaluable."

Curry’s lineup was extremely efficient. As a team, it shot 52 percent, dished out 19 assists and forced 26 turnovers.

Freshman Allie Craig Cruce and junior Cierra Johnson each finished with 15 points, which led all scorers, in their first game in an Alabama uniform.

"There were a lot of nerves in the beginning, but when the tip goes up, you just need to realize that it’s basketball at the end of the day," Cruce said. "You got to just go out there and play your heart out and do what you’re supposed to do."

Johnson had the most even day as she added three steals, six assists and six rebounds to her scoring stat line.

The Crimson Tide out-rebounded the Lady Eagles 49-30 and outscored them 58-16 inside the arc. Junior forward Jasmine Walker said that the key to controlling the inside was that the team was able to play fast, score efficiently and find the open player.

Alabama had seven players make their debut. The group scored 58 points, 20 rebounds and 13 assists.

"It’s going to be something that’s really important to our team this year," Curry said. "When you lose that senior class and 59 percent of your scoring, we’re going to have to have somebody else’s turn. What I like is the depth of this team and the balance. I thought we brought good energy off the bench."

Alabama is back in action on Nov. 1 when it plays its last exhibition game against Mississippi College.
Who is the biggest threat to the Tide?

Nick Saban & Co. keep rolling while potential challengers falter

Michael Casagrande mcasagrande@al.com

Watching the closing moments of Ohio State being snowplowed by Purdue on Saturday night, this beat writer had an idea.

Why not tweet an open-ended question? People will surely answer who the biggest threat to Alabama with respect. I'm obviously stupid because the wide-ranging responses waterfalled Saturday night, straight through Sunday.

Some were funny. Others were awful. But, for once, it was an earnest question.

Alabama is averaging a 38-point win every time it plays. Nobody has come closer than Texas A&M's 22-point loss and top-contenders continue looking vulnerable.

Ohio State became not only the second No. 2 team in as many weeks to lose, but like Georgia seven days earlier, the Buckeyes were blown out. The 49-20 whipping at Purdue was probably worse than the 36-16 LSU win over the Bulldogs. The unranked Boilermakers exposed weaknesses and challenged pride.

The Buckeyes, like the Bulldogs, aren't dead in the playoff race with another month-plus of football to play. It can still win the Big Ten and would figure to be in good shape. And Ohio State would seem to
have the athletes who could match up with Alabama physically.

Who else?

Oklahoma has the offensive firepower to score fast and score big. With Alabama scoring 54 points a game, a track meet is the most logical route to competitiveness. The Sooners, however, have a loss to Texas and a No. 77 defense that got a Stoops fired.

Notre Dame is undefeated but has struggled against inferior opponents.

Michigan is also on the rise after losing to the Irish opening weekend. It will figure things out with Ohio State on Thanksgiving weekend.

And at No. 2, there’s Clemson again. Dabo Swinney and the Tigers. Again.

The collision course is set with a young, dynamic quarterback in Trevor Lawrence and an NFL defensive front. There’s just a magnetic pull between these two.

The 41-7 win Saturday over previously undefeated North Carolina State has the Tigers in a good spot. Only one remaining opponent has a winning record in ACC play (Boston College at 2-1) with struggling Florida State next. Louisville and Duke also remain with a visit from South Carolina to close the season.

Clemson survived the surprise scare from Syracuse with a 27-23 win Sept. 29. Texas A&M also threatened before the Tigers escaped 28-26 in Week 2.

Just file that away for after LSU.

In this weird season, Ed Orgeron’s group exceeded expectations to present Alabama’s biggest challenge of November. The preseason pick to finish fifth in the SEC West backed up wins of fading gravitas over then-top-10 teams Miami and Auburn with the blowout of Georgia.

Weird things can happen at night at Tiger Stadium. And even though Alabama hasn’t lost there since 2010, every game has been close with varying talent gaps narrowed in that environment.

It comes down to LSU having the defense (ranked No. 25) to do what nobody else has done: Slow Tua Tagovailoa. With a No. 85 total offense, the Tigers’ season-high 45 points scored against Ole Miss is still nine fewer than Alabama’s season average.

After that, two three-loss teams close the Tide’s SEC schedule. Mississippi State and Auburn are unranked after slipping. The Bulldogs were as high as No. 14 and were ranked before a four-interception loss at LSU on Saturday. Preseason top-10 Auburn was better against a slump-buster in Ole Miss’ No. 125 defense, but still underperformed a week earlier in a loss to the same Tennessee team Alabama beat by 37 on Saturday.

That brings us back to the question at hand. The biggest threat?

Among those who took the Twitter question in the neighborhood of seriousness, there was a relatively common answer: Themselves.

Alabama’s had teams on seemingly undisturbed paths to a title only to see things breakdown internally. See the 2013 team.

The pressure will only build from here for a starting quarterback who hasn’t come close to playing a four-quarter game this season. There’s still young on defense that has been exposed in short spurts against Arkansas and Tennessee. Neither threatened but neither has anything close to a championship-level offense.

That said, nobody seems to have that obvious perfect storm of weapons or experience that exceeds Alabama’s. The first eight weeks revealed that.

So, No. 4 LSU is the biggest threat left in Alabama’s regular season.

And old flame Clemson is hanging around, hoping to dance again should it come to that.

Michael Casagrande is an Alabama beat writer for the Alabama Media Group. Follow him on Twitter @ByCasagrande or on Facebook.
Despite big loss, Tide may be even better

Collin Sexton's move to NBA may result in improvement in overall team play at Bama

Joseph Goodman
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Alabama had its best basketball team in more than a decade last season.
This one can be better.
That's quite the statement considering NBA lottery pick Collin Sexton helped put Alabama basketball back on the map and back in the NCAA Tournament; but that's the kind of program Alabama coach Avery Johnson is building in Tuscaloosa.

Between the rise of basketball at Alabama and what Auburn coach Bruce Pearl is building, it has been far too long for the basketball junkies in this state. From a conference perspective, the SEC could be the best in the country this season.

Auburn has the star power with the return of Austin Wiley, but Alabama might be more versatile throughout its rotation. Even with Sexton off to the NBA, this Alabama team has the talent and experience to make a run at the Sweet 16 (and perhaps beyond). It just needs one important thing: confidence.

Last season, that intangible quality wasn't in short supply at Alabama, it was just disproportionately unbalanced. Sexton had it all by February and March, and his teammates stood by and watched as the future Cleveland Cavalier tried his best to carry the team on his back into the NCAA Tournament.

At the 11th hour... No, at 11:59:59 p.m. on the season's doomsday clock, Sexton did it with that magical, last-second floater against Texas A&M in the SEC tournament.

SEC Tipoff 2018 was on Wednesday at the Grand Bohemian Hotel in Mountain Brook, and the message from Johnson was clear. Sexton is gone, but Alabama isn't taking a step back.

"Maybe we're not going to have one guy who can get us 20 points every night, but hopefully we'll have four or five guys who can get us 14 or 15," Johnson said, "and if we can accomplish that goal, then you'll see the ball move a little bit more, and maybe defenses won't be able to load up on one guy, and they probably won't know where the shots are going to come from."

"That's what I'm excited about with this year's team."

Clear limitations emerged last season with Sexton dominating one possession after another. Teammates deferred to their star player at an unhealthy rate, and in the final month of the 2017-18 season, Alabama was predictable. Sexton led the SEC in usage rate at 32.9 percent, and Alabama lost its final five games of the regular season.

As The Ringer pointed out before the NBA preseason, only James Harden, Russell Westbrook and Joel Embiid had higher usage rates in the NBA last season.

"Hopefully we won't be so easily scouted," Johnson said. "I thought last year, because of the way we were built, and, you know, Collin was an alpha dog. He's going to score 20 points a game, and sometimes teams can load up their defense to try and shut him down."

SEE ALABAMA, B10
Alabama

FROM B1

down, and I'm hoping this year that we will be a lot more versatile on offense.

In his fourth season at Alabama, Johnson has the pieces in place to transform Alabama basketball into a serious contender. There is versatility and length at every position.

> There's a nationally respected lockdown defender (Herb Jones).
> There's an experienced point guard (Dazon Ingram).
> There's a long-distance specialist (John Petty).
> Big man Donta Hall is a force on the block.
> New guy Tevin Mack led the University of Texas in scoring before transferring.
> Depth is coming off the bench.
> Mix a little confidence and trust into that rotation, and Alabama can have a special season.

"I just think the key for us is going to be point guard play to go along with all that versatility that we have both on the offensive and defensive end," Johnson said.

There isn't a sure-fire lottery pick on this season's team, but Jones can have a future in the NBA if he continues to develop. He has the potential to make Alabama an elite defensive unit, which is where Johnson feels most comfortable.

Learning how to play together can be this team's strength by March.

Joseph Goodman is a columnist for the Alabama Media Group. He's on Twitter @JoesGoodmanJr.
Bama not done, but what it's doing in 2018 should be appreciated

Cecil Hurt

KNOXVILLE, Tenn. — Alabama has reached its open week — a time to nurse its bone-weary players back to full strength, work on self-scouting and install small tweaks to make itself better and, if all goes according to plan, emerge from a brief hiatus as a happier, healthier, better football team.

Yes, "better" is possible. Perhaps it will be needed against LSU. Time will tell.

Over the course of the next two weeks, there will be all sorts of speculation about how good this Alabama team can be.

Some people will argue that, so far, it's been a bit like Bitcoin in its glory days — there was no real way to measure its worth, even as people are paying phenomenal prices (or, in this case, piling on princely praise) for all they can get their hands on.

See HURT, Cc

See next page
On the other hand, there is a measure you can use — history.

If what Alabama is doing in a function of “an easy schedule,” then why has no team ever done it before? Even if you concede the schedule is historically easy, and there is no strong evidence to back that argument, has there never been a soft schedule before? Has every team in college history played nothing but road games, or ranked opponents?

Somewhere, out of the 25,000 or so schedules in college football, there must have been a few easy ones. Yet no team ever has dominated its opposition like Alabama has so far.

You can accept that the pendulum has gone far in one direction for the Alabama program and far in the other for Tennessee. But Alabama scored more points than either team has ever scored in the 101-year history of the series on Saturday — and took less than three quarters to do it.

Alabama suspended one starter (Raekwon Davis) for a half, limited the playing time of another (Damien Harris, for what head coach Nick Saban called “internal matters”) and left a third (DeVonta Smith) at home in Tuscaloosa because of injury. All should be available for the next game. Plus, to the relief of itchy Alabama fans everywhere, starting quarterback Tua Tagovailoa will now get the two weeks of rest that most, medical school or not, deemed necessary.

Again, there is a chance for “better,” even from Tagovailoa. He was his usual spectacular self — although he had a Heisman-level highlight misfire when he spun away from three Tennessee rushers, lost a shoe and then fired a cross-field pass to Harris, who could not hang on for the catch. On a few other passes, though, the ball seemed high, or at least not up to his usual between-the-number standard. A ridiculously high standard, to be sure, but his standard nonetheless. What if he comes back from a two-week break at his September level?

This isn’t yet the time to turn to incessant LSU talk. That happened in 2011, before the Game of the Century, to a mind-numbing degree. This isn’t quite No. 1 vs. No. 2, but there will be a feeling across the Bama-fatigued nation that this may be the roadblock, or the measuring stick, or something. So there will be talk.

Perhaps there is an upset in the future. That doesn’t change one thing — this season has been historic to this point, something that mortals have never seen before. The last chapter has not been written, but this is still something to be appreciated. Alabama and Tennessee have played 101 times. That means something. There is continuity there, and never has it been like this, not for a game, not for a decade. And that has to mean something.
In the background, the face of Tennessee’s last vestige of glory was tense. Phil Fulmer wore a look of disgust as he watched his head coach, Jeremy Pruitt, review the Volunteers’ latest humiliating defeat to Alabama.

The Tennessee athletic director never said a word, letting Pruitt take up all the oxygen in the cramped room buried deep inside Neyland Stadium. But his expression revealed the thoughts of a man who has seen his proud program reduced to rubble by a rival.

Fulmer listened as Pruitt delivered a stream of stinging indictments of the Volunteers following the 58-21 loss to mighty Alabama.

“We get to sign 25 guys,” he said. “It gives you a chance.”

Given the talent disparity that exists between Alabama and Tennessee, Pruitt didn’t think he had much of one Saturday. He claimed Tennessee would have to play a “perfect game” to stay within striking distance of the Tide.

It was evident that wasn’t going to happen. The Volunteers’ offensive line leaked like a sieve, surrendering three sacks before halftime. Tennessee, meanwhile, couldn’t generate any pressure on Tua Tagovailoa, allowing him to sit back and dissect an overmatched secondary.

“They outplayed us,” Tennessee defensive back Baylen Buchanan said. “They outmanned us. That’s the same. That’s a fact.”

Buchanan, a sophomore, is expected to be an integral part of the rebuilding process already underway in Knoxville.

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He hinted there are some members on the current team who have yet to embrace Pruitt’s regime, saying, “We’ve got to pull some guys along.”
Leaders of U.S. companies still more likely to have MBAs

Jena McGregor  Washington Post

Yet another reason to consider urging your kids to go into engineering: For the second year in a row, the best-performing CEOs in the world were more likely to have an engineering degree than an MBA.

Harvard Business Review released its annual ranking Monday of the top-performing CEOs around the globe. It found that engineering degrees are actually slightly more prevalent among these top corner-office occupants than the finance- and strategy-focused MBA, a trend that could reflect strong performance among tech-driven CEOs but also a possible openness to engineering backgrounds among a wider range of companies.

Thirty-four of the top 100 CEOs in 2018, according to the HBR report, had an engineering degree, compared with 32 who had an MBA. Eight of the top CEOs had both degrees. In 2017, 29 CEOs had MBAs and 32 had engineering degrees, the first time that there were fewer MBAs than engineers since 2014, when it began tracking the degree question.

Although the top spot isn’t held by an engineer — that nod went to Pablo Isla, CEO of Spanish retailer Inditex — 10 of the top 20-ranked CEOs in this year’s survey have an engineering degree, including No. 2-ranked Nvidia CEO Jensen Huang, compared with four MBAs. HBR’s ranking examines the change in market capitalization and total shareholder return, adjusted by both country and industry, over the entire tenure of CEOs in the global S&P 1200, and adds in data that rates the company’s performance on environmental, social and governance issues during the CEO’s time in charge.

The most likely explanation for the trend is that the number of technology CEOs on the list have expanded as the industry has seen exponential growth in recent years — there were just eight technology CEOs on the list in 2014, but 22 in 2018.

It’s also possible the result might be partly explained by a quirk in HBR’s methodology. Senior editor Dan McGinn said HBR made a change to its methodology in 2015, when it added the ESG component to its analysis and the list became somewhat more populated by European companies. Its data show that more engineering degrees are held by European CEOs, while a preponderance of the MBAs are held by U.S. CEOs, so it’s possible that differing educational backgrounds in different regions could contribute.

Yet the skills one learns in an engineering degree also have obvious applications for management roles. McGinn said that after HBR first began asking about educational degrees, it spoke with management experts who noted engineering’s focus on problem solving, analytical skills and structural methods of thinking.

“That has obvious advantages if you’re running an I.T. company, but it probably also has advantages if you’re trying to problem-solve in everyday business situations,” McGinn said.

One of the CEOs on this year’s list, Jeffrey Sprecher, the CEO of Intercontinental Exchange, which owns the New York Stock Exchange, holds both an MBA and an engineering degree but said in a video posted on Facebook by his alma mater, University of Wisconsin, that he’s never had a job that relates to his chemical engineering degree. Still, he said, it “taught me about problem-solving, and complex systems and the way things relate to each other, and business is really just that.”

Others suggested there could one day be more CEOs with that background, especially at a time when technology and digitization is increasingly important for every company — even those well outside the I.T. sector — and as more people come out of school with those degrees. Robert Sutton, a professor of management science and engineering at Stanford University, said that it’s becoming more important for executives to have some understanding of computer science.

“This is not a surprise given that technology, especially computer science, is so important,” he said. “Every organization I talk to says they’re doing ‘digitization.’”

Still, HBR’s ranking looks at the educational backgrounds of only the 100 top-performing CEOs globally; educational data for CEOs in the S&P 500 and Fortune 500 show a slightly different story. An annual report produced by executive search firm Crist Kolder Associates shows that 26.4 percent of those CEOs had engineering degrees in 2018, slightly down from 27.4 percent in 2017 and 28.4 percent in 2016.

The Birmingham News
Wednesday, October 24, 2018
The Secret Is Out on How to Get Into Harvard

By ANEMONA HARTOCOLLIS

BOSTON — The deliberations that take place inside 86 Brattle Street, a red brick building where Harvard University's admissions committee convenes, have very much stayed inside 86 Brattle Street.

Until now.

A federal trial that began this week accusing Harvard of stacking the deck against Asian-American applicants is providing a rare glimpse into the secretive selection process at one of the country's most elite universities. It is as if those sitting on the wood benches before Judge Allison D. Burroughs of Federal District Court in Boston have been invited inside the inner sanctum of the Harvard Office of Admissions and Financial Aid.

There is the longtime dean of admissions, William Fitzsimmons (Harvard Class of 1967), on the stand, grilled on whether rural students receive a leg up over urban students. They do.

There on a big screen are his emails with the university's fundraisers, suggesting special consideration for the offspring of big donors, those who have "already committed to a building" or have "an art collection which could conceivably come our way."

Grades, test scores, intended major, personality ratings, ethnicity — all the various factors that can help turn an anonymous high school student into a Harvard man or Harvard woman are being dissected for all to see.

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Lawsuit Unveils Secrets Of Harvard Admissions

From Page A1

Actual student files have been introduced into evidence, with Thang Q. Diep's family history being pored over alongside Sally Chen's test scores.

Court documents and trial testimony have introduced Harvard admissions jargon: "tips" are bumps given to applicants, the "dean's interest list" is a repository of applicants with clout, and the "Z-list" is a sort of back door into the college for students who are borderline academically. For everyone, the odds are long, as nearly 43,000 applicants sought spots in the Class of 2022 and just 2,044 received letters promising high-fives and teary phone calls.

Although many selective colleges are known to engage in the same admissions tactics, Harvard's lawyers lamented in pre-trial papers that being forced to produce application materials would be like divulging trade secrets, and would allow students and college counselors to game the process, which is in full swing right now. The judge even likened Harvard's formula to the recipe for Coke.

In the end, however, Harvard's lead counsel, Bill Lee (Harvard Class of 1972), said this week that it had been necessary to spill some secrets.

"We definitely revealed the secret of Coke," said Mr. Lee, who represented Apple in a patent suit against Samsung — another trial that exposed closely guarded secrets. But, he acknowledged, "you're not going to want to know. Once you understand it, you can understand how decisions are made."

Some, but not all, of the secrets have buttressed Harvard's elite reputation.

Harvard is a wide net for students, aggressively recruiting those in "sparrow country," predominantly rural areas that yield few applications.

"We have to reject students who are exceptional."

That is what Mr. Diep was "grappling with sexual identity." The reviewer mentioned a "fильmaking summer" as an extracurricular activity of note.

Other admissions files have offered insights into how reviewers distill personal traits from the accomplishments and activities. "When I read an admissions officer's file for the applicant, I'm looking for a pattern of stereotypical descriptions for Asian-Americans that bring down their personal ratings.

Harvard also looks at factors like parental occupation, which Mr. Fitzsimmons said offer clues about financial hardship, and intangible major to avoid having too many students with the same educational interests.

For instance, he said this week, there had been huge increases in be engineers and computer scientists, but Harvard had to be wary of admitting too many, because "a whole bunch" of them "will end up happily ever after at M.I.T. or Caltech.

"One thing, we always want to humanize," Mr. Fitzsimmons said, adding that there were fewer and fewer of them.

An applicant might also be given credit for babysitting siblings, he added, "which I did myself."

"College-prep professionals and guidance counselors around the world are following the case, a veritable gold mine of insider information.

Belinda Wilkerson is a private admissions counselor in Fayetteville, N.C., whose very business involves getting students into schools like Harvard. She said that when working with Asian clients, she discusses with them the "perception" that there are too many qualified, and similar, Asian applicants — an issue at the core of the Harvard case. She encourages students to cast a wide net to avoid "getting so focused on a select few schools," she said.

Harvard has testified that race, when considered in admissions, can only help, not hurt, a student's chances of getting in.

Mr. Fitzsimmons said this week that one factor that could explain why Asian-American applicants get lower personal ratings may be the content of teacher and guidance counselor recommendations.

Mark Sklarow, the chief executive of the Independent Educational Consultants Association, which represents private admissions counselors, said many guidance counselors are simply unable to get to know students in depth, and could provide few stereotypes.

Indeed, one industry report found that in 2015, the typical counselor advised nearly 500 students.

"If a school counselor is spending eight minutes per year with a student, it's so much easier for those biases to play in, because you don't develop what's truly very well," Mr. Sklarow said.

Mr. Fitzsimmons and other admissions officers testified that reviewers receive extensive training when they begin working for Harvard. But under questioning by the plaintiffs, they said that they did not receive written instructions on how to consider race.

Judge Burroughs seemed to be looking for evidence of unconscious bias. "Are there times when you don't realize that you're tip-tapping for something?" asked Mr. Fitzsimmons on Friday, "and you go to the data and you realize that wasn't really the tip that didn't intend or know about?"

"No, no," Mr. Beever said.

Mr. Fitzsimmons emphasized that any advantage given to a candidate for their background would not outweigh all other application factors. The committee never gives enough of a tip to adfame an applicant at the expense of a first-rate one, he said.

One important aspect of a diverse class, he said, is that students learn from one another. That is especially important today, he said, "in a country that is so segregated economically, and in some ways, with our social classes coming further apart."
Rival Views of Harvard Come Out at Bias Trial

By ANEMONA HARTOCOLLIS

BOSTON — Two starkly different pictures of Harvard — an elitist country club or an egalitarian engine for social change — emerged on Wednesday in a federal trial examining whether the university discriminates against Asian-Americans.

The competing views were raised in the testimony of the first witness, William Fitzsimmons, Harvard's longtime dean of admissions. In the plaintiffs' eyes, Mr. Fitzsimmons catered to privilege, allowing the offspring of big donors to get a leg up in the application process.

To the defense, he was living proof of Harvard's effort to reach students of all backgrounds. He shared his compelling life story on the stand: the son of a gas station owner who was the first in his family to go to college, at Harvard.

The plaintiffs' lawyer, John Hughes, asked Mr. Fitzsimmons about the university's little-known "Dean's Interest List," composed each year of the children of prominent people, mostly white, whose chances of getting in are many times higher than that of other applicants. The plaintiffs say Asian-Americans suffer disproportionately in a rigged admissions system, which Harvard denies.

Mr. Fitzsimmons acknowledged on Wednesday that the students on the list, which he manages, were often put forward by Harvard's development office, its fund-raising arm, and that some were from wealthy families. But he defended putting candidates on the list as a way of encouraging benefactors to underwrite the research and scholarships that were important to Harvard.

"Regardless of whether they are otherwise strong applicants?" Mr. Hughes asked.

The list is compiled at a point when it is too early to tell whether they are strong candidates, Mr. Fitzsimmons said.

Mr. Hughes then presented some emails that were addressed to the dean. One, from June 2013, had the subject line "My hero." In it, David Ellwood, who was then the dean of Harvard's Kennedy School of Government, told Mr. Fitzsimmons, "once again you have done wonders." It went on to describe one person who "has already committed to a building." He also congratulated the admissions dean on a donor who gave "major money for fellowships — before a decision from you!"

Another email from Roger Cheever, a development officer, talked about gifts totaling $8.7 million to Harvard and included the phrases "is the grandson of" and "who is married to." The emails were projected on a screen, but significantly redacted and difficult to read clearly.

Another email in October 2014 came from a former tennis coach. "Thanks so much for meeting with ___ during his visit," it said, with the name blacked out.

The family had given $1.1 million over the previous four years, the email said.

Mr. Fitzsimmons said that he did not hesitate to tell the development office when a student was
not a good candidate for admission, even if supported by the development office.

During a break in the trial, Bill Lee, Harvard's lead counsel, said that applicants supported by the development office had to be qualified to be admitted.

He said that one reason the list existed was to give donors a way of finding out, as a courtesy, when a candidate was not going to get in. And he noted that Asian-Americans were becoming a growing part of the legacy and the donor pools.

Mr. Lee questioned Mr. Fitzsimmons later in the day, and led him through an account of the importance Harvard places on attracting students of poor and working-class backgrounds.

Mr. Fitzsimmons had emphasized this even to the plaintiffs, telling them, "We want to let people know that poor people as well as rich people can get into Harvard."

He was asked about his own story, and then turned into a poster child for Harvard's promise.

With Mr. Lee's prompting, Mr. Fitzsimmons said he had graduated from Archbishop Williams High School in Braintree, Mass. His family, he said, ran a gas station and mom-and-pop store in nearby Weymouth.

"Where did you attend college?" Mr. Lee asked.

"At Harvard College, fully accredited in Cambridge," Mr. Fitzsimmons said in his Boston accent, drawing laughter in the courtroom.

Harvard asked his family to pay "virtually nothing" for his education, he said. He paid his parents' contribution by working on the summer dorm crews and doing research jobs.

In those days, he said, Harvard had few students of color, international students or students who were the first in their family to go to college. A modest fraction received financial aid. Men outnumbered women, he said, four to one.

"It was a totally different world," he said.

He graduated in 1967 and went to work for the university admissions office five years later.

Harvard, he said, "totally transformed my life. It opened up possibilities — I had no idea."
Student Debt Relief Program Remains a Headache for Many

The program that public servants can use to have their federal student loans forgiven is such a quagmire for borrowers that Congress had to set up a relief program for the relief program. So far, it’s not performing much better.

It has been nearly five months since the Department of Education released instructions for a $350 million pot of money that some public servants can use if they received bad information about the loan forgiveness program and ended up in the wrong type of repayment plan.

Tens of thousands of people have applied for the relief program. But so far, most have been rejected, and as of late last month, none among the few thousand who remain in the running have seen their debt balances go to zero.

In response to an inquiry led by Senator Tim Kaine, Democrat of Virginia, the department disclosed last week that 28,207 people had submitted requests as of Sept. 28 and that it had found 21,672 ineligible almost immediately. It then culled “approximately” half of the remaining 6,535 for other reasons. That leaves just over 3,000 applications still under consideration.

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Debt Program Remains a Headache

From First Business Page

It can take up to six months or so to review these requests because of the complexity of both the forgiveness program and the relief fund application process. The Department of Education has shifted some staff to work more closely with the loan servicer that handles the forgiveness program.

The relief fund was created after it became clear that scores of teachers, social workers and other government and nonprofit employees had received bad information from their loan servicers about the forgiveness program's complex terms. So far, fewer than 1 percent of applicants have had their loans discharged through the program, which got its start just over a decade ago but is only now having borrowers become eligible.

To qualify for tax-free loan forgiveness, borrowers need to make 120 on-time monthly payments (while working in an eligible public-service position), have the right kind of loan (some federal loans qualify while others do not) and be in the right kind of payment plan (the income-driven ones designed to help lower-income borrowers). When it became clear in recent years that loan servicers had told public-servant borrowers that they were doing everything right even when they were in the wrong kind of loan or payment plan, pressure grew on elected officials to help borrowers who thought they were being meticulous only to find that years of payments had not counted for forgiveness.

Enter the Temporary Expanded Public Service Loan Forgiveness Initiative, which is a pool of $350 million designed to help borrowers who were in certain ineligible payment plans, often because their loan servicers specifically told them to use those plans or stay in them. The relief program comes with its own rules and restrictions, which are available on the Department of Education's website.

Five months in, that website is no model of clarity.

For instance, one paragraph tells borrowers that they must submit a public service loan forgiveness application and wait to be rejected (for payments that were not in a qualifying payment plan) before being potentially eligible for relief. The very next paragraph, however, tells them that they do not need to wait.

A complex web of requirements and sometimes conflicting information.

Before submitting a request under the temporary plan.

Jolie von Suhr, a psychologist in a state psychiatric hospital in Lakewood, Wash., who was in an ineligible payment plan for years before realizing she had a problem, said the site's conflicting information left her both perplexed and afraid.

"It kind of sounds like you can submit them both at the same time, but I'm not sure," she said. "I'm so anxious now about doing anything incorrectly that could get me booted out of consideration."

In fact, you do not have to wait for a public service loan forgiveness denial in order to request consideration under the temporary expanded program. I asked if the department intended to clarify this on its site and received assurances that it "will continue to review communications to borrowers and will adjust them as appropriate."

Some eligibility determinations are easier to make than others — rejecting people who have not made 120 payments or who were in an ineligible loan, for example. The Department of Education's loan servicer often has a tougher time producing an accurate count of months of repayment.

Plus, it now has to account for a rule under the temporary program that applies to people who thought they were in the right kind of repayment plan but found out much later that they were not. They are eligible for the temporary program only if their most recently monthly payment and the one they made 12 months before their application were higher than what they would have paid if they had been enrolled in a qualifying repayment plan. Yes, it's complicated, and clearing this hurdle may require documentation.

The Education Department seems tired of bearing blame for all of this.

"We implement the programs Congress creates," said the department's press secretary, Liz Hill. She added that the forgiveness program and the temporary program were "poorly constructed programs, the rules of which are highly complex and difficult for students to navigate."

"We are working to make it as straightforward as the rules allow," Ms. Hill said.

Some borrower advocates are not surprised by the delays thus far.

"This is a new program in that we're still in the first year or so of forgiveness applications," said Betsy Mayothe, president of the Institute of Student Loan Advisors, a nonprofit adviser to debtors. "I have high hopes that the process will become more seamless and quicker over time."