SPECIAL SECTION:

BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING

JUNE 6-7, 2019
University of Alabama board chooses new trustee

By Ed Enoch | Staff Writer

The University of Alabama System trustees on Friday elected a UA law school alumna to fill a vacant District 4 position on the board.

The board elected Evelyn VanSant Mauldin, a banker from Florence, to fill the District 4 vacancy on the board formerly held by System Chancellor Finis St. John.

“I believe we have found an exceptional candidate who will serve our board and the state for years to come,” Board President pro tempore Ron Gray said.

Mauldin’s election was part of a slate of agenda items that also included tuition increases for out-of-state students and amendments to the plans for the renovation of Bryant-Denny Stadium.

Mauldin is the general counsel and senior vice president at Bank Independent in Sheffield. She earned undergraduate and law degrees from UA.

Trustee Karen Brooks praised Mauldin for her strength, wisdom and higher character as she announced the nomination.

“I have known her by her excellent reputation previously, and I had the chance to meet with her at length and I am very excited about the possibility of her joining this board,” trustee Marietta Urquhart said.

The University of Alabama System board of trustees named St. John as the next permanent chancellor of the three-campus system in April after he served as the interim leader since last summer when Chancellor emeritus Ray Hayes stepped down. St. John was first appointed to the board of trustees in 2002.

The board’s sitting members nominate and elect new members. Mauldin’s appointment still requires formal approval from the Alabama Senate; however, new members are allowed under system rules to begin service after being elected by the board. New members typically begin serving on the board at the meeting following their election.

The board approved keeping tuition rates unchanged for in-state graduate and undergraduate students at its three campuses this fall while increasing rates for out-of-state students by 3-3.5%.

The board approved tuition increases of 1-3% for the system’s medical, dentistry and optometry students earlier this year.
Evie Mauldin: First UA trustee in 65 years

By Lisa Singleton-Rickman | Staff Writer

Evie Mauldin, senior vice president and general counsel for Bank Independent, has been appointed a trustee to represent the Fourth Congressional District for the University of Alabama System.

The Fourth Congressional District includes Colbert, Franklin, Lawrence, Cullman, Marion, Winston, Lamar, Fayette, Walker, Marshall, Etowah, DeKalb counties and the northern half of Tuscaloosa.

Mauldin, who resides in Leighton, is the first UA board appointee from the Shoals area since 1954.

William H. Mitchell, of Florence, served as trustee from 1947 to 1954. Prior to his service, Archibald H. Carmichael, of Tuscumbia, served from 1923 to 1939.

Mauldin was elected to the position Friday to serve a six-year term. She earned her undergraduate and law degrees from UA.

As part of the 15-member board, Mauldin's service begins in September.

The university system is made up of three campuses — the University of Alabama in Tuscaloosa, the University of Alabama at Birmingham, which includes UAB Medicine, and the University of Alabama in Huntsville.

"It's a huge honor to be asked to serve on this board, particularly given the history of Shoals appointees, and it's a big undertaking," Mauldin said. "This is a working board, not just a rubber stamp, that's responsible for more than 70,000 students, so I take this appointment very seriously."

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The board is likewise responsible for all physical properties within the system, its programs and system investments.

"My job is to do the best thing, make the best decisions for the university system," she said.

"I graduated twice from the University of Alabama and my training as a lawyer helps me think logically and make fact-based, not emotional, decisions. The board (members) said they needed a good leader for the management of the system and I'll strive to be that. My duty is to the university system."

Mauldin said it's good for the board to once again have a presence from the Shoals area.

She is filling the seat vacated by Finis St. John, who was recently named system chancellor.

The board's president pro tempore, Ron Gray, called Mauldin "an exceptional individual who will be a tremendous asset to the University of Alabama System."

Trustee Karen Brooks said the selection of a trustee is one of the board's most important responsibilities.

She said she expects Mauldin to make a significant impact in her role as trustee. "She's vivacious, intelligent and laser focused."

The board meets five times a year with meeting locations rotating between Tuscaloosa, Huntsville and Birmingham.

The Alabama Senate must confirm Mauldin's appointment, which is expected to happen when the Legislature reconvenes in 2020.
University of Alabama details $93 million Bryant-Denny Stadium upgrade

By Ed Enoch / Staff Writer

The University of Alabama System board of trustees on Friday will consider plans to revise the designs for the renovation of Bryant-Denny Stadium and increase the budget of the project by $17 million.

The full board meets Friday morning at 9:30 a.m. in the Bryant Conference Center on the UA campus. The board’s Physical Properties Committee approved the revised architectural designs and the new budget Thursday afternoon.

UA Athletic Director Greg Byrne presented the revisions on Thursday.

The university is proposing increasing the budget from $75.5 million to $92.5 million as a result of changes to the planning for the stadium including new, larger video score boards in the corners of the stadium, more elevators, and student spaces on the southeast ground level.

“We certainly acknowledge that some of the plans have changed but they still very much meet the needs across the board,” Byrne said.

The revised plans call for four larger scoreboards in the corners of the end zones instead of a previously proposed larger video board in the upper deck of the south end zone. The scoreboards would be 60% larger than the existing ones and have better technology.

The student terrace in the upper deck of the south end zone would be eliminated in favor of a student concourse at the southeast ground level entrance that still includes concessions stands, restrooms, social spaces and televisions.

Bryne estimated the new concourse would be about 10,000 square feet and provide a shaded area for students to socialize.

“I don’t know of any stadium in the country that has an area like this designated for the students, so it will be a nice addition for them,” Byrne said.

The loge box seating originally planned for the upper south end zone would be moved to level 6 and the design would add two new stair towers on the west side of the stadium. The athletic department also wants to add a new larger elevator and new enclosed elevator lobby on the ground level to the southwest and refurbish the existing elevators to the Founders Club.
Last fall, Alabama unveiled a 10-year, $600 million initiative called the Crimson Standard to upgrade the stadium, Coleman Coliseum, the Mal Moore Athletic Facility and other athletic facilities.

The stadium renovations, which were unveiled with the launch of the campaign, are part of the first of three phases of the 10-year capital plan.

Phase one of the project, which includes Bryant-Denny, the softball stadium and student athletic complex, will cost $111.6 million, Byrne said.

The committee on Thursday also approved the architectural designs for the $3 million renovation and addition to the John and Ann Rhoads Softball Stadium and increased the budget of the Mal M. Moore facility renovation by $1.5 million to $16.1 million to add 6,855 square feet of space for sports science programs and hydrotherapy on the southeast corner and scrap plans to re-build existing space for strength and conditioning.

The plans still include more premium seating options including an open-air terrace on the west side, the relocation of the press box to the east side of the stadium, upgrades to the locker room and recruiting lounge, a renovation to the tunnel that the team uses to enter the field, and an extension of the Walk of Champions w into the Game Day Locker Room via a new tunnel.

The student seating capacity will not change in the stadium, Bryne said. The overall capacity will be reduced by a few hundred seats but it will still be more than 100,000, he said.

The university is also requesting approval to award construction contracts to the future lowest responsible bidder as part of plans to complete the project by next August.

The funding plan would also be modified under the revision.

The project will be funded with $48.4 million in bonds, $25 million raised during the capital campaign, $10 million from the Crimson Tide Foundation, and an internal loan of $9 million of university funds to the athletics department that is to be repaid. The original proposal called for the project to be funded with $40.4 million in bonds, $25 million from the capital campaign and $10 million from the Crimson Tide Foundation.
UA System won’t raise in-state students’ tuition

By Ed Enoch / Staff Writer
Posted at 6:00 AM

Tuition for in-state graduate and undergraduate students will remain unchanged at the three University of Alabama System campuses while rates for out-of-state students will increase by 3-3.5% under a proposal being considered by the board of trustees on Friday.

The financial chiefs for the three campuses and the system presented the proposals on Thursday, along with budget priorities for the upcoming fiscal year. The priorities included additional spending for student supports, increases in insurance and benefits costs, additional faculty, merit raises and research.

System Chancellor Finis St. John IV announced plans in April to keep tuition rate growth flat for in-state graduate and undergraduates at the three campuses.

Vice Chancellor of Finance Dana Keith speculated the pledge to keep tuition flat contributed to an increase in state funding for the system in the budget recently approved by state lawmakers. The system will get an additional $36 million in state appropriations.

“The decision by our three campuses to freeze in-state tuition was universally praised,” Keith said. “And undoubtedly factored into our generous treatment.”

UA has about $25 million to $26 million in new budget priorities for the upcoming fiscal year, UA Vice President of Finance Matt Fajack said.

Undergraduate and graduate tuition at UA would remain flat at $5,390 per semester for Alabama residents taking full course loads. The rate will increase around 3.5% to $15,125 per semester for out-of-state students.

Tuition for full-time in-state law students would remain at $11,805 per semester. Out-of-state law students would see tuition increase roughly 3% to $21,530.
The Tuscaloosa News
Friday, June 7, 2019

UA expects the tuition increase will generate about $11.3 million. While tuition rates will remain unchanged for in-state students, rates for dining hall services will go up 3% and housing rates overall will increase 2.3%, though some individual rates may drop, Fajack said. Parking rates on campus will remain flat for the upcoming year, Fajack said.

University of Alabama at Birmingham Vice President for Finance and Administration Allen Bolton estimated the university had about $35-38 million in upcoming budget priorities.

Undergraduate tuition would remain at about $5,355 per semester for in-state students at UAB. Out-of-state students at UAB would see rates increase 3.5% to $12,750 per semester. Out-of-state graduate students would see tuition increase by about 3.2% about $15,990 per semester.

UAB also plans to increase tuition for international undergraduates to $13,875 in academic year 2021. International graduate student tuition would increase to about $17,115.

“The reason we need to do that today is there are two months of that academic year that will be captured in this fiscal year,” Bolton said.

Dining and housing costs will see “modest” increases of 1.5-2.26%, Bolton said. Parking fees will increase 10.5% as part of a phased program.

The University of Alabama in Huntsville has about $11.1 million budget priorities for the upcoming budget.

UAH undergraduate and graduate students would see tuition rates remain at $4,865 per semester for residents. Rates would increase 3.5% percent to $11,063 for non-residents. Tuition for graduate students would stay at $5,316 per semester for in-state and increase 3.5 % to $12,215 for out of state. Some fees will also increase.

Other cost increases would include $1-$4 dollars for college fees, $1 for facilities fees, 3% each for meals and housing, and $10 per year for parking fees.

The board approved tuition increases of 1-3% for the system’s medical, dentistry and optometry students earlier this year.
The rate adjustment plan is similar to changes enacted last year at UA, which saw a slight decline in student body growth for the first time in more than a decade in the fall, with the greatest drop coming from in-state student enrollment. The system kept tuition rates for in-state students at UA flat as it increased rates for out-of-state students and students at UAB and UAH.

Last year, the board approved 3-4% increases for University of Alabama at Birmingham and the University of Alabama in Huntsville and out-of-state students at UA.
After law school donor blasts abortion law, University of Alabama might give funds back

By: Stephanie Francis Ward

In September, attorney and philanthropist Hugh F. Culverhouse Jr. pledged $26.5 million to the law school at the University of Alabama, directing that the largest donation in the school’s history mostly be used for scholarships. But by May, of the total funds, only $2,000 has been used, he says, and it looks like he’ll be getting a refund on the rest, following his call for a boycott of the state after it passed a new law that effectively outlawed abortions.

“I would like for a boycott to spread not just to Alabama but to all of the states that are denying abortion through threats. This is BS,” says Culverhouse, who thinks politicians who are Crimson Tide alumni influenced the issue.

Terri Collins, a Republican member of the state’s House of Representatives who sponsored the bill, graduated from the university; while Roy Moore, the state’s former chief justice, as well as former U.S. Attorney General Jeff Sessions, graduated from the law school.

Another law school graduate is Harper Lee, the author of To Kill a Mockingbird. The law school and the ABA Journal established in 2011 the Harper Lee Prize for Legal Fiction, an annual award, to mark the 50th anniversary of her Pulitzer Prize-winning book.

A university statement released May 29 denies Culverhouse’s assertion. He asked for $10 million back, according to the statement, and made numerous demands about operations at the institution now known as the Hugh F. Culverhouse Jr. School of Law.

“None of the issues between the law school and Mr. Culverhouse had anything to do with the passage of legislation in which the university had no role. Donors may not dictate university administration,” according to the statement.

The chancellor suggested that the law school return all of Culverhouse’s $21.5 million donation to the law school and remove his name from the school, too. The board of trustees will vote on the matter when it meets June 6 and 7, Kellee Reinhart, the University of Alabama System’s vice chancellor for communications and community relations, told the Journal.

“If I’m going to be investing that amount of money, you’d better believe I will be involved,” says Culverhouse, who asked for $10 million back after he said he discovered that none of the money had been used for scholarships. According to him, his donation did not stipulate naming rights, and putting his name on the law school was the university’s idea.

Culverhouse’s late parents, Joy McCann Culverhouse and Hugh Culverhouse Sr., who owned the NFL Tampa Bay Buccaneers, both attended the University of Alabama and were active with Planned Parenthood since the 1950s. The younger Culverhouse, who’s also a real estate developer, is also involved with Planned Parenthood and the American Civil Liberties Union, which recently sued the state regarding its new law.

“The law school and the university—they don’t talk to me. I didn’t know until I read about it that the head guy is recommending to send my money back,” Culverhouse says. “I think what
provoked them the most was when they asked me if I wanted to see a football game and I said no; I don’t like to see young men hurting themselves.”

Culverhouse is now a Florida resident and has a bachelor’s and law degree from the University of Florida and an MBA from New York University. He says the law school has only spent $2,000 of his donation—for travel. Culverhouse wants the money to help law students pursue jobs they love, rather than making career choices based on where they could earn the most money. He also wants to see student enrollment grow by 8% annually, until it has between 500 and 550 students.

Mark E. Brandon, the University of Alabama’s law school dean, was resistant to that idea, according to Culverhouse. U.S. News & World Report has consistently ranked the law school as No. 25, and Culverhouse says Brandon thought that admitting larger classes could harm their position on the list.

“There’s this horrible problem you’ve having in education, with people paying money to get in, and a state law school is denying access to students who would have gotten in the year before, simply to be 25th on a magazine poll,” Culverhouse says. According to him, 69% of the law school’s students have some sort of scholarship. He estimates that 20% have full-tuition scholarships, and 16% have scholarships covering tuition, room and board.

Brandon referred questions from the Journal to Reinhart, who responded with the university’s statement. The law school had a total of 381 students, according to its Standard 509 Information Report for 2018. A total of 1,526 people applied, according to the document; and 474 received admissions offers. Out of that group, 116 enrolled. The law school’s median LSAT score is 164, and the median undergraduate GPA is 3.88.

The donation, which Culverhouse made with his wife, Eliza, is also earmarked for an endowed chair in constitutional law, program development, additional education and career opportunities for students and the law library, according to a September press release.

The couple has given more than $35 million to the university in the past decade, according to the release. Besides the law school donation, the Culverhouse’s gave $5.3 million for the UA Culverhouse College of Business—which is named after Culverhouse’s father—and $2.25 million to endow women’s golf scholarships—in honor of Culverhouse’s mother, who golfed at the university in the early 1940s.

It seems unlikely that someone else will give as much money to the law school as Culverhouse. And it’s possible that state politics has played a role in the situation, says Noel A.D. Thompson, a political science professor at Tuskegee University, a private historically black college in Alabama. He adds that the public University of Alabama could benefit from Culverhouse’s money.

“When I read about this, I just said, ‘Wow, that’s a lot of money to give back.’ I’m not sure who’s behind that, but in my own judgment, that’s a kind of bone-headed proposition, really,” Thompson says. “Alabama does not have enough money for the legislature to go off on a tangent about this issue.”
UA OKs return of $25M donation

Board of trustees cites law school interference by donor

By Ed Enoch
Staff Writer

The University of Alabama System board of trustees voted Friday to return the largest gift in its history to donor Hugh Culverhouse Jr. and remove his name from the law school.

The board unanimously approved the recommendation by System Chancellor Finis St. John, who said the move was spurred by divergent visions of the future of the college. He also cited Culverhouse’s interference in the operation of the school and demands about the use of the more than $20 million gift.

“While we are grateful to all of our donors and very grateful to this donor and his donor’s family, donors do not dictate the administration of the University of Alabama,” St. John said. “For those reasons and these reasons alone, it is my recommendation that we return this donor’s gift in its entirety, plus earnings, and restore the name of the law school to the University of Alabama School of Law.”

On Friday, Culverhouse said by phone he was disappointed in the action, which he believes was not about his interaction with the administration but a response to his commentary last week about a new Alabama law further restricting access to abortion. His criticism of the

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law included a call to boycott the state.

"Did I think a law school would react the way Alabama did? No. I am disappointed in them, of course, and now it is around the world," he said.

The system has rejected the assertion that the action was based on anything other than Culverhouse’s interaction with the law school administration.

"That was the only reason the board voted to remove his name and return his money," System Vice Chancellor for Communication Kellee Reinhart said. "Any attempt by Mr. Culverhouse to tie this action to any other issue is misleading and untrue."

Culverhouse and his wife, Eliza, donated nearly $40 million to UA during the last decade. His gift of $25 million to the law school last summer was the largest in university history, and UA celebrated by renaming its law school after the Florida businessman and attorney. The Culverhouses also pledged a $1.5-million gift to the law school in 2017 to establish the Hugh F. Culverhouse Jr. Endowed Chair in Constitutional Law.

UA Vice President of Advancement Bob Pierce said he couldn't comment further on the gift's return when asked about the impact on the law school and Culverhouse’s demands.

Crews stripped Culverhouse’s name from the law school’s sign on Friday morning soon after the board’s vote.

"While our board’s responsibilities are broad and decisions frequently complex, this decision was not difficult or complex. This decision is perfectly right and in the best interest of the University of Alabama, this system and the board of trustees," Board President pro tempore Ron Gray said. "It is one of our greatest missions to protect the integrity of these institutions, and we will continue to do so with every decision now and in the future."

In an email sent Friday afternoon, UA President Stuart R. Bell said, "This decision was made for reasons of academic and institutional integrity. I appreciate the actions of the Chancellor and our Board of Trustees and their unwavering support of these intrinsic values."

The fallout between the university and its largest donor of the last decade became public last week as St. John’s recommendation and statements by Culverhouse encouraging a boycott of the state over its new strict abortion law were released on the same day.

In statements reported by Florida Politics on May 29, Culverhouse encouraged a boycott of state institutions including UA because of a new Alabama law that outlaws almost all abortions and is set to take effect in November. The law, crafted as a vehicle for a legal challenge to Roe v. Wade, has already drawn legal challenges.

Later in the day on May 29, St. John released a statement recommending UA return $21.5 million in donations, part of the $26.5 million overall pledge to the law school, and restoring the law school's name.

The system maintains the recommendation was unrelated to calls for a boycott or the controversy
surrounding the strict abortion law and had already been made when Culverhouse's comments became public. St. John cited a copy of an email dated May 28, which was released with his statement and recommended the return of the gift as a result of an ongoing dispute and Culverhouse's request for the return of $10 million.

"It has become clear that that donor's expectation for the use and application of that gift have been inconsistent with the essential values of academic integrity and independent administration of the law school," St. John said. "Despite the diligent efforts and good faith of our dean and our president, there is no path forward consistent with those values."

Culverhouse questioned the assertion that the move was unrelated to his statements about abortion.

"Let's call it what it is — and wearing your wading boots," Culverhouse said.

Culverhouse acknowledged he had concerns about the law school's decision on enrollment, but said those concerns had been resolved.

"It was simple," Culverhouse said. "The dean limited enrollment for the law school. I objected to that."

Culverhouse said he believed the college should have been able to enroll about 200 more students aided by his gift.

"Otherwise, kids from Alabama are just getting screwed. They should be able to get into their (state) school," Culverhouse said.

Culverhouse said he and his wife have given more than $75 million in donations including the gifts to UA.

"Not a penny has gone to a piece of concrete. I don't believe in it. The money is for scholarships," he said.

"The statement I made at the law school (dedication), this money is to go for scholarships to grow this school for good teachers to attract students."

Culverhouse also rejected the assertions he was placing undue demands about the administration of the college.

"I'm not going to hire your professor, but if I see a big problem, you better believe I am going to say something," Culverhouse said.

Culverhouse also expressed concern about the impact the state's new abortion law and the university reaction would have on the vision for the future of the state and the university.

The new abortion law and the university's return of the gift are self-inflicted wounds, he said.

"You took an issue you never had to confront and you just killed yourself," Culverhouse said. "You just took a gun and shot yourself ... You are destroying everything my father and I worked for to give them something other than a vision that Alabama is a bunch of hayseeds."

St. John ended his comments Friday by stating the system and university leadership cannot compromise on the values of academic integrity and independent administration. But he said the system will also learn from the experience.

"We have detailed gift agreements with all donors for all major gifts like this," St. John said. "A good review of those agreements is probably needed to make sure they reflect the expectations of the donors and the university. We need to make sure they are clear on both sides."
UA trustees return $21.5 million donation, rename law school

By: AL.com

University of Alabama trustees voted Friday to return a record $21.5 million donation from controversial donor Hugh Culverhouse Jr. and rename the law school. Culverhouse had originally pledged a total of $26.5 million.

Culverhouse last week called for a boycott of Alabama -- school and state -- over the state's latest near-total abortion ban law.

The UA System quickly responded saying the university and Culverhouse have been in an ongoing dispute over the millions he has donated to the law school unrelated to the abortion legislation, vice chancellor for communications Kellee Reinhart said last week. In an emailed statement, Reinhart said Culverhouse asked the school to return $10 million, "repeating numerous demands about the operations of the University of Alabama School of Law."

In a statement by University of Alabama System Chancellor Finis St. John to trustees on Friday said that since Culverhouse's pledge "it has become clear that the donor's expectations for the use and application of that gift have been inconsistent with the essential values of academic integrity and independent administration of the Law School and the University. Despite the diligent efforts and good faith of our Dean and President, there is no path forward consistent with those values."

"While we are grateful to all of our donors and supporters, and very grateful to this donor and his family, donors do not dictate our administration of the University. For these reasons, and these reasons alone, it is my recommendation that we return this donor's gift in its entirety, plus earnings, and restore the name of the law school as "The University of Alabama School of Law." The resolution in your material reflects this recommendation. One last point: we will learn from this -- and always remember that we cannot and will not compromise the values of academic integrity and independent administration at any price," St. John stated.

Reinhart on Friday also said that "The action taken by the Board today was a direct result of Mr. Culverhouse's ongoing attempts to interfere in the operations of the Law School. That was the only reason the Board voted to remove his name and return his money. Any attempt by Mr. Culverhouse to tie this action to any other issue is misleading and untrue."

Culverhouse issued this statement after the trustees vote Friday:

"I expected this response from UA. I will not allow my family's name to be associated with an educational system that advocates a state law which discriminates against women, disregards established Federal law and violates our Constitution. I want to make clear that I never demanded that $21.5 million be refunded and wonder if the University is attempting to silence my opinions by their quick response. I will not be silenced. Once again, I call on students to protest and reconsider their educational options in Alabama. I also appeal to out-of-state and international businesses to consider the consequences of
conducting business in a state that discriminates against women and defies constitutional law. These boycotts and acts of resistance should remain in effect until the State of Alabama reverses the illegal anti-abortion statute."

Culverhouse’s father, Hugh Culverhouse Sr., and his mother Joy both attended UA and were prominent donors to the university. He said his father was an active officer of a Planned Parenthood in Jacksonville, Fla., when he was a child and his mother was strong-willed and never would have stood for Alabama’s strict abortion regulations. Culverhouse Jr. said he does not want his donation back, but he is afraid students from out of state will be deterred by Alabama’s strict laws on reproductive health.

The abortion ban was signed into law by Gov. Kay Ivey and has already been challenged by the ACLU of Alabama and Planned Parenthood Southeast. State Rep. Terri Collins, R-Decatur said the purpose of the ban is to challenge the Supreme Court decision in Roe v. Wade.
Culverhouse, UA feud was about ego, power and money, not Alabama’s abortion law

By Kyle Whitmire | kwhitmire@al.com

This is an opinion column.

It was a narrative that would not die, kept alive by a social media frenzy and a lot of folks too eager to believe it.

In an op-ed published by The Washington Post on Friday, Hugh Culverhouse Jr., again framed his ongoing feud with the University of Alabama as a political dispute over the state’s near-total abortion ban.

Culverhouse Jr. is an heir of Hugh Culverhouse Sr., a University of Alabama alumnus and donor. Last year Culverhouse Jr, who is not himself an alumnus, pledged $25 million to the university’s law school, and in exchange, the university agreed to name its law school after Culverhouse Jr. and set up an endowed chair. That relationship went sour, Culverhouse claimed, after he called for prospective students to boycott the university because of the abortion law.

It’s a good story.

Heck, I shared Culverhouse’s initial comments on Twitter when he first made them. And after the Post published his op-ed Friday, that story traveled even farther and faster, as it was shared and retweeted by a lot of people willing to believe the worst about Alabama and its namesake university.

We all should have given it a second look.

Emails and a timeline

There are big problems with that narrative, problems that show little of Culverhouse’s premise, if any, may be true, and that he hijacked the abortion debate and Alabama’s ugly moment in the national spotlight as a preemptive attack against the university.

The university has now released email exchanges between Culverhouse and university officials showing the dispute as something else entirely — a bitter, personal feud between the University and one of the institution’s biggest donors. Those emails show Culverhouse trying to influence hiring decisions, admissions and scholarships — and threatening to take his money out of the school when he didn’t get his way.

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“I want to talk next week and go over every candidate, but your actions have resulted in my not giving any further gifts to Alabama and yesterday, I removed Alabama as a beneficiary from my will/trust,” Culverhouse wrote to the university’s law school dean on May 24. “That amount makes a mockery of the sums I have given.”

And those records show Chancellor Finis St. John first told trustee Joe Espy that the university should refund all of Culverhouse’s donations and un-name the law school after Culverhouse — four days before Culverhouse made any publicly reported comments about the abortion ban.

Further, those records show Culverhouse mocking trustees, the university president and the law school dean, threatening to pull his money from the university unless those officials treated him with more deference, and eventually demanding at least $10 million back from the school.

Again, all before Culverhouse said a word in the press about Alabama’s abortion law.

“If you want to continue treating me as a subversive spy, simply change the name of the professorship to ‘The Richard Shelby Chair of Constitutional Law,’ and we will think of a cover story,” Culverhouse wrote on May 24. “The same can be done with the law school, after a financial settlement is reached and accomplished.”

Virulent and viral

On May 29, a Florida politics website, FLAPOL, published a story in which Culverhouse called on prospective students to boycott the University of Alabama — not because of his spat with university officials, but because of Alabama’s near-total abortion ban.

That’s the story I shared on social media. A lot of other folks did, too. But quickly, the facts got in the way of a good story. And facts matter.

From the beginning, there were reasons to be skeptical. For starters, Culverhouse didn’t target Alabama in general but the University of Alabama in particular. Yes, his family name carries more weight there, but shouldn’t Auburn get the same treatment? Or any other university or college in the state? Or any business? Why just UA?

Timelines are important, and the backstory made Culverhouse’s motives more clear.

The truth dies first

On Friday, university trustees approved of St. John’s proposal, took Culverhouse’s name off the law school and agreed to refund Culverhouse’s donations. The same day, Culverhouse sent his op-ed to the Post, which published it and began a social media firestorm. Other media followed, most portraying the dispute as a he-said/they-said.
I'm married into the Crimson Cult, but I have never hesitated to bend the UA system's nose when I thought it warranted. I might never have received more hate mail than the day I argued in a column that Nick Saban might have voted by absentee ballot illegally. I'm lucky I didn't have to leave the state.

And I'm not a fan of Alabama's abortion law. Quite the opposite. I've argued vehemently against it.

But the University of Alabama is not the right target here. Not this time.

Facts matter. Truth matters. And this whole sorry saga has been short on both, even when Culverhouse tried to bring it back to the real Alabama religion: Football.

"I think what provoked them the most was when they asked me if I wanted to see a football game and I said no; I don't like to see young men hurting themselves," Culverhouse told the American Bar Association Journal last week. It was a good line. A good story, but ...

In addition to the emails, Sunday I got emailed a photo, too. It's of Culverhouse and his wife standing on green grass, waving to a sea of crimson — from the 50-yard line at Bryant-Denny Stadium.

*Kyle Whitmire is the state political columnist for the Alabama Media Group.*
UA emails show decision to return funds to Culverhouse preceded abortion comments

By Abbey Crane

The University of Alabama planned to return Hugh Culverhouse Jr.'s donation and remove his name from the law school at least four days before Culverhouse called for a boycott of the school following the state's passage of an abortion ban.

According to emails sent to AL.com, Finis St. John, chancellor of UA System, suggested Culverhouse's $21.5 million donation be returned on May 25, four days before Culverhouse spoke out about the abortion legislation. That followed a May 24 email request from Culverhouse that the University return $10 million.

The emails also showed Culverhouse's interest in influencing student admissions, scholarships, faculty hiring and firing, and the employment status of the dean of the law school.

In the May 24 email from Culverhouse to University President Stuart Bell, Culverhouse asked for the return of $10 million because he was not happy with candidates for an endowed chair position in his name and Culverhouse demeaned the dean of the law school Mark Brandon as well as Bell.

"I wanted a renowned Constitutional law professor. Someone to make academic waves...These are nice additions to a 3880 faculty with an insecure dean-but they are hardly nationally stature constitutional law figures," Culverhouse wrote in the email. "I believe Mark, you and I come from different concepts. I want the best law school, not a mediocre law school, whose ranking is a simple mathematical manipulation. I also know you have never dealt with a gift of my size-either for endowed professor or for a something as large as to change the name of the law school. You are unprepared. Mark will always be a small town, insecure dean. The outside world frightens him."

On May 29, AL.com reached out to Culverhouse after Florida Political wrote a piece detailing Culverhouse's disdain with Alabama's abortion ban law. Culverhouse told AL.com out-of-state students should boycott The University of Alabama and businesses should boycott the state.

"All foreign and U.S. international firms that do business in Alabama should boycott," Culverhouse said. "It would get the law changed quickly."

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Following the AL.com article. A spokesperson from UA system quickly released a statement explaining UA’s efforts to return Culverhouse’s donations before he spoke to media about the abortion legislation.

According to an email from law school dean Mark Brandon to Bell, Culverhouse advocated for the firing of 10 law school professors and wanted to have access to observe law classes at his leisure during a campus visit.

“Donors may not dictate University administration,” Kellee Reinhart, senior vice chancellor of community relations for UA system, said in an emailed statement.

In an email to Brandon, Culverhouse used his past involvement in aiding in the selection of dean of UA’s business school, named after his father, as an example the power he wields as a prominent donor.

“My input was a courtesy, but it was an acknowledgement of my involvement and commitment,” Culverhouse said in an email. “The school did not get the $16MM from my father’s estate except when they agreed to my terms after 2 years of litigating.”

Hugh Culverhouse told AL.com today his statements about abortion legislation had nothing to do with his relationship with the law school. He said his goals for the school were to raise enrollment by seven percent and find a good constitutional law professor, but was frustrated the money he had already given the school had not been used yet to fund the law school.

“I never said give all my money back,” Culverhouse said. “If it’s really bad why don’t they ask for those other gifts back.” Culverhouse said he has previously given $9 million to the university.

“Unfortunately I’m staring at Stuart [Bell’s] email at 6:53 p.m. 5/24/19 and it certainly doesn’t sound like he’s wanting to return any money,” Culverhouse said.

The University of Alabama Board of Trustees voted Friday, June 7 to return $21.5 million back to Culverhouse and rename the law school.
The Crimson White
Sunday, June 9, 2019

Emails show Culverhouse decision unrelated to abortion ban

By: Rebecca Griesbach and Shahriyar Emami, News Editor and Staff Reporter

The University of Alabama System has been adamant that the decision to return Hugh Culverhouse Jr.'s $21.5 million donation had nothing to do with his public disavowal of the Alabama abortion ban.

Now, they have receipts.

On Sunday, June 9, UA System spokeswoman Kellee Reinhart released email correspondences between trustee members regarding their decision to give the donor's money back. While an official decision was made on Friday, new evidence reveals that conversations were brewing as early as May 17.

As the Culverhouse saga has unfolded on local and national news, both his and the University's motives have been called into question – namely, the true relationship between Culverhouse's political leanings and apparent in-house drama.

Upon receiving new information, the Crimson White thought these questions might be best answered in a timeline, so we made one for you.

Here's what we knew two days ago:

**May 28 at 4:24 p.m.** – Chancellor Finis St. John sent out an email to the Board of Trustees strongly advising to return Culverhouse's money, and that they would make a decision at the monthly meeting on June 7.

**May 29** – Culverhouse's team sent out a statement to media detailing his disappointment with what he viewed to be silence on matters of abortion legislation.

"As a lawyer, I cannot countenance a law school, especially one which bears my name, teaching state law that I believe to be wrong both constitutionally and morally," Culverhouse stated.

Since the Alabama legislature provides a chunk of the University's funding, he said, his first step toward rectifying the law was to protest the University. That day, flurries of headlines relayed his call to boycott the school.

**May 29 at 5:23 p.m.** – Reinhart sent the Crimson White and other local affiliates a release with St. John's attached memo, stating that the decision to return Culverhouse's money was unrelated to the abortion ban.

**June 7** – St. John officially returned Culverhouse's donations, totaling $21.5 million.
While Reinhart noted that the decision to return the money was not political, St. John’s email came in close timing with Culverhouse’s public statement. But now, it’s clear that trustees had been discussing how to handle an ongoing, and unrelated, feud with the donor weeks before he took to the national stage.

Here’s what we know now:

**May 17, 2019, 8:52 a.m.** – Culverhouse sent an email to Mark Brandon, dean of the law school, citing grievances about the college’s money-handling and requesting the law school treat him with the same courtesy he was given in the business school when picking candidates for the Chair positions. He stated that he felt he had not been thoroughly included in a decision to elect a Chair of the constitutional law program.

“To date, I have been feted, and kept in the dark,” Culverhouse wrote. “I could give a crap about newspaper articles or even the name on the law school. I want the school to operate the best and for now, you need to forget the ratings.”

**May 17, 9:03 a.m.** – Brandon responded, stating that the search for a Chair had already begun, but that he include Culverhouse in choosing from a list of candidates.

**May 17, 9:30 a.m.** – Brandon forwarded the above conversation to UA President Stuart Bell, stating that he thought Culverhouse lacked “fiscal logic” and affirming that he would meet about the Chair.

**May 18, 11:38 a.m.** – Culverhouse sent a message to Brandon suggesting he assign someone else to handle recruiting trips, then requested Brandon send cost estimates and breakdowns on the library. He then stated that he’d like to sit in on a class, and demanded that no one restrict him from doing so.

**May 19, 12:18 p.m.** – Brandon forwarded Culverhouse’s message to Bell and Chad Tindol, the Chief Administrative Officer, with a draft of a response. He stated that he was wary of Culverhouse’s desire to wander into his classroom, citing threats to academic freedom.

**May 23, 4:01 p.m.** – Brandon sent a list of the Chair candidates to Culverhouse.

**May 23, 4:38 p.m.** – Culverhouse responded that he intends to attend the interviews for the Chair candidates.

**May 23, 11:02 p.m.** – Brandon responded, “Thanks Hugh.”

**May 24, 6:19 a.m.** – Culverhouse responded to Brandon, re-stating previous grievances about not being involved early enough.

“I want to talk next week and go over every candidate, but your actions have resulted in my not giving any further gifts to Alabama and yesterday, I removed Alabama as a beneficiary from my

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will/trust,” he stated. “If you want to continue treating me as a subversive spy, simply change the name of the professorship to ‘The Richard Shelby Chair of Constitutional Law,’ and we will think of a cover story.”

May 24, 7:55 a.m. – Brandon apologized to Culverhouse, and promised to respond with more thought at a later time.

May 24, 1:14 p.m. – Culverhouse wrote to Bell, requesting back the $10 million he had paid ahead of the scheduled payment date.

May 24, 6:02 p.m. – Brandon issued another apology to Culverhouse and requested to set up a meeting to discuss candidates for the Culverhouse Chair.

May 24, 6:53 p.m. – Bell responded to Culverhouse, stating that he was surprised at the request and that the system would need time to consider logistics.

May 24, 8:04 p.m. – Culverhouse responded to Bell, urging Bell again to send back the payments. He also urged Bell to look over Brandon’s choices for Chair candidates, stating that he didn’t want his name attached to the position.

May 25, 6:37 a.m. – Culverhouse wrote again to Bell complaining about Brandon and his dissatisfaction with the Chair search, claiming that he would not know anything about the candidates had Bell not ordered Brandon to relay that information.

“You seem to think the quid pro quo is I give you the largest sum and commitment in the school’s history and you have no return consideration as your end of the transaction,” he wrote, demanding Bell process the return of $10 million of his payments.

May 25, 6:40 a.m. – Culverhouse responded to Brandon’s apology, stating, “at this point conversations are not worth the time.”

May 25, 3:32 p.m. – The Chancellor responded to Joe Espy, Chair of the Legal Committee of the board of trustees, about Culverhouse’s forwarded request, stating, “We need to do this immediately because it will only get worse.”

May 25, 3:49 p.m. – Espy requested Sid Trant of the System’s General Counsel create an outline for the return of Culverhouse’s donations, the renaming of the law school and the canceling of a constitutional law professorship.

“What he said to our president and about our president and Dean are absolutely unacceptable,” Espy wrote.

TAKEAWAYS

Despite public misconceptions, the dispute between Culverhouse and the University had nothing to do with the abortion ban and started over a week before Culverhouse released statements
about opposing the University because of the state's abortion law. Instead, it was about his desire to impact decisions regarding the law school, including the hiring process for the Chair of the Constitutional Law program.

The emails make clear that Brandon's trepidation came from not wanting to give Culverhouse power over the law school.

"I worry, too, that his logic will convert the Endowment for Excellence into a recipe for mediocrity," Brandon said in a May 17 email to President Bell. "And it may well blow up the Law school. If one wanted to see Florida or Georgia leapfrog Alabama, this would be one way to do it."

While Brandon opposed giving Culverhouse too much control over the law school, he does not reject the idea of having the donor in a consultant position.

"As for the search for a chair-holder, I'm happy to involve him, solicit advice, and get recommendations and preferences," Brandon said in the same email. "But we'll be in trouble with accrediting bodies - and vulnerable in the various courts of public opinion - if we are ceding responsibility for choosing chair-holders (or any tenure-line faculty) to non-academics."

This correspondence, however, is limited to recent events, and it is unclear whether Culverhouse's claims of mismanagement from the law school and Brandon, specifically, are justified.

Regardless, UA System's decision to return Culverhouse's $21.5 million donation still stands.

*If you're wondering more about the relationship between the University and the state legislature, stay tuned. The effects this decision will have on the law school and the surrounding community will also be covered in a future story.*
Internal emails show Culverhouse donation refund was never about abortion, he called for ‘cover story’

By Sean Ross

The University of Alabama System on Sunday definitively proved that returning Hugh Culverhouse, Jr.'s record donation was never about abortion, providing emails that showed the recommendation was made four days prior to any public remarks he made about the subject.

In a statement accompanying a number of documents and electronic correspondences between UA administration, System officials and Culverhouse himself, a System spokesperson emphasized, “Our decision was never about the issue of abortion. It was always about ending the continued outside interference by the donor in the operations of The University of Alabama School of Law.”

The statement and document dump came after The Washington Post published an op-ed from Culverhouse in which he made several claims that are now refuted by the System’s records.

The System spokesperson advised Culverhouse had even been attempting to bar the emails from being released “for reasons that are now obvious.”

The emails show objectively that Culverhouse was trying to influence the law school’s student admissions; scholarship awards; the hiring and firing of faculty; and the employment status of the law school dean himself.

“The donor’s continuing effort to rewrite history by injecting one of society’s most emotional, divisive issues into this decision is especially distasteful,” the System spokesperson concluded.

While Culverhouse first denounced Alabama’s new abortion ban law to Florida Politics on May 29, emails show that University of Alabama System Chancellor Finis “Fess” St. John and Trustee Joe Espy on May 25 recommended the return of the donation amount Culverhouse had already paid — along with the cancellation of the amount yet to be paid and the renaming of the law school.

This came after an early morning May 25 email from Culverhouse to UA President Stuart Bell, in which Culverhouse admitted his expectation of “quid pro quo” was not being met. In that lengthy email, Culverhouse bashed the law school dean, Mark Brandon, repeatedly and trashed the nationally highly ranked law school as “mediocre.”

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"I also know you have never dealt with a gift of my size—either for endowed professor or a something as large as to change the name of the law school. You are unprepared," Culverhouse wrote to Bell. "Mark will always be a small town, insecure dean. The outside world frightens him."

Culverhouse then said as a result of his demands about admitting more students and the hiring of personnel not being met, the amount of his donation he had paid ahead of schedule ($10 million) should be returned.

"And, if you want to tell the board of [trustees] for the state, fine," Culverhouse signed off.

"I would like those funds returned. You can send a check or wire transfer," he further outlined in a separate email.

In subsequent public comments, Culverhouse has said he never asked for a refund of his donation.

In his The Washington Post op-ed, misleadingly entitled, "I gave the University of Alabama $26.5 million. They gave it back when I spoke out about abortion," Culverhouse brazenly alleged, "It has been painful to witness administrators at the university choose zealotry over the well-being of its own students, but it's another example of the damage this attack on abortion rights will do to Alabama."

On his abortion comments, Culverhouse claimed, "I expected that speaking out would have consequences, but I never could have imagined the response from the University of Alabama, which on Friday said it would be returning my gift and removing my name from the law school."

This came in spite of the facts exposed by the emails and documents released Sunday — and that Culverhouse on Friday had said in a statement, "I expected this response from UA."

Internal emails also showed that Culverhouse had demanded the right to freely roam the law school, walking into ongoing classes unannounced. Additionally, he had desired for ten professors to be fired, along with alterations to the law school's financial operations.

Writing to Bell the night of May 24, Culverhouse complained about the prospective candidates to become the law school's new constitutional law chair, decrying that his name would be "attached" to any of their hires.

"It is a joke," Culverhouse wrote of the potential professors at the then-Hugh F. Culverhouse, Jr. School of Law. "Use another name."
In an email from the previous week, Culverhouse had written, “I could give a crap about newspaper articles or even the name on the law school.”

Speaking of the law school’s high national rankings, Culverhouse told the dean, “[Y]ou need to forget the ratings.”

Emails show that while disagreeing with Culverhouse’s attempts to influence law school hiring decisions and the like, administrators were trying to continue constructive dialogue with him until he blew up over a two-day period, finally writing to the law school dean on May 25, “Mark—at this point conversations are not worth the time.”

This came the day after he admitted at being “mad” at the school for not heeding his demands.

Culverhouse even wrote to Brandon that he had removed the University of Alabama completely from his will and trust on May 23 and would no longer be giving any more gifts during his lifetime to the university.

“That amount makes a mockery of the sums I have [already] given,” Culverhouse bragged. “It is gone. You have already cost University of Alabama Law School a fortune. We will see the next few months if you can change your relationship with me. You may also learn my approach is beneficial.”

Later in that email, he suggested changing the name of the constitutional law chairmanship to “The Richard Shelby Chair of Constitutional Law” and inventing a “cover story” for Culverhouse’s demands not being met. He said the same could be done with the law school “after a financial settlement is reached and accomplished.”

“One of the terms of a settlement would be I will not give any money to any other law school or discuss anything about the Alabama Law School,” Culverhouse concluded in that email.

On June 3, well after St. John had publicly recommended the return of all his money and Culverhouse had begun his public abortion spectacle, Culverhouse wrote to a System attorney requesting that the emails and documents not be publicly released.
TUSCALOOSA, Ala. (WBRC) - The University of Alabama System released detailed information days following accepting the resolution to return a record $26.5 million donation from Hugh Culverhouse Jr., and remove Culverhouse’s name from the School of Law.

The 17-page document clarifies the decision-making process behind the University of Alabama after the board accepted the resolution on Friday.

Culverhouse initially made headlines weeks after Alabama signed its anti-abortion bill into law, calling for students to boycott the University of Alabama. Despite Culverhouse saying the University of Alabama’s decision was based on these comments, the statement released June 9 says that is not true.

The document states the decision was based on Culverhouse attempting to influence student admissions, scholarship awards, the hiring and firing of faculty and the employment status of the law school dean. The document includes emails from Chancellor Finnis St. John IV on May 25 (four days prior to Culverhouse’s initial comments) that recommend the donations be returned and Culverhouse’s name be removed from the school.

St. John IV said Friday following the resolution being accepted that Culverhouse Jr.’s expectations for the use of his donations have been “inconsistent with academic integrity and independent administration of the law school.”

“We will learn from this experience and always remember we cannot and will not compromise those values of academic integrity and independent administration at any price," St. John IV said.

Culverhouse Jr. has donated over $30 million to the University of Alabama. This recent $21.5 million contribution included the law school being named the Hugh F. Culverhouse School of Law.

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Culverhouse doubles down on refuted claims even after emails released

By Sean Ross

Even after the release of emails on Sunday irrefutably debunking his claims, Hugh Culverhouse, Jr. continues to peddle the narrative that the University of Alabama System returning his record donation and renaming the law school was related to his support of abortion.

The emails show objectively that Culverhouse was trying to influence the law school’s student admissions; scholarship awards; the hiring and firing of faculty; and the employment status of the law school dean himself.

In a statement released Sunday night, Culverhouse said he was “glad” the emails were released.

However, he ignored the facts revealed by these emails, essentially asserting that the emails proved the opposite of what they actually did.

“The emails further prove that UA returned my $21.5 million donation as retaliation for calling on students to reconsider attending a university that advocates a state law that discriminates against women and is unconstitutional,” Culverhouse alleged.

To be clear, the university has never advocated for the abortion ban law he has referenced, nor was UA in any way involved in passing or supporting that legislation.

Culverhouse added, “The call for the boycott is unrelated to the issue discussed in the emails. Let me be clear, I never asked UA for the full $21.5 million to be returned nor did I hear UA officials discuss that option until after I called for the UA boycott on May 29.”

This comes in spite of facts revealed by the emails being released, including that UA System Chancellor Finis St. John and Trustee Joe Espy recommended returning all of Culverhouse’s law school donation funds on May 25 — a full four days before Culverhouse ever spoke about abortion.

Additionally, one of the emails from Culverhouse to the law school’s dean on May 23 said that Culverhouse had removed the University of Alabama completely from his will and trust and would no longer be giving any more gifts during his lifetime to the university. This was six days before he spoke about Alabama’s abortion ban.

“That amount makes a mockery of the sums I have [already] given,” Culverhouse wrote to the law school dean in that May 23 email. “It is gone. You have already cost
University of Alabama Law School a fortune. We will see the next few months if you can change your relationship with me. You may also learn my approach is beneficial.”

Later in that email, Culverhouse suggested changing the name of a proposed constitutional law chairmanship (one of the items his donation was endowing) to “The Richard Shelby Chair of Constitutional Law” and inventing a “cover story” for Culverhouse’s demands not being met. He said the same could be done with the law school “after a financial settlement is reached and accomplished.”

“One of the terms of a settlement would be I will not give any money to any other law school or discuss anything about the Alabama Law School,” Culverhouse concluded in that email.

His statement Sunday night came after emailing a System attorney on June 3, well after Culverhouse had begun his public abortion spectacle, requesting that the emails and documents not be publicly released.

Sean Ross is a staff writer for Yellowhammer News. You can follow him on Twitter @sean_yhn
Bully donor Culverhouse aborts the truth in his spat with 'Bama law

By: Quin Hillyer

A big-money, pro-abortion bully is taking it on the chin after he was caught lying in a dispute with the University of Alabama. At this point in the saga, it's hard to think of anyone more deserving.

Hugh Culverhouse Jr.'s late father, an Alabama native, was a wildly successful lawyer and real estate investor best known for being the founding owner of the NFL's Tampa Bay Buccaneers. He was a generous philanthropist who made a $10 million gift to the University of Alabama.

The junior Culverhouse seemed to be following his father's footsteps when he pledged $26.5 million to the school in return for having the university's law school named after himself. In the last two weeks, though, a public brouhaha erupted in which Culverhouse urged people to boycott the college in protest at Alabama's strict new anti-abortion law.

The school's trustees decided to return at least $21.5 million to him and remove his name from the law school. This was interpreted by some as a reaction.

Culverhouse then wrote a column in the Washington Post in which he castigated college officials, who he said "choose zealous over the well-being of its own students. . . . [A]dministrators have sent a message to young women that their agency is not respected or valued."

But from the beginning, Culverhouse's actions looked strange. Why urge a boycott of the university to protest a law that the university had nothing to do with? He worked very hard to make it sound like the trustees were sending the money back as a sign of their own support for the stringent anti-abortion law, and he tried to claim the moral high ground against a state law he characterized as "an act of oppression."

But it turns out Culverhouse is, to put it very kindly, fudging the truth. It turns out his dispute with university officials predated the abortion controversy. After he pledged the money, without any explicit strings attached, he began trying to dictate policy to school administrators.

Kyle Whitmire, an outspokenly liberal columnist for the al.com newspapers who has been critical of Alabama's abortion law, explained: "The university has now released email exchanges between Culverhouse and university officials showing the dispute as something else entirely — a bitter, personal feud between the University and one of the institution's biggest donors. Those emails show Culverhouse trying to influence hiring decisions, admissions and scholarships."

He continued: "Those records show Chancellor Finis St. John first told trustee Joe Espy that the university should refund all of Culverhouse's donations and un-rename the law school after Culverhouse — four days before Culverhouse made any publicly reported comments about the abortion ban.

Further, those records show Culverhouse mocking trustees, the university president and the law school dean, threatening to pull his money from the university unless those officials treated him
with more deference, and eventually demanding at least $10 million back from the school. Again, this all occurred before Culverhouse had said a word in the press about Alabama’s abortion law.”

In short, the administration wanted to maintain the law school’s academic independence and integrity, while Culverhouse threatened to take his money back if the school didn’t obey him. The university rightly called his bluff. Abortion was always a red herring.

To be clear, this is not a matter of a school reneging on its agreement with a donor. If a philanthropist wants conditions placed on his gift, and the school agrees in writing to those conditions beforehand, then donor intent should always prevail. But if a donor pompously tries to throw his weight around after the fact, making demands to which the university never agreed as a condition of accepting the donation, that’s a different matter entirely.

Culverhouse apparently didn’t count on the university realizing his money wasn’t worth the price of dealing with him.
UA: Donation return never about abortion.

The University of Alabama System on Sunday issued a statement reiterating that its decision to return the largest donation in school history was based on Hugh Culverhouse Jr.'s attempts to influence administration of the law school.

The statement and approximately 15 pages of email correspondence released to support the claim are the latest exchange in a public spat between the university and its largest donor of the last decade.

The system has accused Culverhouse of attempts to interfere in the administration of the law school and denied claims by the Florida developer and attorney that the gift's return was because of his calls for a boycott of the state and its institutions over a recently passed state law that bans nearly all abortions.

On Friday, the system's board of trustees voted to return the $21.5 million given by Culverhouse toward his $26.5 million pledge and remove his name from the law school. In response, Culverhouse wrote a column that was published in the Washington Post headlined "I gave the University of Alabama $26.5 million. They gave it back when I spoke out about abortion."

The emails released on See UA, A7

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Sunday cover a series of conversations from May 14 to June 3. The emails show that conversations about returning the gift were occurring among university system officials at least four days before the fallout between Culverhouse and the system became public on May 29. Last month, Culverhouse, in interviews with Florida media outlets, called for a boycott over the state's new abortion law. A few hours later, the system publicly announced the plans to return the gift. “These emails also clearly establish the Chancellor [Finis] St. John’s recommendation to refund all monies came on May 25 — four days prior to any public comment by the donor about abortion,” the statement reads. “The donor’s continuing effort to rewrite history by injecting one of society’s most emotional, divisive issues into this decision is especially distasteful. These facts should finally set the record straight.” Culverhouse made a statement through a publicist Sunday night in response to the release of the emails, saying the correspondence was unrelated to his call for students to reconsider attending Alabama because of the abortion law passed by lawmakers last month. Culverhouse asserted that the emails proved the return of the gift was in retaliation for his call for a boycott. Culverhouse asserted his original request was to return $10 million given ahead of schedule with the plan to return to the original given schedule. “Following the anti-abortion law — and with Gov. Kay Ivey being a member of the board of trustees of the University of Alabama — I am compelled to take a stand and call for a boycott, especially since my father was an officer of Planned Parenthood,” Culverhouse said in the statement. “The call for the boycott is unrelated to the issue discussed in the emails. Let me be clear, I never asked UA for the full $21.5 million to be returned nor did I hear UA officials discuss that option until after I called for the UA boycott on May 29.”

The governor of Alabama is an ex officio member of the board. But Ivey was not present Friday when the board voted. Governors rarely attend the meetings. In May 17-18 emails with Law School Dean Mark Brandon released by the system, Culverhouse makes recommendations
Culverhouse to return the $10 million. University of Alabama President Stuart Bell said the administration was caught by surprise by the request, indicating that a previous conversation had resolved the issue with a plan to move forward to resolve Culverhouse’s concerns. In the emails released by the system, Culverhouse expressed dissatisfaction with candidates for an endowed chair in constitutional law and being kept in the dark, calling Brandon a “small town, insecure dean” as he criticized his leadership. In the emails released by the system, trustees and the system chancellors discuss returning the gift on May 25. In a June 3 email to the system attorney and board secretary Sid Trant, Culverhouse requests the system and his attorney arrange for the plans for the return to include provisions to keep the correspondence between Culverhouse and the system about the law school confidential. “Our decision was never about the issue of abortion,” according to the system’s statement. “It was always about ending the continued outside interference by the donor in the operations of the University of Alabama School of Law.”
The Washington Post
Tuesday, June 11, 2019

Sorry, Hugh Culverhouse. Alabama law school class sizes aren’t your call.

By Ronald Krotoszynski
June 11 at 7:48 PM

Ronald Krotoszynski is the director of faculty research and a professor of law at the University of Alabama School of Law.

The Board of Trustees at the University of Alabama recently voted to return a $21.5 million gift from Hugh Culverhouse Jr. Since this decision, a game of he-said, they-said has ensued. Culverhouse claims the university’s decision relates to his unwavering support of reproductive freedom. The university says its decision relates solely to inappropriate demands by Culverhouse to dictate key aspects of the law school’s administration.

One thing is clear: Culverhouse was insisting on Alabama significantly increasing the law school’s entering class size — and then demanded $10 million of his gift back when the law school demurred (with all of this taking place well before his highly public call for an abortion-related boycott of all things Alabama, notably including the University of Alabama School of Law). Thus, when it comes to law schools, Culverhouse embraces the idea that bigger is better. However, this simply isn’t true. What’s more, this view reflects a deep misunderstanding of the current market for legal employment.

An ethical law school has a duty to consider whether its graduates will enjoy reasonable access to good professional opportunities after they graduate — and class size has a direct, and inverse, relationship to employment outcomes for graduates.

Since the Great Recession, a wrenching retrenchment in demand for legal services has occurred. Tasks that were once performed by junior associates at big-city law firms are now both automated and offshored. Not long ago, document review in major corporate litigation constituted a bread-and-butter staple of litigation practices. Now, computers scan and sort documents for attorney-client and work-product privilege with astonishing speed and accuracy. The remaining documents are more often than not then reviewed by U.S.-trained lawyers working abroad (who are less expensive than domestic lawyers). In addition, corporations have taken more work inside their corporate counsel offices and have slashed their budgets for outside work.

This reduced demand for legal services has led to a steep decline in demand for lawyers. Law school enrollment is down by about 20 percent since 2008 — and applications have declined by about 30 percent. Would-be law students are taking a hard look at the cost-benefit equation of law school and deciding “thanks, but no thanks.”

U.S. law schools have been playing a game of catch-up with these disruptive changes in the profession. One common response, at least by law schools affiliated with major universities, has been to reduce the entering class size. Taking this step permits law schools to hold the line on the quality of the entering class despite fewer applications for admission — and makes it easier for law schools to maximize students’ prospects for good post-graduation employment.

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Simply put, in the current market, it’s much easier to find good jobs for 125 law school graduates than to place 250 graduates. Many universities, including but not limited to Alabama, have forgone tuition revenue and used central university funds to permit reductions in class size, to right-size law school enrollments. It would be easy, and remunerative, to admit bigger classes — with less capable students who are less likely to find law-related employment after graduation. Law schools, however, have generally tried to do the right thing.

Rather than pushing for law schools to enroll more students, it would be better if would-be donors facilitated public-interest career paths by making it possible for current law students to graduate with lower debt loads. Taking this step would permit more newly minted lawyers to take positions that involve providing legal services to chronically underserved communities desperately in need of them.

Alabama actually does a pretty good job on this front — on average, our graduates finish law school with less than $82,000 in law school-related debt, and 38 percent graduate with no debt. This gives them the ability to take lower-paying jobs as prosecutors and public defenders, and with state and federal agencies. In sum, a smaller graduating class, with lower debt loads, is a good thing for both recently graduated lawyers and also for those who need access to lawyers but cannot afford to pay for it.

It would be disingenuous to suggest that reductions in law school class sizes have nothing to do with the annual law school rankings. But it would be equally disingenuous to suggest that cuts to law school class sizes are only about gaming the rankings. There are important benefits to the students that relate directly to right-sizing a law school’s entering class size. Law schools should be given credit, not blame, for considering seriously whether our graduates will enjoy robust professional opportunities after they graduate. Moreover, regardless of whether right-sizing entering law school classes represents the best policy or not, surely the law school, and not a donor, should be entitled to make this important judgment call.
University: Return of donor's money 'never' about abortion

By Blake Paterson, Associated Press
This article was featured in the San Francisco Chronicle, The Washington Post, and numerous other publications.

MONTGOMERY, Ala. (AP) — University of Alabama officials have released a selection of emails to back up their contention that their decision to return a record $26.5 million donation had nothing to do with the donor's highly publicized call for a boycott in response to the state's new, near-total abortion ban.

Instead, the emails suggest the relationship between the university and Hugh F. Culverhouse Jr. had already soured before he called the boycott, and the university was already moving to return his record donation before he spoke out.

The university said Culverhouse Jr., a 70-year-old Florida real estate investor who pledged the record-setting gift in September, attempted to influence student admissions, scholarship awards, the hiring and firing of faculty and the employment status of the law school dean.

Culverhouse has said repeatedly that the university's decision to return his money was retribution for his call for a boycott of the university over the restrictive abortion legislation.

The university said it wanted to "set the record straight."

"Our decision was never about the issue of abortion," read a statement released Sunday alongside the emails. "The donor's continuing effort to rewrite history by injecting one of society's most emotional, divisive issues into the decision is especially distasteful."

Culverhouse, however, said the emails selectively released by the university only tell part of the story, adding that he believed the issues raised in the emails had been resolved. He said he continues to believe the university is lying about the motivation for the decision and argued that at least one email included was "fabricated" to appear as though university officials decided to return his money earlier than they claim.

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"There's too much coincidental and inconsistent behavior for me to buy anything Alabama says," Culverhouse said. "I specialize in white collar criminal work. I've seen these kinds of documents before. The minute I looked at it I burst out laughing."

According to the emails, on May 25 — four days before Culverhouse called for the boycott — Chancellor Finis St. John IV authorized a university lawyer to prepare an outline of what needed to be done to return the gift, writing: "We need to do this immediately because it will only get worse."

Culverhouse said he believed this email was "manufactured."

University spokeswoman Kellee Reinhart said the university was "completely comfortable allowing the record to speak for itself" and had nothing else to add. The matter erupted publicly on May 29 when Culverhouse urged the boycott, saying: "I don't want anybody to go to that law school, especially women, until the state get its act together."

He spoke after state lawmakers passed legislation making abortion at any stage of pregnancy a crime punishable by 10 years to life in prison for the provider, with no exceptions for rape or incest. The law, set to take effect in November, is the most hardline of the anti-abortion measures enacted this year as states emboldened by the new conservatives on the U.S. Supreme Court take aim at Roe v. Wade, the 1973 ruling that legalized abortion nationwide.

Hours later, the university announced it was considering giving Culverhouse his money back after officials said he repeated "numerous demands about the operations" of the law school. They emphatically denied the decision had anything to do with the abortion comments. The university did not elaborate any further until it released the emails Sunday.

Culverhouse did not attend Alabama, but his parents did, and the business school bears the name of Hugh Culverhouse Sr., a wealthy tax lawyer and developer who owned the NFL's Tampa Bay Buccaneers. After the younger Culverhouse's record-setting donation the law school was renamed after him but his name was stripped from the school Friday when the trustees also voted to return his money.

According to the emails provided by the university, Culverhouse wrote that the school's president was "unprepared" to deal with a gift of his size and repeatedly

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referred to the head of the law school Mark Brandon as a "small town, insecure dean" frightened by the "outside world."

The May 25 email from St. John that appears to call for a full refund followed at least a week of heated back-and-forth exchanges between Culverhouse and university officials over the administration of the law school, including disagreements over the number of admitted students, his ability to freely sit in on classes, his wish to fire 10 law school professors and the finalists selected for a constitutional law professorship he endowed.

"I wanted a renowned Constitutional law professor. Someone to make academic waves ... These are nice additions to a ... faculty with an insecure dean - but they are hardly nationally stature constitutional law figures," Culverhouse wrote.
The Culverhouse Debacle Is (Still) A Reminder That Conservative Free Speech Suppression Is Baseless, Bad Faith Nonsense

By Kimberly Joyner

Last Friday, the Board of Trustees at the University of Alabama voted to return a $21.5 million donation from Hugh Culverhouse, a long-time Alabama philanthropist. The vote came days after Culverhouse called for a boycott of the state of Alabama, including the university, in protest of a controversial anti-abortion law recently signed by Governor Kay Ivey.

Shortly after the vote, Alabama President Stuart Bell sent an email to UA alumni (full disclosure: I am an alumnus of the University of Alabama) vaguely stating that the gift had been returned “for reasons of academic and institutional integrity”. The following day, June 8, Culverhouse gave his view of what happened in an editorial on AL.com, explicitly accusing the university of punishing him for his political beliefs.

“I expected that speaking out would have consequences, but I never could have imagined the response from the University of Alabama, which on Friday said they would be returning my gift and removing my name from the law school,” he wrote. “It has been painful to witness administrators at the university choose zealotry over the well-being of its own students,” he added, “but it’s another example of the damage this attack on abortion rights will do to Alabama.”

On June 9, a day after the op-ed was published, Alabama released emails that confirmed their version of events—that the school had been locked in a dispute with Culverhouse over the law school’s administration and were planning to return his donation four days before he called for a boycott over the state’s abortion ban.

While the emails provided some much-needed vindication for Alabama, initial reactions to the rejected donation suggest that conservatives were prepared to defend Alabama even if they had admitted to punishing Culverhouse for his political speech.

Notably, at around the time they were heaping praise on Alabama for putting principles above money, conservatives were slamming YouTube following its decision to demonetize videos made by right-wing comedian Steven Crowder, who
posted several videos featuring racist and homophobic insults directed at Vox journalist Carlos Maza.

With their knee-jerk defense of Alabama against a left-wing donor, conservatives stepped on their own position opposing institutions, from public colleges to private companies, enforcing speech standards. But consistency in outrage has never been their goal—though conservatives readily point out the inconsistency of those enforcing speech standards. The Culverhouse debacle is just the latest to demonstrate the bad faith inherent to conservative claims of free speech suppression.

To be sure, I believe that Alabama had every right to reject Culverhouse’s donation on the basis that his politics conflict with the vision and values the university wishes to have associated with its law school.

And regardless of whether one agrees with Culverhouse’s views on abortion, his calls for a boycott do run contrary to Alabama’s goals of recruiting and retaining students. Even if Alabama had already decided to cut ties with him before his boycott suggestion, it makes sense that his political speech would cause a permanent rift between the two parties.

But the contradictory responses to the way YouTube and the University of Alabama handled controversial speech prove that conservatives look to the content of speech to decide whether the speech is worth defending. And yet in his defense of Steven Crowder, Texas Senator Ted Cruz disingenuously argued that to avoid controversy over its enforcement of speech standards, YouTube should stop “blacklisting” users for offensive speech altogether.

The leap to laissez faire solutions with zero concern for hate speech or harassment on YouTube’s platform should be familiar to anyone who has followed the Trump administration on domestic policy matters: things that conservatives like—such as tax cuts without pay-fors—ought to be shielded from public scrutiny by the state, while things that liberals like must be defended in the “marketplace of ideas”.

Conservatives clearly believe that public and private institutions have a right to regulate the content being distributed on their platforms (or on their physical property), and to punish individuals who do not adhere to their standards. Ultimately, the only reason conservatives claim to be unfairly targeted by these institutions (despite evidence to the contrary) is to shield themselves from the “market of ideas” they want so badly for everyone else to participate in.
To put it another way, conservatives don’t want to debate their opponents. Crowder’s manipulation of homophobic bullying into a free speech crusade is solely about getting the guardrails of the juridical state behind his desire to inflict harm upon his enemies.

None of this is to say that companies don’t deserve any criticism for how they enforce content standards (or how schools enforce speech standards). A fair argument could be made that too often websites like YouTube don’t enforce their standards until after a political outcry, giving their actions a partisan appearance.

But conservatives have been preying on the fears of colleges, newspapers, and social media companies appearing bias to their benefit for a long time. Pretending that content standards or enforcement of those standards is unfair to them and should be left up to the free market is just bad faith nonsense. Conservatives have never believed in the free market of ideas, and only pretend to do so because they know that the people who truly care about society’s oppressed never could.
U. of Alabama’s Returned Gift Is a Case Study in Donor Relations Gone Bad

By Liam Knox and Will Jarvis

Last September, Hugh F. Culverhouse Jr. hugged Mark E. Brandon, dean of the University of Alabama’s law school, and shook hands with the Tuscaloosa campus’s president, Stuart R. Bell, as they unveiled a portrait of the 70-year-old philanthropist.

Culverhouse had just pledged $26.5 million to the university, the largest gift in its 187-year history. In remarks that day, he spoke of a hope that law students in Tuscaloosa would be provided with the best teachers, the best facilities, and competitive scholarship funds. The school was renamed in his honor.

By May of this year, though, the relationship between the university and its top donor had turned sour. Culverhouse wanted a role in the law school’s decisions about the use of his money, while university administrators increasingly felt he was overstepping his bounds.

Last Friday the Florida real-estate investor’s conflict with the law school reached a boiling point when the university system’s Board of Trustees voted to return the $21.5 million of Culverhouse’s gift it had received so far and to remove his name from the law school.

Meanwhile, both in interviews and in an op-ed published in The Washington Post this past weekend, Culverhouse repeatedly asserted that the university had given back the money only after he spoke out against Alabama’s new, restrictive abortion law.

In response Alabama released a statement as well as emails strongly suggesting that Culverhouse had been falsely portraying the conflict between him and the university. The emails, dated from May 17 to June 3, appear to show Culverhouse’s efforts to wield what administrators believed to be unwarranted influence in the hiring process for an endowed chair.

In the emails Culverhouse also demeaned Brandon, calling him “insecure.” And he told Bell that the president was “unprepared” to deal with a monetary gift as large as his.

The documents also show that on May 25 the university system’s chancellor, Finis St. John IV, in an email to the system’s general counsel and two board members, agreed that the money should be returned. That was four days before Culverhouse published a statement criticizing the abortion law.

The saga is a case study in how donor relations can go bad, complete with a crescendo of national publicity and a frenzied public-relations effort to set the record straight.

In an interview with The Chronicle on Monday, Culverhouse stuck to his original claims, insisting that, although there was contention with Brandon, all major disputes had been resolved. He also asserted, without offering verifiable evidence, that the
May 25 email exchange had been fabricated by university officials in an attempt to retroactively justify their narrative.

A university spokeswoman denied Culverhouse’s accusation and said that all materials provided by the university are authentic.

The falling out in Alabama is a worst-case example — though hardly the first of its kind — involving universities and big-money donors. Doug White, a philanthropic adviser and author, said it highlighted the need for mutual expectations to be made clear for each party’s role in the relationship after a donation is made or pledged.

That misunderstanding was clear in an email exchange between Culverhouse and Bell on May 25 in which the donor wrote: “You seem to think the quid pro quo is I give you the largest sum and commitment in the school’s history and you have no return consideration as your end of the transaction.”

“In my mind, it goes back to a fairly basic concept,” White said. “And that is: A gift agreement should carry a lot of these understandings down on paper.”

**What Stewardship Means**

White, who is the author of a 2014 book on the breakdown of relations between Princeton University and a longtime donor family, said the lesson from Alabama is twofold: Make future expectations clear, and stay in touch with the donor to anticipate possible conflicts. Disagreements between donors and universities aren’t uncommon, he said, but “you don’t try to eliminate the tension; you just try to figure out how to best manage it.”

The tension between Alabama and Culverhouse had grown to the point that Brandon, in a May 17 email to Bell and another administrator, wrote that the donor did not understand the “mission and fiscal logic of a university, the environment in which the law school operates, the nature of decision making in a public academic institution, and [the] relationship between the school of law and the university.”

That the conflict escalated so quickly — and so publicly — emphasizes the need for university officials to address misunderstandings with donors before the disputes appear in national news outlets.

According to White, what pushed Culverhouse to turn hostile and to presumptuously assert his role in the law school’s administration — and what drives many wealthy donors who fall out with their beneficiaries — was a perceived lack of respect. White said that even if such a perception is a projection or is based in misunderstanding, it is university administrators’ responsibility to cater to the donor’s ego and smooth out the conflict.

“That moment when the gift is made is really the beginning of a huge new phase, and oftentimes a lifetime phase,” White said. “And I know he’s a past donor ... but you can’t let your guard down. This is what stewardship means.”
White just might be onto something. Despite all the public accusations over the past week, Culverhouse indicated to *The Chronicle* that he was willing to return to the table with the university if its officials would just “sit down, calm down, and put it all back together.”

Culverhouse’s name has been removed from the law school’s sign, his portrait taken down. But at the end of the day, White said, those who suffer most from the lost funds are students. Universities, he added, should do everything in their power to make sure that doesn’t happen.

“The university tends to be very happy when a gift like this is made,” he said, “and so the tougher questions are not addressed. But at some point, real life invades the process. You finish having the champagne and drinking a toast to the future, and real-life questions really come in.”

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University of Alabama says its refusal of donor money was about academic integrity and not the abortion law

By Nicole Chavez, CNN

(CNN) The University of Alabama insists its refusal of a donor's money had nothing to do with abortion and it has released several emails to prove it.

Last week, the school returned $21.5 million to Florida-based lawyer and developer Hugh Culverhouse Jr. and removed his name from its law school. Culverhouse claims the decision was retaliation after he urged students to boycott over the state's recently passed abortion ban. But school officials said it was not related.

Kellee Reinhart, the university's vice chancellor for communication, said the "decision was never about the issue of abortion" in a statement that included emails between university officials and Culverhouse, as well as internal emails about the attorney.

"It was about ending the continued outside interference by the donor into the operations of The University of Alabama School of Law," Reinhart added.

The emails show that Culverhouse intended to meddle into student admissions, faculty hiring and even the employment status of the law school dean, the university said. They also show school leaders wanted to refund the gift and rename the school since "May 25 -- four days before the public comment by the donor about abortion."

It appears in the emails provided by the university that Culverhouse disliked the candidates for an endowed professor in his name and asked the school to return a $10 million donation he had made.

According to the university, he wrote:

- "I wanted a renowned Constitutional law professor. Someone to make academic waves ... These are nice additions to a 3,880 faculty with an insecure dean—but they are hardly nationally stature," in an email to Stuart R. Bell, president of the University of Alabama.
- "This year I paid the University $10M in advanced of the scheduled payment date. I would like those funds returned. You can send a check or wire transfer," in another email from May 24.

CNN has reached out to Culverhouse for comment. Culverhouse pledged a total of $26.5 million last year, the largest gift in the university's 187-year history. The university named its law school for him then.
He told The Washington Post he had asked for the return of his $10 million donation. He also said he had asked university officials to "wait on a hiring decision until the state abortion ban was dealt with in federal court," the newspaper reported.

"The donor's continuing effort to rewrite history by injecting one of society's most emotional, divisive issues into this decision is especially distasteful," the university's statement said. "These facts should finally set the record straight."

Culverhouse had denied asking for a refund.

"I want to make clear that I never demanded that $21.5 million be refunded and wonder if the University is attempting to silence my opinions by their quick response," he said in a statement Friday.

Culverhouse did not attend the university, but his parents did. Hugh Culverhouse Sr. owned the Tampa Bay Buccaneers for 19 years until his death in 1994. The Alabama business college is named for him.

"I will not allow my family's name to be associated with an educational system that advocates a state law which discriminates against women, disregards established Federal law and violates our Constitution," Culverhouse had said.
Editorial: Culverhouse learns money can't buy everything

Hugh F. Culverhouse Jr.'s $26.5 million donation to the University of Alabama's law school was the largest in the institution's history, and the university thanked him by renaming the law school in Culverhouse's honor.

But the gift wasn't so large it bought the university's integrity.

Culverhouse made not just state but national news when he called for a boycott of the University of Alabama in response to the Alabama Legislature passing a near-total ban on abortion. Even with some people already talking about boycotts following the passage of the bill sponsored by Decatur Republican Terri Collins to challenge Roe v. Wade, Culverhouse's remarks stood out.

Here was a wealthy businessman, lawyer and philanthropist calling for a boycott of the very institution to which he'd just given a record donation. That is a statement.

But if it all seemed a little too quick, a little too convenient and a little too calculated to grab national attention, perhaps that's because it was.

The University of Alabama responded by saying its dispute with Culverhouse predated the abortion law. Instead, it was about the university's refusal to give into demands that, as the university described them, amounted to Culverhouse seeking to micromanage the law school in exchange for his donation.

That's the sort of thing that, if true, and allowed to go on, can cost a university its accreditation.

So, the University of Alabama Board of Trustees did the responsible thing. It voted Friday to send Culverhouse's money back. Within hours, the wire transfer was complete, and Culverhouse's name was literally removed from the law school.
Nevertheless, Culverhouse persisted, claiming the university’s decision to return his money was retribution for his call for a boycott of the university over the restrictive abortion legislation, never mind it’s a strange sort of retribution that entails giving back $26.5 million.

So, over the weekend university officials released a selection of emails backing up their claim the dispute with Culverhouse not only predated but had nothing to do with abortion.

In a May 25 email, dated four days before Culverhouse’s boycott comment, university Chancellor Finis St. John IV “authorized a university lawyer to prepare an outline of what needed to be done to return the gift,” according to The Associated Press. St. John wrote, “We need to do this immediately because it will only get worse.”

Culverhouse said he believed this email was “manufactured,” the AP reported.

That seems, to put it modestly, unlikely. It seems more likely Culverhouse threw his weight around and was surprised when the university didn't cave. He then used the abortion law as a convenient excuse to lash out.

This is not the first time the Culverhouse family has played hardball with the state of Alabama only to end up embarrassed.

Culverhouse’s late father, Hugh Culverhouse Sr., an Alabama grad for whom the university’s school of business is named, owned the Tampa Bay Buccaneers, and infamously botched signing Auburn’s Bo Jackson, who took a pay cut to play baseball with the Kansas City Royals rather than play for the Bucs, after he became convinced Culverhouse Sr. deliberately tried to sabotage Jackson’s baseball career.

It appears now it’s twice that a Culverhouse has come to Alabama thinking money trumps principles. We are happy to report that both times, principles won out.
Gary Palmer on UA vs. Culverhouse: ‘I am proud of the university’s decision’

By Sean Ross

Congressman Gary Palmer (AL-06) is standing fully behind the University of Alabama System Board of Trustees’ decision to return Hugh F. Culverhouse, Jr.’s record donation and strip his name from the UA law school.

The University of Alabama System on Sunday definitively proved that returning Culverhouse’s donation was never about abortion, providing emails that showed the recommendation was made four days prior to any public remarks he made about the subject. However, Culverhouse has continued to try peddling his abortion-gate conspiracy even after the System’s irrefutable records release.

In a statement on Tuesday, Palmer emphasized that the facts of the matter are clear, despite the wishes of many media outlets in the state and across the country.

“I am proud of the university’s decision to return the funds,” Palmer said. “This is about academic integrity and institutional independence.”

“In returning the funds, The University of Alabama is setting an example that I hope other colleges and universities will follow,” he concluded. “While donors may designate the use of their donations, they do not have a right to dictate how our academic institutions conduct business related to admissions, scholarships, and hiring. To do so would undermine institutional independence and integrity.”

Sean Ross is a staff writer for Yellowhammer News. You can follow him on Twitter @sean_yhn
At 'Bama's law school, Culverhouse was trying to mess up a winning formula

By Steven Arango | June 12, 2019 12:00 AM

Opinion

In September 2018, Hugh Culverhouse, Jr. made a very generous $26.5 million gift to the law school. In exchange, the law school changed its name from the University of Alabama School of Law to Hugh F. Culverhouse, Jr. School of Law at the University of Alabama.

Unfortunately, the gift ended up being conditional. Culverhouse, Jr. began demanding that the law school expand its student body, which would likely lead to lower admission standards. There are two notable features that set the University of Alabama School of Law apart from other law schools — aspects that allow the public school to be consistently ranked among the top 30 law schools in the country. First is the small enrollment size, and second is the excellent ratio of professors to students.

As such, when Culverhouse, Jr. demands that the school triple its enrollment numbers, he is not asking for a small change; he is asking the school to fundamentally change a very successful model.

Fortunately, the law school does not allow donors to dictate school policy — even if their name graces the law school’s entrance.

This resolute response from the law school did not sit well with Culverhouse, Jr., which is why he demanded a partial return of his donation. Publicly, however, Culverhouse, Jr. claimed that the University of Alabama School of Law was based on the school’s alleged support of the recently passed Alabama abortion law. He went so far as to call for people to boycott the school.

Although Mr. Culverhouse says otherwise, the University of Alabama School of Law has not taken a position on the Alabama abortion law, nor will it. It is a public institution that plans to remain neutral and focused on providing a top-flight education to anyone who attends. As my classmates and I can attest, recent graduates all, it achieved both these goals.

As a former law school ambassador and student member of the professorial hiring committee, I have firsthand knowledge of the principles the University of Alabama School of Law does stand for. Dean Mark Brandon and his entire staff work tirelessly to provide students with the best professors from around the globe. Diversity of thought and experience is the hallmark of our professors.

And the school’s recruitment of students is no different: Fifty percent of the student population is from out of state, and the number of women attending almost equals the number of men at the law school. Every background and viewpoint one can imagine is represented in the law school’s classes. A student at Alabama is just as likely to volunteer with the American Civil Liberties Union as with the Heritage Foundation.

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The University of Alabama School of Law's only agenda is the success of its students. No matter their race, political belief, or career goals, the law school wants its students to succeed. Culverhouse, Jr. would not be aware of this because he did not attend the law school. Maybe we should not expect him to appreciate the bountiful culture of learning fostered here. However, I do want the public to know the truth about our fine institution.

Despite what Culverhouse and others have said, the decision to return his money does not hurt students. In fact, it protects them. Dean Brandon and the Board of Trustees made the right decision. One donor should not be able to hold a competent, caring, and adept administration hostage, preventing them from creating the best possible environment for its students and alumni.

Culverhouse, Jr. is not wrong on all fronts. The law school is guilty of zealotry, just not the zealotry he accuses it of having. Our law school is zealous to create objective lawyers who seek to protect those who cannot protect themselves, walk with integrity and character, and carry on the tradition that is the University of Alabama School of Law.

*Steven Arango is a native of Tampa, Fla. and a graduate of the University of Alabama School of Law.*
An Abortion Red Herring in Alabama

The real story behind Hugh Culverhouse’s rejected donation to the state law school.

By Steven J. Arango

When the University of Alabama decided to return a $21.5 million donation to investor Hugh F. Culverhouse Jr. and remove his name from its law school, Mr. Culverhouse claimed it was retaliation for his speaking out against Alabama’s new abortion law. But the university’s decision had nothing to do with abortion.

Mr. Culverhouse made the gift last September, but it ended up being conditional. He demanded that the law school increase the size of its student body by as much as half. Alabama has consistently ranked among America’s top 30 law schools, in part because of its small enrollment (about 400 students) and its excellent student-to-faculty ratio (6.3 to 1). A larger enrollment likely would have meant lowering admission standards.

The law school was firm: It wouldn’t allow donors to dictate school policy—even the donor whose name graced the law school’s entrance. In response, Mr. Culverhouse demanded the school return $10 million of his donation. Publicly he claimed it was because of the school’s purported support of the abortion law. Then last week he issued a press release urging a boycott: “I don’t want anybody to go to that law school, especially women, until the state gets its act together.”

The University of Alabama School of Law has taken no position on the Alabama abortion law (nor do I). It is a public institution that appropriately remains neutral and focuses on its educational mission.

As a former law school ambassador and student member of the professorial hiring committee, I have firsthand knowledge of the law school’s principles. Dean Mark
Brandon and his staff work tirelessly to hire the best professors and promote diversity of thought in both the faculty and the class. A student at Alabama is as likely to volunteer with the American Civil Liberties Union as with a conservative organization. The law school’s only agenda is the success of its students, regardless of their race, sex, politics or career goals.

The decision to return Mr. Culverhouse’s money doesn’t hurt students; it protects them. One donor shouldn’t be able to hold a school hostage—or to hide his agenda behind abortion politics.

*Mr. Arango is a graduate of the University of Alabama School of Law.*

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More letters from UA’s biggest donor

By Rob Holbert | Staff Writer

There was no shortage of elitist Left and Right Coast media outlets lined up to heap praise upon Hugh F. Culverhouse Jr. and scorn upon Alabama after Hugh Junior claimed last week The University of Alabama Law School had told him where he could stick a $26.5 million donation. Hugh Junior had publicly urged students to boycott UA — including the law school bearing his name and the school of business bearing his father’s — in response to the recently passed law banning abortion.

The school’s reaction to his boycott suggestion, according to an op-ed Culverhouse penned for The Washington Post, was to send his money back and break out the Black & Decker on the sign bearing his name outside Alabama’s lawyer factory. It was a story regurgitated time and again by others in the media all too willing to lap up a tale too good to believe — that even Alabama’s premier university (I mean ONE of them) is run by the same kind of Bible-thumping rednecks who just passed a law so strict it won’t even let a girl abort the product of her last family reunion.

They piled on, one after the other with little actual thought as to how stupid the story actually sounded. A rich guy attacking a school he pledged $26.5 million to and that now bears his name because the state legislature passed a law he doesn’t like? University administrators — known hardline conservative thinkers — telling a wealthy donor to take a flying leap because they didn’t agree with his political statements? A guy who gave millions to Alabama and whose father once owned the Tampa Bay Buccaneers claiming he hates football because it hurts people?

Never mind that the story ran counter to common sense — no time to check it out when there were conservative skulls to crack.

But Hugh Junior apparently forgot the many emails he sent to the law school griping about all manner of things having nothing to do with the state of abortion in the state of Alabama. Behind the scenes Hugh Junior was a huge pain, making outrageous demands, openly insulting the dean and other law school muckety-mucks and otherwise acting like a raging jerk. At least that’s how the emails read.

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For example, it seems Hugh Junior wanted to be able to just wander into any law class at any time and set up shop in the back of the room. Administrators also were under the impression he wanted to fire up to 10 law school professors. All this comes from the emails UA dumped onto the worldwide web shortly after Culverhouse and the rest of the world branded them the dumbest rednecks outside the dumb rednecks who actually passed an abortion ban with no exceptions for rape or incest.

Those emails show Culverhouse to have been an insufferable (rich) clown, making outlandish demands and treating faculty and staff like cartoon bears treat toilet paper in a TV commercial. The emails also reveal UA was in the process of returning his money, which he’d asked for, before Culverhouse ever went public with his calls for a boycott. And he never mentioned the abortion issue to university officials. It was obviously a face-saving effort on Hugh Junior’s behalf.

But don’t expect to read much about that outside the borders of this beautiful state that would prefer it if you do, in fact, carry to term a reminder of the last time you saw Uncle Jimmy. As much as I often think the “liberal media bias” claim is an easy way out for right-wingers who don’t want to answer tough questions, this serves as a great reminder the label has actual roots in actual bad journalism. And I wouldn’t hold my breath waiting for the majority of those outlets that bandied Culverhouse’s lie as an unimpeachable example of what Grade A morons are running the show in Alabama to now come back and explain he made it up because he misjudged just how much abuse he got to dish out for $26.5 million.

For his part, Culverhouse is playing the “Alabama’s emails just prove I’m right” card. It’s not clear HOW they make him right, but the one thing that is clear at this point is that Mr. Culverhouse appears “eccentric,” to put it kindly.

In fact, I wouldn’t be one bit surprised to find out this was just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to UA’s stash of unhinged Hugh Culverhouse Jr. emails. Seeing as his father donated heavily enough to the business school that it’s known as the Culverhouse College of Business, I can only imagine some of the letters Dean Kay M. Palan has received:

“Kay-Kay, I just wanted to check in and see how my Culverhouse School of Business Writing is coming along. Remember, I want to cut through the crap and teach our students how to really offend people they’re dealing with. I think the first course should be called ‘Dear A-hole 101,’ and I’d like you to submit the names of five really irritating professors to teach it so I can select one then write the other four and tell them they suck. Get this done today or send my money back and expect me to blame the failure of this fine program on Gov. Ivey signing the chemical castration law. — H.J.”

Or maybe something like this to Dean Robert F. Olin of the College of Arts & Sciences:

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“Bobb-Ohhh — I read that your science students are experimenting on some ‘perplexing worm-like mollusks’ and immediately thought of you! Is this really the kind of research my hard-earned money should be supporting???? Remember the Japanese art collection I promised to donate after I die? Fuh-ged-about it!!! I’m sending a truck around to get it tomorrow right after I put out a press release saying it’s because Alabama’s legislature didn’t pass a law allowing public schools to teach yoga. — H.J.”

A past $2 million donation to the UA women’s golf team has brought some interesting missives, I’m sure. Maybe something like this to Head Coach Mic Potter:

“Mic, the lack of a K in your first name offends me. I want my two mill back. Either that or I’ll need the ladies’ team captain to drive me around campus in a golden golf cart. Didn’t Alabama just get rid of marriage licenses? DO NOT provoke me!!! — H.J.”

Hugh Culverhouse Jr.’s emails might be the only truly funny thing that’s come out of this abortion law fight and the story serves as a great example of how we tend to believe what we want to believe — even if it’s totally crazy.
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On June 4, 2019, Frank Hardy Bromberg, Jr. of Birmingham, Alabama passed away in Cashiers, North Carolina at the age of 87. Frank was born in Birmingham, Alabama on November 15, 1931 to Annie Maud Wilkinson Bromberg and Frank Hardy Bromberg, Sr. He and his wife, Lella Clayton Bromberg, met at Ramsay High School and were married for almost 65 years.

Frank received a Bachelor of Science from the Commerce and Business Administration School of The University of Alabama, where he was the fourth person to graduate with an A in every course for four years. He also received the Algernon Sydney Sullivan Award, and was a proud member of Delta Kappa Epsilon. He received a Master's Degree in Retailing from New York University.

He served as a Captain in the United States Air Force and spent two years as a Base Exchange Officer at Dreux AFB, France.

Frank served as Chairman of the Board of Bromberg and Co., Inc.-Alabama's oldest business (est. 1836)-and was a member of the fifth generation of family management.

Frank held many leadership positions throughout his life, including his service to The University of Alabama as a member of the Board of Trustees from 1983-2000, a Trustee Emeritus until his death, Past Chairman of the President's Cabinet, Past President of the National Alumni Association, and as a member of the Board of Visitors for the School of Commerce, the Business Hall of Fame Board, and UAB's President's Council.

Frank also served as Past Chairman of the Commerce Executives Society, Past President of the Crippled Children's Foundation, Past Senior Warden and Past Treasurer (for approx. 30 years) of the Cathedral Church of the Advent, Past President of the Jewelers of America, Past President of the American Gem Society, Past President of the Kiwanis Club of Birmingham, Past Captain of the Birmingham Monday Morning Quarterback Club, Past President of the Country Club of Birmingham, and Member of the Alabama Academy of Honor.

He was also the recipient of The University of Alabama's Distinguished Alumnus Award, Distinctive Image Award, Jefferson County Outstanding Alumnus Award, Business Hall of Fame Award, and an Honorary Doctorate Degree.
Frank also received the Silver Beaver Award from the Boy Scouts of America. Additionally, he was the recipient of the Shipley Award for a lifetime of service to the American Gem Society.

Frank was an exceptional person because he had a servant's heart, always placing others before himself. His life was defined by his devotion to God, his family, Bromberg’s, The University of Alabama, and the Advent. Frank was not only a leader, but every institution he touched, he made better. Frank was kind-hearted, never speaking ill of others, and well-liked amongst his peers. He was a genuine person, a true gentleman, outgoing, and was more interested in other people than himself. Frank was philanthropic, compassionate, dependable, honest, and improved the lives of many through his friendship. He had a deep faith in God and always had his Bible nearby.

He had a magnificent sense of humor and was a joy to be around. Frank was an Eagle Scout and a competitive player of basketball in his youth, and enjoyed playing golf and tennis, and watching Alabama football and basketball.

He was a past King of the Beaux Arts Krewe and a member of the Redstone Club. He loved spending time at the family mountain house in Cashiers, North Carolina. Frank set an example that his children, grandchildren (by whom he was affectionately known as "Bop"), and family friends sought to emulate. Despite all of his accomplishments, he remained humble until his death. He will be missed by many, but most of all, by his canine companion Lily.

Frank is survived by his loving wife Lella and four children, Frank Hardy Bromberg, III; Charles Clayton Bromberg (Christy) of Jacksonville, Florida; Frederick ("Ricky") Wilkinson Bromberg (Nancy); and Lella Bromberg Wilbanks (Bruce) of Nashville, Tennessee. He is also survived by seven grandchildren: Charles Clayton Bromberg, Jr. (Robin); Frederick ("Wil") Wilkinson Bromberg, Jr. (fiance Katie); Anne Hayden Bromberg; Margaret ("Mallie") Russell Bromberg; Frances Hardy Bromberg; Bruce ("Bo") Ogletree Wilbanks, Jr.; and Alice Kirkland Wilbanks; and two great grandchildren, Zoe Dylan Bromberg; and Charles ("Charlie") Clayton Bromberg, III. He is predeceased by his parents, and by grandchildren Virginia McMillian Bromberg, Elizabeth Bromberg Wilbanks, and Zoe Proferis Bromberg. Frank's family would like to thank Dr. Tom McRae, Dr. Allen Yeilding, and Margaret Dunsford for their invaluable friendship and loving care. The Memorial Service will be held at 1:00 PM on Saturday, June 8, 2019 at the Cathedral Church of the Advent, with visitation immediately following the service. Memorials in Frank's honor may be directed to: The Cathedral Church of the Advent, 2017 6th Avenue North, Birmingham, Alabama 35203; The Crippled Children's Foundation, 2019 4th Avenue North, Ste. 101, Birmingham, Alabama 35203; and The University of Alabama Culverhouse College of Business Department of Marketing, The University of Alabama, Box 870101, Tuscaloosa, Alabama 35487.
He was fifth generation to lead state's oldest jeweler

Frank Bromberg Jr., the fifth generation to lead Alabama’s oldest jeweler and family-owned retailer, has died. He was 87.

News outlets reported he died Tuesday in Cashiers, North Carolina.

During his career, Bromberg led the company as president and chairman of the board of Bromberg’s, the company his family founded in Birmingham in 1836.

He was also a member of the University of Alabama Board of Trustees from 1983 to 2000, and was a trustee emeritus until his death. He was also a past chairman of the president’s cabinet, past president of the National Alumni Association and a member of the Board of Visitors for the School of Commerce, the Business Hall of Fame Board and UAB’s President’s Council.

A graduate of the University of Alabama, he earned a master’s in retailing from New York University. He also served on numerous boards and civic organizations.

Prior to his time with the company, Bromberg served as a captain in the United States Air Force and spent two years as a base exchange officer at Dreux Air Force Base in France.

In a Facebook post on the Bromberg’s page, the company stated, “The world lost a true gentleman ... with the passing of Frank Hardy Bromberg Jr. He was an excellent leader, a beloved father, a wonderful friend and a fine example of a life well lived. The world is a better place because he was here.”

He is survived by his wife Lella and four children, Frank Hardy Bromberg, III; Charles Clayton Bromberg (Christy) of Jacksonville, Florida; Frederick (“Ricky”) Wilkinson Bromberg (Nancy); and Lella Bromberg Wilbanks (Bruce) of Nashville, Tennessee. He is also survived by seven grandchildren and two great grandchildren.
University of Alabama superfan Walt Gary dies at age 36

By Drew Taylor | Staff Writer

It was a tradition that lasted for years.

Every Thursday — normally a few minutes before 7 p.m. during the football season — Walt Gary would arrive at the athletic facilities at the University of Alabama. There, he would briefly meet with Crimson Tide football head coach Nick Saban to give his prediction for the game that weekend.

For Walt, a 36-year-old born with Down syndrome, being able to spend time with Saban and the players was tremendous.

“I’m proud of the coaches and players both,” Walt told ESPN in 2018. “These people are my friends and I know what they can do.”

On Thursday, Walt died after being in a coma for several days in UAB Hospital’s intensive care unit. His grandmother, Betty Shirley, confirmed that Walt, who had a history of health issues during his life, had bleeding in his brain before his death.

“He was always so full of joy and loved the Crimson Tide,” Alabama Athletic Director Greg Byrne wrote on Twitter following Walt’s death. “We will miss seeing him around the department.”

On Friday, Saban released a statement on Walt’s death:

“Walt Gary was a special part of the Alabama football program and our hearts are broken by the news of his passing,” Saban said. “He was beloved by everyone on our team, in our athletic department and throughout the Alabama family. Our thoughts and prayers go out to his family, friends and everyone who knew and loved Walt as much as we did. The Thursday night radio show won’t be the same without hearing his game prediction and seeing his infectious personality. Walt will be truly missed.”

Walt’s mother, Betsy, told Southern Living in 2017 that having Walt changed her life.

“He really helped change my priorities,” she said. “Quickly, things that I thought were important were no longer that important.”

When Walt was in sixth grade, his mother reached out to then-Alabama coach Gene Stallings, a family friend whose son, John Mark, also had Down syndrome, to spend time with him. Stallings did one better: He would often invite Walt to football practices.
Stallings remembers how Walt was a joy to be around.

“He was just a special child,” Stallings told The Tuscaloosa News on Friday during a phone interview from his home in Texas. “I did not look at him as somebody who had Down’s; I just looked at him as a youngster that had some special needs and was a friend of Johnny’s.”

Stallings, who has known the Garys for many years, said his heart is with the family.

“It was the saddest day of my life when Johnny passed away, so I understand what all they’re going through, and my heart is heavy for them,” he said.

While a student at Central High School, Walt was voted “Most School Spirit” and also attended Crossing Points, a program for children with special needs.

For more than 20 years, Walt was involved with Crimson Tide football, going to practices and meeting with Saban and the team once a week during the football season. During the day, Walt had a full-time job at UA’s Supe Store.

Different players have spoken at length about Walt’s positivity.

“This kid is always happy and then when he sees a football player, it’s like he becomes more happy and when he becomes super happy, it’s like it starts to become contagious,” quarterback Tua Tagovailoa told ESPN for a piece last year.

“Walt is one of the people that, in my opinion, project the spirit and tradition of Alabama football,” Saban told ESPN.

Stallings said he was appreciative of how Saban continued to keep Walt in the fold of the football program.

“That was extremely important to him because it gave him some identity, and people associated him with the football program,” he said. “What a joy it was to see him and let him be a part of that program.”

Betsy said Walt’s enthusiasm for life could be summed up in the way he always said he had “Up syndrome” instead of Down syndrome.

“He sees the cup half full instead of half empty and he’s just a positive person and that has, I think, translated to other people,” she told ESPN. “They see that in Walt.”

No funeral arrangements had been announced as of Friday.

Reach Drew Taylor at drew.taylor@tuscaloosanews.com or 205-722-0204.
CECIL HURT: Alabama superfan Walt Gary will continue to touch lives

By Cecil Hurt

At Nick Saban’s annual Nick’s Kids charity golf event last Thursday, a worthy event for a worthy cause, many of the people who passed through the Old Overton clubhouse en route to the course asked the same questions to one another.

“How is Walt?”

“Have you heard about Walt?”

“What’s the latest on Walt?”

Walt, of course, was Walt Gary. The latest news at that time wasn’t good — Walt was in intensive care at UAB — and the news became worse by Friday morning, when Walt passed away at the age of 36.

The Sabans had been in close contact with Walt’s family through his hospitalization. Virtually everyone else, especially those from Tuscaloosa or those who had spent time here, knew Walt on a first-hand, first-name basis. Many of us had known Walt Gary since childhood, had watched him grow up in this community, and know his remarkable family.

Walt had started coming to Alabama football practices when Gene Stallings was the coach. The name “Walt Gary” was trending nationally on Twitter on Friday, as his passing touched off a series of tributes from one of the country’s most promising athletic programs and from former Alabama football and basketball players ranging from former Heisman Trophy winners to walk-ons, but Tuscaloosa was home and Tuscaloosa was where Walt was happiest.

Walt, who had Down syndrome, loved Alabama’s players, not because they were celebrities but because he considered them friends. He certainly had no designs on being a celebrity himself, even if he liked attention as most people do. Most of his public persona came about because of his connection with Alabama football, high-profile enterprise that it is, but he loved all Alabama sports.

You would see him at Coleman Coliseum, which is where I saw him most often in recent years. He had predictions on those games, too. He had more friends, more people around him than most people and he didn’t always remember my name, but he would remember my picture from the newspaper and always — always — strike up a conversation. His opinions were his own and he’d occasionally pick Alabama to win by 150 points or so. He also picked up astutely on the things he heard around him, and would sometimes repeat them with fairly little filter. (Walt could be particularly tough on referees, until a gentle correction from his mom.)

One notable thing came through in this weekend’s worth of tributes to Walt Gary from those who knew him. Very few mentioned Down syndrome. None mentioned anyone feeling sorry for
Walt, who had a great quality that sometimes goes unnoticed: he didn’t feel sorry for himself. He knew he wasn’t going to score touchdowns like Derrick Henry or Jalen Hurts, but he considered his contribution — making his weekly prediction for the head coach (perhaps with some occasional play-calling advice), or working at the Supe Store, or shaking his red-and-white shaker — as important, too. And it was.

That would be my tribute to Walt, a small one in a great outpouring of tributes from great figures. His life taught the lessons of empathy and of not taking for granted the blessings that you have, certainly. Those are great things to ponder, to recognize and to acknowledge.

My prediction for Walt, in return for the many predictions he offered to coaches and players and even to me now and again is this: you touched thousands of lives, and will continue to do so now that you are gone, because you lived your life to the fullest, confident and generous, the way we all should.

Reach Cecil Hurt at cecila.tidesports.com or 205-722-0225.
Walt Gary’s life celebrated by fans at Bryant-Denny Stadium

By Drew Taylor | Staff Writer

Betsy Gary remembers how after her son, Walt, was born, she believed she would never be happy again.

Walt was born with Down syndrome in 1983, as well as a slew of health problems that would require numerous surgeries throughout his life. On June 6, the longtime Supe Store employee and University of Alabama athletics fan died.

While Gary may have despaired at her son’s condition in the beginning, the person he would become changed her view.
“I felt like my life had ended, but in reality, my life was just beginning in a much better way because Walt just showed us unconditional love and what it means to be happy and thankful,” Gary said Wednesday at Bryant-Denny Stadium.

Gary hugged hundreds of people, many of whom wore “We Love Walt” stickers on their shirts, during a special celebration of Walt’s life at the stadium. Walt, a Tuscaloosa native who graduated from Central High School, was best known for meeting with Crimson Tide head coach Nick Saban and the football team every Thursday during the season to give his prediction for the upcoming game. Since he was a young boy, he had attended many Alabama football practices, first starting with former coach Gene Stallings, whose son, John Mark, also had Down syndrome and was a friend of his.

Stallings later commended Saban for keeping Walt as part of the program.

“That was extremely important to him because it gave him some identity, and people associated him with the football program,” Stallings told The Tuscaloosa News June 7. “What a joy it was to see him and let him be a part of that program.”

Saban said that while Walt’s family thanked him for all he had done for him, the reality was quite the opposite.

“Walt did way more for me than I ever did for him,” said Saban, who called Walt one of the three most inspirational people he had ever met.

Saban said there were many Thursdays when something would be on his mind — football practice not going the way he wanted it to or being worried about the upcoming game — but when he would see Walt smiling at him, it all changed.

“I always walked out that door much more spiritually uplifted than I came down those steps and it was all because of Walt and his passion he had for Alabama football, his passion he had for life and, in some kind of way, the way he made you feel to have a lot of gratitude for what you had and the opportunities you had,” Saban said.

Beth Curtis, principal at Verner Elementary School, remembers how Walt, whom Curtis believes was the first child with special needs to integrate into the Tuscaloosa City Schools, was a hard worker who bypassed any expectations teachers had for him.

Walt Gary Scholarship in Special Education
The Garys have set up a scholarship at the University of Alabama designed to give to students who plan on majoring in special education. Donations can be made to the scholarship by giving here or mailing a check to the University of Alabama, Box 870101, Tuscaloosa, AL 35487.

“He was such a role model for all the other children and they learned so much from him that they would have ever learned without him,” Curtis said.

Moving forward, Curtis believes Walt’s legacy will have a ripple effect as more people learning about him across Tuscaloosa. She has already seen that effect in her own school, where pictures of Walt are hung up around the building.

“The children will stop and say ‘Tell me about him,’” she said.

Walt’s kindness and love of children is something Curtis believes more people should take up.

“He was one of the most accepting people I have ever met,” she said.

Since Walt’s death, the Garys have heard from many former Alabama players, coaches, friends and acquaintances Walt had over the years.

“It has obviously been God-directed because one person could not have this kind of influence without it being God’s will,” Betsy said.

Likewise, Saban said he believed that while he and others would miss him, he was now in a better place, looking down on Tuscaloosa.

“When I come down those steps on Thursday, I’m going to know that there is an expectation from above,” he said.

Reach Drew Taylor at drew.taylor@tuscaloosanews.com or 205-722-0204.
The Southeastern Conference announced Friday that it would revise its existing limitations on the availability of alcoholic beverages at athletics events, giving Alabama and other member institutions the autonomy to determine its own policy regarding beer and wine at football, basketball, baseball and softball games as well as other sports.

However, an official statement from UA on Friday afternoon said that the university did not see changes in its current policy at this time. “This new policy allows each campus to decide what is right for them,” said the release from UA. “These guidelines will be helpful as we move forward and have future conversations. We have one of the best game-day atmospheres in the country, and we don’t envision making changes at this time.”

The revised SEC policy on alcohol availability, which was approved during the conference’s 2019 spring meetings in Destin, Florida, requires any SEC institution choosing to permit alcohol sales at athletics events to establish policies governing the sale and distribution of alcoholic beverages consistent with requirements established and agreed to by the Conference membership. In the past, SEC athletics programs have been prohibited from selling alcohol in public areas of SEC athletics venues.

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ALCOHOL

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The rule change takes effect on Aug. 1. The revised policy is not to be construed as a requirement or expectation that SEC institutions will sell alcohol at athletic events. Each institution has the autonomy to decide the permissibility of alcohol sales to the general public and to designate the locations where alcoholic beverages may be available, consistent with Conference-wide alcohol management expectations, each university’s policies, and state or local regulations governing alcohol sales and/or consumption.

The revised policy adopted by the presidents and chancellors requires institutions to implement a series of conference-wide alcohol management procedures, including the establishment of designated stationary sales locations, a restriction prohibiting sales by vendors in seating areas, a limit on the number of alcoholic beverages purchased per transaction and designated times that sales must cease specific to each athletics event.

“We are proud of the great game-day atmospheres the SEC and our member schools have cultivated throughout our history, and no other conference rivals the SEC in terms of our ability to offer an intense yet family-friendly atmosphere for all of our fans,” said University of South Carolina President Harris Pastides, current chair of the SEC Presidents and Chancellors. “This policy is intended to enhance the game-day experience at SEC athletics events by providing our schools the autonomy to make appropriate decisions for their respective campuses while also establishing expectations for responsible management of the sale and distribution of alcoholic beverages.”

The adoption of the revised policy comes after a recommendation by a working group of campus leaders created at the May 2018 SEC Spring Meetings. The group was charged with a review of the existing conference game management policy governing the availability of alcoholic beverages at SEC athletics events and to identify a direction for consideration by the membership.

“Our policy governing alcohol sales has been a source of considerable discussion and respectful debate among our member universities in recent years,” said SEC Commissioner Greg Sankey. “As a Conference, we have been observant of trends in the sale and consumption of alcohol at collegiate sporting events and have drawn upon the experiences and insights of our member schools which have responsibly established limited alcohol sales within controlled spaces and premium seating areas. We remain the only conference to set forth league-wide standards for the responsible management of the sale of alcoholic beverages.”

Any sales of alcoholic beverages in the public seating areas will be limited to beer and wine, and each institution that chooses to sell alcohol will be required to implement a server training program for staff.

“We are committed as a conference to ensuring that all changes in policy are implemented in ways that respect and sustain the traditions that make the SEC game-day experience exceptional for all attendees,” Sankey said.

The policy does not affect suites, clubs or private leased areas in which the sale and distribution of alcoholic beverages was previously permitted under existing SEC regulations.

Members of the SEC Working Group included Stuart Bell, President of the University of Alabama; Michael Sagas, Faculty Athletics Representative at the University of Florida; Hunter Yurachek, Director of Athletics at the University of Arkansas; Sarah Reesman, Senior Deputy Athletics Director at the University of Missouri; and Troy Lane, Chief of Police at the University of Tennessee.

Reach Cecil Hurt at cecil@tidesports.com or 205-722-0225.
There’s lots to distill on alcohol decision

By Cecil Hurt

The war raged for three years. They battled in the aisles and under the stately oaks of The Quad. They fought on the radio airwaves and the darkest swampy recesses of Alabama Twitter. Sometimes it was neighbor against neighbor, father against son, mother against daughter until a shaky compromise was hammered out, allowing the two sides to co-exist but not dispelling all the mutual distrust. And that was just over “Dixieland Delight.” So imagine what it is going to be like over beer. When the Southeastern Conference announced that its presidents had voted to modify the league’s longstanding policy about public alcohol sales at sporting events, a few of the member schools — notably LSU — were ready to light the drinking lamp almost immediately. Others moved more cautiously. Alabama didn’t appear to budge. A release from Rose Administration (not, one might note, from the athletic department) said that the game-day atmosphere was the “best in the country” and that no changes were planned at this time. For 2019, certainly, things will go as they went for years in dry counties around Alabama. You can’t buy it, unless you are a member of a private club — think of The Zone as a million-dollar Moose Lodge — or you can creatively sneak past the sheriff (or, in this case, the gate security) with a flask hidden creatively in ways that may or may not be proper to discuss in a family publication. That’s where Alabama stands and will stand, at least for now. There is more at stake in the alcohol debate (money, for one thing) than in the squabbling over “Dixieland Delight’s” improvised lyrics, but the lines will be drawn similarly. On the one hand, there are people who want no disturbance in their game-day experience, not especially not from the angry guy two seats down who has had one brew too many. On the other hand, there are people who might like a frothy ale at a 3 p.m. game in September on the Blast Furnace Network and might just decide that halftime is as good a time as any to leave the premises and find a public house to take their money and quench their thirst. A few things seem certain. This is not going to be strictly an athletic department decision, if there is a decision made in the future. Second, Alabama is going to take its time and watch what happens elsewhere, this season and quite possibly next season as well. Third, there is a window open to
explore alcohol sales on a limited basis at other venues in other sports. Baseball and beer go together like Coach Bryant’s weekly TV show cola and chips, for many fans. Fourth, while there is a potential revenue stream to be tapped, there will have to be another change in SEC policy before the advertising windfall that many analysts foresee can happen. As things currently stand, only “point of sale” advertising is permitted so we are still a few years away from seeing Kentucky run into Wild Turkey Field at Woodford Reserve Stadium. One word that hasn’t been mentioned yet is “never.” The next phase of construction at Bryant-Denny Stadium already appears headed for a bigger budget by some $15 million dollars or so than the original plan called for. The money has to come from somewhere — most of it out of donors’ bank accounts but, perhaps eventually, out of a keg as well.
To Many, Starr’s words were as impactful as his right arm

By Joseph Goodman | jgoodman@al.com

One of Bart Starr’s greatest gifts had nothing to do with football.

Starr was a prolific writer of letters, and his thoughtful words put down on paper throughout the years touched people in a more personal way than any of his great athletic achievements. The Pro Football Hall of Famer, who passed away on May 26, was memorialized on Sunday at Samford University with a beautiful service hosted by his family. NFL commissioner Roger Goodell spoke about receiving letters from Starr, and Bill Curry artfully framed his eulogy in the form of an open letter to his lifelong friend.

"Dear, Bart," Curry said. "I’m doing this as an open letter to you just so I can get through it without falling apart. I want to remind you, your family and the rest of the world about the grace and power of the greatest winner and finest teammate I have ever known."

Curry’s symbolic words were the perfect tribute. Starr was a man of letters, and he understood their great power. He used personalized, handwritten notes to make people feel special throughout his life.

His achievements came on the football field, but his legacy was created off of it. As his son, Bart Starr Jr., said so eloquently on Sunday inside Samford’s Wright Center, his father “put everything and everyone before him,” and so often Starr showed people how much he cared with his letters.

Starr must have written thousands of letters throughout his life. In the days after his passing, some of them were used to show Starr’s character. He wrote Goodell one before every season, and wrote Brett Favre one after every game, but he also wrote letters to fans and anyone who helped him.

“Direct and in his own writing,” Goodell said.

When is the last time you wrote someone a personal letter? I’m embarrassed to admit that I can’t remember the last time I penned a letter to a friend, or a colleague. I’m not talking about an email, or a text message. Those types of notes are nice, but they’re not the same as receiving a handwritten card, or letter in the mail.
We have so many different forms of communication now, and they are all inferior to a simple handwritten card. Twitter contributes more to miscommunication these days than clarity, and don’t even get me started about Facebook.

Social media is about ego and vanity, and little else. A personalized letter, received through the United States Postal Service, is the complete opposite. A card or letter through the mail is a sign of respect for others.

“Since I became commissioner,” Goodell said, “something extra special arrived with the kickoff of our new seasons. It was a handwritten letter sent through U.S. mail every year, and the return address said, ‘Bart Starr, Birmingham, Alabama.’”

Starr’s great ability as a leader was to make the people around him better. That legacy will now last long after his death thanks to the many letters he wrote throughout the years.

“His words are as important as ever,” said Goodell, pausing to compose himself.

Curry’s personalized letter to Starr on Sunday was a deep and sincere thank you to his friend. Curry began his professional playing career in Green Bay, and culturally it was a difficult transition for a player raised in the Deep South in the 1950s.

“I was insecure,” Curry said on Sunday in his open letter to Starr, “and fearful of people different from my experience: Catholics, Yankees, people of color. You would not allow it, calling me out. At times in front of the team if necessary.

“It was painful, but it taught lessons I would have never learned any other way. It set me up for experiences with great human beings like Willie Davis and Vince Lombardi with whom I had transforming life experiences.”

Read those words again, and understand their power. There can be no greater tribute to a person.

Sometimes, though, it doesn’t even really matter what the words are. Just the act of writing and addressing someone a letter conveys an inherent level of kindness and caring.

A slideshow of pictures and images played on loop during Starr’s service on Sunday at Samford. One of the most memorable was a letter from Starr to his granddaughter.

She was just going to the beach for vacation. That’s it. Starr just wanted her to have a good time, and let her know he was thinking about her.

Now she’ll have that letter forever.

Starr liked to quote William Shakespeare, history’s greatest writer of letters. One of Starr’s favorite lines, according to Bart Starr Jr., perfectly sums up his father’s legacy of the written word. From “The Merchant of Venice”:
The quality of mercy is not strain'd.

It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven

Upon the place beneath. It is twice blest:

It blesseth him that gives, and him that takes.

In honor of Starr's legacy, write someone a handwritten letter today or this week. It will make you and them feel better.

Joseph Goodman is a columnist for the Alabama Media Group. He's on Twitter @JoeGoodmanJr.
Bryant-Denny Stadium work to cost $17M more, UA says

By: Ed Enoch

The University of Alabama is proposing increasing the budget of the renovation of Bryant-Denny Stadium by $17 million as part of revisions to the project including scrapping plans for a student terrace and large video board in the upper deck of the southern end zone.

UA is proposing increasing the budget from $75.5 million to $92.5 million as a result of changes to the planning for the stadium renovation including new, larger video score boards in the corners of the stadium, more elevators, and student spaces on the southeast ground level.

The Physical Properties Committee of the University of Alabama System board of trustees will vote on whether to approve the revised architectural designs and new budget when it meets at 2:45 p.m. Thursday in the Bryant Conference Center on campus.

The board’s finance and academic affairs committees are also scheduled to meet Thursday afternoon. Any action items approved by the committees will be sent to the full board for consideration on Friday.

The revised plans call for increasing the size of the scoreboards in the corners of the end zones by about 60 percent instead of the previously proposed larger video board in the upper deck of the south end zone. The student terrace in the upper deck of the south end zone would be eliminated in favor of a student concourse at the southeast ground level entrance that still includes concessions stands, restrooms, social spaces and televisions.

The loge box seating originally planned for the upper south end zone would be moved to level 6 and the design would add two new stair towers on the west side of the stadium. The athletic department also wants to add a new larger elevator and new enclosed elevator lobby on the ground level to the southwest and refurbish the existing elevators to the Founders Club.

Last fall, Alabama unveiled a 10-year, $600 million initiative called the Crimson Standard to upgrade the stadium, Coleman Coliseum, the Mal Moore Athletic Facility and other athletic facilities.

The plans for the stadium still include more premium seating options including an open-air terrace on the west side, the relocation of the press box to the east side, upgrades to the locker room and recruiting lounge, a renovation to the tunnel that the team uses to enter the field, and an extension of the Walk of Champions into the Game Day Locker Room via a new tunnel clad with video boards.
Alabama basketball coach talks games vs. in-state schools, the portal and priorities

By: Edwin Stanton

Alabama basketball vs. UAB?
The Crimson Tide taking on South Alabama?

It’s quite possible.

UA men’s basketball coach Nate Oats spoke Sunday at a luncheon for the Alabama Sports Writers Association and discussed several issues, including the possibility of scheduling games with in-state schools.

“We have talked about it,” Oats said. “We want to play as many in-state schools — it’s got to fit for us and for them. We may play Samford up there in Birmingham. I wouldn’t be opposed to playing South Alabama because that gets you down in the Mobile area where we have a big fan base.”

Alabama has played in-state games against the likes of Stillman, Alabama A&M and Alabama-Huntsville in recent years, all at Coleman Coliseum.

The Crimson Tide has played in Huntsville the past three years in the Rocket City Classic, but not against in-state opponents. Alabama also played Clemson in 2016 in Birmingham at the Vulcan Classic.

“Outside the small city of Auburn I think have a big fan base all over the state,” Oats joked. “I would be open to it. In the future I would not be opposed to that. It’s just got to make sense on both ends.

“We are just not going down to play a road game without getting something in return. If we can make it work, we are open to it for sure.”

Portal problems

Oats’ first weeks at Alabama were spent getting to know his players and dealing with the NCAA’s new “notification-of-transfer” model, more commonly known as the “transfer portal.” The new system allows athletes to inform their current school of a desire to transfer. Once their name is in the database, other coaches are free to contact them.

Several UA players put their name into the portal with two coming back to the team (guards John Petty and Kira Lewis) and a few others opting to leave (guards Dazon Ingram and Diante Wood, and forward Daniel Giddens). Guard Tevin Mack is still in the portal and hasn’t announced whether he will return to UA or enroll elsewhere.

“It makes it a little different,” Oats said. “I haven’t had a chance to make them mad yet, really. They may want to leave based on something else or they may want a fresh start with another coach and stay here.

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"I have a really good relationship with the guys that left, but I just sat them down — with the way we want to play, there was way too many bigs here that didn’t fit into what we were doing and they just weren’t going to play."

The challenge for getting athletes not to transfer, Oats said, depends a lot on playing time but also the environment.

"It’s huge now that you have to build a culture to where kids want to be in that culture and they are not looking for the ‘grass is greener’ situation," Oats said. "If they are not going to play, it makes it easier for them to go find a place where they are going to play. If you get a kid in here that is going to play, you have to build a culture to where he wants to stay. That’s what our plan is, and we have a great start on it."

First-year priorities

Oats spoke at great length about his blueprint for success at Alabama, which is basically the same template he used for four years at Buffalo.

It starts with building a solid roster.

"There wasn’t enough guards," Oats said of the situation at Alabama. "At Buffalo we started two-point guards, a combo guard, a 6-7 two-guard and four-man that could shoot. The roster wasn’t set up anything like that here. We want to play a lot faster and a lot more wide open, so we need to get the roster set."

Oats has taken those first steps in building a roster suited for his style, getting graduate transfer Beetle Bolden, Villanova transfer Jahvon Quinerly, and Hutchinson Community College transfer James Rojas and signee Raymond Hawkins.

"Moving forward we need to get started on getting some younger kids," Oats said. "We will have guys that won’t play (2019 season) and some will leave. We are planning on that happening. We are getting our eyes on some kids. We have to build a culture to where the guys realize how hard they are going to have to play and how fast we play. They don’t have any idea how hard it is. They are just not used to doing it at the pace that we do it. We have to get some guys in shape and guys that are willing to play at that pace."
Miss Alabama 2019: Tiara Pennington, Miss University of Alabama, takes the crown

By Mary Colurso | mcolurso@al.com

Tiara Pennington is the new Miss Alabama.

Pennington, 20, was crowned Saturday night at Samford University's Wright Center in Birmingham. She competed this year as Miss University of Alabama, besting 46 other contestants for the 2019 state title. Pennington will move on to represent Alabama at the Miss America competition.

She is the first African-American woman to hold the title of Miss University of Alabama.

Pennington takes over the role of Miss Alabama from Callie Walker, Miss Alabama 2018. Walker crowned her successor at the Wright Center on Saturday and presented her with a bouquet of roses.

The yearlong reign of the new Miss Alabama starts immediately. She'll make public appearances, do charity work, speak to community groups, motivate students and more. Pennington's philanthropic platform (now called a "social impact initiative") is National Psoriasis Foundation: Psoriasis Take Action Alabama.

"It's amazing," Pennington said backstage after her win. "I'm just so happy and thankful to be Miss Alabama. ... The title means to me empowering young women to conquer their dreams and go for their goals, and not to be afraid of achievement, and not to be afraid of success. And I'm going to cherish every moment of this."

Pennington admitted to being rather overwhelmed when she realized the title was hers.

"Tonight when they called out my name, just an overwhelming feeling of emotions just poured over me," she said. "Just to see my mom and my dad and my grandmother there, and my (pageant) directors there, just smiling and waving at me was amazing, and I'll remember that forever."

Pennington, a political science major at the University of Alabama, was one of 12 semifinalists chosen on Saturday, competing in talent, evening wear/social impact and interview segments. For talent, she sang "Nessun Dorma" from the opera "Turandot," repeating a performance that gave her the top score in a talent preliminary competition on Wednesday.

Three rounds of preliminary contests for Miss Alabama took place Wednesday through Friday at the Wright Center, giving all 47 contestants a chance to strut their
stuff in talent, evening wear and on-stage interview segments. Scores received in the preliminaries were used to create a composite score that was considered by the judges on Saturday.

"I worked really hard and hard work definitely does pay off," Pennington said. "I came into this week knowing that I was prepared and ready to do the job. And so now that I am Miss Alabama, I'm ready to just step into that role and enjoy the ride."

The swimsuit competition was eliminated this year in the preliminaries and finals, for the first time in Miss Alabama history. Another first: Each contestant made a 10-second statement about her social impact initiative during the evening-wear segments. In the past, contestants walked across the stage in evening wear, but didn't speak during that part of the program.

Scoring in the Miss Alabama finals was based on the following categories: talent, 30 percent; on-stage interview, 25 percent; composite score from preliminaries, 25 percent; evening wear/social impact, 20 percent.

Although glitzy on-stage activity is the most public aspect of the Miss Alabama pageant, there's significant scholarship money at stake behind the scenes.

Cash scholarships in various categories are awarded to contestants during pageant week, totaling $116,275 this year, according to the Miss Alabama pageant guide.

The title of Miss Alabama comes with a $10,000 scholarship. The first runner-up receives $3,500; the second runner-up receives $3,000; the third runner-up gets $2,500; the fourth-runner up receives $2,000, all in scholarship money.

Seven semi-finalists earn $1,250 each in scholarship money. The remaining 35 contestants receive $1,000 each for competing in the pageant. More than 50 other cash scholarships, in sums of $100-$2,000, are awarded by the pageant's scholarship committee.

This week's preliminary talent winners will receive $450 each in scholarship money, according to the pageant guide. Winners in the evening wear/social impact preliminaries will receive $300 each in scholarship money.

Several colleges and universities in the state also offer in-kind scholarships to the winner and other contestants, paying tuition, fees and other expenses.

Annie Ozment, Miss Friendliest City, was the winner of the Catherine Crosby Community Service Award, which offers $2,000 in scholarship money. First runner-up was Isabella Powell, Miss Camellia, who received $1,250. Second runner-up was Caitlyn McTier, Miss Tuscaloosa, who received $750.

A STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) award went to Lillie-Ann Dawson, Miss UAB, who received $1,000 in scholarship money. The runner-up, Maggie Jones, Miss Walker County, received $500.
Courtney Porter Orazine, Miss Alabama 2011, was the emcee for Saturday's program.

Judges for this year were David Blackledge, a banker who's the board chairman and executive director of the Miss Mississippi Corp.; Earl Coleman, a singer, violinist and teacher at Columbus State University; Yolande Dolly Fox, an actress, producer and the daughter of the late Yolande Betbeze Fox, a Mobile native who became Miss Alabama 1950 and Miss America 1951; Marlesa Ball Greiner, a singer, choreographer and Miss Georgia 1986; and Kim Wimmer Totty, an actress, singer and Miss Alabama 1992.

Production numbers at this year's competition were set to songs recorded by Alabama artists or tunes with Alabama themes, in honor of the Alabama Bicentennial. They included "All Night Long (All Night)" by Lionel Richie, "Heat Wave" by Martha and the Vandellas and "Do I Make You Proud," the "American Idol" winner's ballad for Taylor Hicks.
IN BRIEF

UA student named
Miss Alabama 2019

A University of Alabama student has earned the 2019 Miss Alabama title. Tiara Pennington, a Helena native, competed as Miss University of Alabama during the competition held June 8 at Samford University in Birmingham.

A total of 47 women vied for the Miss Alabama title. Pennington will go on to represent the state in the Miss America competition.

Pennington is a political science major at UA. In November 2018, she became the first black woman to earn the title of Miss University of Alabama.

Pennington was previously crowned Miss Alabama's Outstanding Teen in 2016 and was first runner-up in the 2018 Miss Alabama pageant.
Spots open for UA forensic science camp

By Stephanie Taylor
Staff Writer

Dusting for fingerprints and examining blood splatter are some of the skills students will learn in this summer’s Forensic Science camp.

Spots are still open for middle and high school students who want hands-on experience learning forensic science techniques. Two sessions of the camp run by the University of Alabama’s Office of Archaeological Research will be held in July.

“The program provides an atmosphere that will challenge and stimulate the participants to be career- and college-ready,” said Lindsey Gordon, a cultural resources analyst for the OAR.

The experience is a good springboard for kids interested in studying forensic science, anthropology, sociology, human biology and criminal justice, she said, and provides interaction with UA professors and working professionals.

Participants will use their new skills to collect evidence and solve case based on an actual criminal investigation.

Topics covered include forensic anthropology and odontology, crime scene sketching and analysis, trace evidence and print analysis and forensic profiling.

“Students will leave the program with a better understanding of the world of forensic science and how UA Museums and the College of Arts and Sciences can help them on their career path and opportunities for professional success,” Gordon said.

The five-day camp held on the UA campus is $275 for participants who register before June 30, with discounts offered for children of UA faculty and staff.

The session for middle-schoolers runs from July 8-12 with the high school session going from July 22-26.

Contact Gordon at fgordon@ua.edu for more information.
LEAP program exposes rising high-schoolers to community service

By Drew Taylor | Staff Writer

For Victoria Whitfield, college is about more than just academics.

On Tuesday, Whitfield, the director of Early College at the University of Alabama, and dozens of rising high school freshmen put that idea into practice as they worked at the West Alabama Food Bank, unloading food from trucks onto pallets.

The day was part of the weeklong LEAP camp, or Leaders Exploring Academic Possibilities, which prepares students for college life and the academics they plan to pursue. However, Tuesday marked a different aspect of the program.

"Colleges are looking for well-rounded students," Whitfield said. "Yes, they are looking for students who are academically strong, but they're looking for students also who are doing other things outside of academics."

For Whitfield, community service is an activity students can do years before college is on their horizon.

"We wanted them to see some areas where they could get involved as they got prepared for high school," she said.

Kennae Hales, who will be attending Northside High School as a ninth-grader, said that before Tuesday, she was not aware the food bank existed, but was happy to help out.

"I like feeling like I'm doing something," Hales said.

Claire Markham, a homeschooled student who is a part of the University Church Christian Academy, said being able to help out in the community can become another part of her life.

"Once we get out of college, we can maybe deal with situations where we can help out," she said.

Reach Drew Taylor at drew.taylor@tuscaloosanews.com or 205-722-0204.
The 2019 legislative session is now in the books. As each session is observed, it is apparent that, primarily, powerful state senators control the flow and outcome of any and all legislative sessions.


But the annals of political history reveal powerful state senators in every era. Some of the most prominent include: Roland Cooper, the “Wily Fox from Wilcox,” Joe Goodwyn of Montgomery, Walter Givhan of Dallas County, Ryan DeGraffenreid Sr. of Tuscaloosa and later his son, Ryan Jr., also of Tuscaloosa. The legendary Sen. Bob Wilson Sr. of Jasper was powerful in his day.

Others on the list include Jimmy Clark of Barbour as a senator and speaker of the House; the legendary Rankin Fite of Marion County, a senator and speaker of the House; Joe McCorquodale of Clarke County, who was speaker for more than a decade; Pete Turnham and Bo Torbert of Lee County; Rick Manley of Marengo was brilliant. Lowell Barron of Fyffe, Roger Bedford of Russellville, and Hank Sanders of Selma would be on the list, as well, along with former speaker of the House, Seth Hammett of Covington County.

However, as powerful as all of the aforementioned were, perhaps the title of “Most Powerful Legislator” should go to state Sen. James Titus of Madison. Almost all of you are scratching your head and saying who in the world is James Titus? Let me share with you the James Titus story and place in Alabama history.

When the Alabama territory was created by Congress in 1817, the Act provided that the new legislature would be made up of members of the Mississippi Territorial Legislature, who resided in what was to become Alabama. There were 10 men serving in the Mississippi House of Representatives and three in the Senate.

Before the new legislature convened at St. Stephens in January 1818, one of these senators had resigned and a second was unable to attend the session. Only James Titus was present for that first legislative session.

Some men might have been reluctant to conduct business under the circumstances, but not James Titus. He had not made the long journey from Huntsville to St. Stephens for nothing and
he took his responsibilities seriously. He called the Senate to order, called the roll, organized the Senate, nominated and elected himself as presiding officer, voted on all bills and at the end of the day, made the motion to adjourn. He was in essence a one-man senate.

Folks, there have been powerful legislators in our colorful and illustrious political history, but none will ever have the power that Sen. Titus had.

Speaking of powerful senators, our senior U.S. Sen. Richard Shelby has reached a pinnacle unsurpassed in Alabama political history. In March, Sen. Shelby passed the legendary Sen. John Sparkman for length of service in the U.S. Senate from Alabama. Shelby has now served 32 years and five months. Sparkman’s record was 32 years and three months.

In my 2015 book, “Of Goats and Governors: Six Decades of Colorful Alabama Political Stories,” I have a chapter titled Alabama’s three greatest U.S. senators. Sens. Lister Hill, John Sparkman and Shelby have been the greatest. However, if I were writing the chapter today, Shelby would be in a league of his own as the most powerful U.S. senator in Alabama history.

Hill and Sparkman were powerful and left a legacy. Hill’s is in medical research and rural hospitals throughout the nation and Alabama. Sparkman was the father of the Redstone Arsenal in Huntsville and delivered hallmark legislation that afforded housing for Americans as chairman of the Banking and Housing Committee.

Shelby during his 32-plus years in the Senate has chaired the Banking Committee, Intelligence Committee and Rules Committee. However, his current perch as chairman of the Appropriations Committee is unparalleled. Alabama has never had a chairman of the U.S. Senate Appropriations Committee, and more than likely never will again.

Meanwhile, the race for the 2020 U.S. Senate is developing very slowly. The Republican field is smaller than what was expected at this point. If someone is going to run they better go ahead and get going. The primaries are just around the corner in early March of next year.

The only serious announced candidates thus far are 1st District Congressman Bradley Byrne and former Auburn football coach Tommy Tuberville. Within the next few weeks, however, Secretary of State John Merrill and former Chief Justice Roy Moore are expected to enter the GOP field, which would change the dynamics of the race to replace Democratic Sen. Doug Jones.

Steve Flowers served 16 years in the Alabama Legislature. Readers can email him at steve@steveflowers.us.
State increases university spending

Some colleges did better than others in 2020 budget

By Mary Sell
Alabama Daily News

Alabama's public four-year universities will receive funding increases of between about 6% and more than 12% under the 2020 education budget recently approved by lawmakers.

Tuscaloosa campus, Athens State University, the University of North Alabama, Jacksonville State University, Troy University, the University of Montevallo, the University of South Alabama and the University of West Alabama.

That money represented less than half a percent of universities' total allocations, but the process was enough to give some leaders pause.

"I think all of higher education is happy with where we ended up," Alabama Commission on Higher Education Executive Director Jim Purcell said Wednesday.

During the budgeting process, some university officials and lawmakers had expressed frustration over how this year's proposed budget included additional money for a few institutions that had previously been underfunded.

Purcell had said ACHE was attempting to fix "egregious inequities in funding."

A "peer-gap adjustment formula" this year attempted to compare universities' funding to others nationwide with similar missions and student bodies and attempted to make adjustments, giving some schools additional bumps in funding. The biggest winners were the University of Alabama's

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In the final budget, Auburn's total funding increase is 6.5%, according to ACHE. The university saw a 9% increase in its operations and maintenance funding, Auburn public affairs executive director Brian Keeter said.

"Throughout this process, our message was and continues to be about equitable funding for higher education in the state, and we're confident it was ultimately achieved," Keeter said Wednesday.

"... Moving forward, we're grateful that legislative leadership and budget chairs have committed to including Auburn in discussions on alternative budget models for the future."

In the end, lawmakers set aside a $5 million pot of money that could be allocated to universities that show their peer-gap comparisons weren't accurate or fair.

Senate education budget committee member Sen. Rodger Smitherman, D-Birmingham, also raised concerns about the peer-gap process in April, but on Wednesday said he was comfortable with the $5 million equalization fund.

"I do think the process needs to be reviewed," Smitherman said.

Purcell said six or seven schools have asked for "tweaks" in the pool of universities in their peer groups. Those changes would mean more funding for them.

Purcell said the process would be reviewed before ACHE makes funding recommendations for the 2021 budget. He said ACHE plans to continue the additional funding in future budgets for universities that have been underfunded.

Several lawmakers have agreed that, historically, higher education funding has been based less on need and more on a school's ability to lobby in Montgomery.

Purcell also said funding since the recession hasn't kept up with enrollment at some universities.

Of the 14 public universities, six have seen enrollment declines since 2009, according to ACHE. They are Alabama State University, Athens State University, Auburn University Montgomery, Jacksonville State University, Troy University and the University of Montevallo.

Some lawmakers want to go beyond peer-review to a system where at least some state funding is based on universities'
performances, including graduation rates.

"The plan is to get the universities all on the same level based on their peers around the country, and then from there move to outcome-based funding," Senate education budget committee chairman Sen. Arthur Orr, R-Decatur, said Wednesday.

He said universities would help decide what criteria they're judged on and that a "bonus pot" of money could be used to encourage them to hit performance targets.

"We don't want to penalize schools, but we certainly don't want to keep rewarding them through the budget process," Orr said.

Smitherman, a board of trustee at the University of Montevallo, questions how to get apples-to-apples comparisons of universities' performances, especially when some serve more low-income and first-generation students.

"You need to have the same tools to work with if you're going to test them equally for the same results," Smitherman said.

Other lawmakers have pushed for performance-based funding for years.

"I'd personally like to see it move faster, but starting off with peer groups was a small step," Sen. Larry Stutts, R-Tuscumbia said. His district includes the University of North Alabama.

As of Wednesday afternoon, the governor's office was still reviewing the $7.1 billion 2020 education budget and she hadn't signed it. Purcell said he hopes the additional money in the upcoming fiscal year means universities won't have tuition cost increases. Several have already said they will not.
 Ala. ends ‘emotionally charged’ session

Lawmakers were busy with controversial issues

By Kim Chandler and Blake Paterson
The Associated Press

MONTGOMERY — Alabama lawmakers ended a sometimes contentious and fast-paced legislative session Friday that included enacting a near-total ban on abortion and raising the state gasoline tax to fund road and bridge construction.

Fresh off the 2018 elections, lawmakers did not shy from controversial issues in their first meeting of the four-year term.

"We addressed some tough issues and we didn't turn our back. The members in this chamber made some tough votes this year," House Speaker Mac McCutcheon said Friday night after lawmakers adjourned.

On the opening day of the 2019 legislative session, Alabama Gov. Kay Ivey immediately called a special session focused on approving a 10-cent gasoline tax increase to fund road and bridge construction.

Lawmakers later approved a near-total ban on abortion as some conservative states seek to mount new challenges to Roe v. Wade, the U.S. Supreme Court's landmark decision that legalized abortion nationwide.

It is anticipated the Alabama ban will be blocked by a judge before it takes effect in November, but supporters said their goal is to spark a legal case that goes all the way to the Supreme Court.

"It's to address the issue that Roe v. Wade was decided on. Is that baby in the womb a person?" said Rep. Terri Collins, the Decatur Republican who sponsored the bill.

The measure was hailed by abortion opponents who hope new conservative justices appointed to the court by President Donald Trump will lead to Roe being overturned.

But the hardline measure, which contains no exceptions for rape and incest, landed the state as the butt of a "Saturday Night Live" skit and had some national Republicans distancing themselves from Alabama by reiterating their support for those exceptions.

"It gave Alabama a black eye across the nation in how we spoke to women in this state," Senate Minority Leader Bobby Singleton said.

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Rep. Merika Coleman, a Democrat from Pleasant Grove, said the abortion ban was the low point of the session.

"It was an emotionally charged session," Coleman said.

Lawmakers also approved significant education changes. Alabamians will decide next year whether to abolish the elected state school board and replace it with an appointed commission, under a proposed constitutional amendment. The proposal was championed both by Ivey and Senate President Pro Tem Del Marsh.

Another measure would require third graders to meet reading benchmarks before moving to fourth grade. The bill also spells out initiatives, such as requiring regional reading specialists to work with struggling students, to boost test scores.

"I think we'll look back on this session as one of the most productive," said Marsh, a Republican from Anniston.

Alabama lawmakers also established an equal pay law that says business should not pay workers less than employees of another race or sex for the same work unless there are reasons such as seniority, a merit system or productivity to account for the difference.

Rep. Adline Clarke, the legislation sponsor, said the bill was not as strong as she would have liked. Alabama and Mississippi had been the two states without a pay equity law.

Lawmakers left Montgomery Friday expecting to return sometime in the fall for a special session on the state prison system.

The U.S. Department of Justice in April threatened to sue the state over prison conditions, saying Alabama houses male inmates in critically understaffed prisons with unconstitutional levels of violence and inmate deaths.

U.S. Attorney Jay Town, who is handling negotiations between the Justice Department and the state, said the department is working with Alabama on "a multitude of issues to determine if the state can satisfactorily address the identified constitutional deficiencies."

Town said he remains hopeful "litigation will be unnecessary."

Lawmakers in the regular session approved a pay raise for corrections officers and a funding increase for the prison system, but could consider sentencing reform, prison construction and other measures.

"It's top of the priority list," McCutcheon said.
Alabama governor pushes to abolish elected school board

By: Associated Press

Alabama Gov. Kay Ivey on Monday urged voters to approve a proposal to abolish the elected state school board and replace it with an appointed commission.

The governor said she is urging every Alabamian to support the constitutional amendment, which will go before voters next year. Her office called the effort the “Take the Lead, Alabama” initiative, saying it “will shake up how we do things in our state to improve educational outcomes for students in every region.”

“As a former teacher, I recognize that strong leadership and a strong plan are necessary components to improving our education system,” Ivey said in a statement.

Ivey has championed the change that supporters say is aimed at ensuring education experts are making education policy decisions. Only a few states have elected state boards. Critics, including current board member Stephanie Bell, have disparaged the proposal as a power grab.

The proposed new nine-member Alabama Commission on Elementary and Secondary Education would consist of members — including one from each congressional district — appointed by the governor and confirmed by the Senate. The commission would appoint a state education secretary who would replace the current state superintendent of education. The position would also have to be confirmed by the Senate.

Commission members would serve six-year staggered terms.

The proposal says the governor “shall ensure” that the commission membership reflects the geographical, gender, and racial diversity of the public school enrollment. Ivey on Monday signed related legislation that says the governor must consult with minority legislative caucuses when appointing minority commission members.

Alabamians will vote on the proposal on March 3, 2020, the same day as the presidential and U.S. Senate primaries.

The Alabama Legislature approved the constitutional amendment in lopsided votes, but critics said they thought it would interject politics or remove voters from decisions.

Bell, a longtime member of the Alabama Board of Education, told The Associated Press last month that elected board members must be responsive to people in their district.
According to the National Association of State Boards of Education, as of last year Alabama was one of seven states with an elected board. Another state has a board that is partially elected and partially appointed.

The proposal before voters also includes a directive for the new commission to set new study standards to replace Common Core curriculum standards.

Common Core is a set of standards delineating what benchmarks students must reach in math and English at the completion of each grade level. The standards were developed by the National Governors Association and adopted by 40 states. But they became a frequent target of Republicans after President Barack Obama’s administration pushed states to adopt them.
MONTGOMERY — Alabama voters will decide next year whether they want to abolish the elected state school board and replace it with a commission appointed by the governor.

The House of Representatives voted 78-21 Friday for the proposed constitutional amendment that will go before voters next year. Gov. Kay Ivey and Senate President Pro Tem Del Marsh championed the effort. Alabama is one of only a handful of states that have an elected school board.

"Our current system is simply not working. Statistics prove that. However, through this bold change, I am confident that Alabama will have a system that will work more effectively for our students and educators," Ivey said in a statement.

Supporters of the measure cited the state's historically low standardized test scores as evidence of the need for a change. Opposed lawmakers questioned exactly how an appointed board would accomplish that, and said other factors, such as education funding, were responsible.

"Alabama is one of the places in the world where hypocrisy and stupidity dwell so comfortably together," Rep. Chris England, a Democrat from Tuscaloosa, said.

Three Republicans joined with some Democrats in opposing the measure.

"We don't really know if this is going to help or not," Republican Rep. Andrew Sorrell of Muscle Shoals said. "If citizens are the ones that elect

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the governor, certainly they are qualified to elect their own school board."

The proposed new nine-member Alabama Commission on Elementary and Secondary Education would consist of members—including one from each congressional district—appointed by the governor and confirmed by the Senate. The commission would appoint a state education secretary who would replace the state superintendent. The position would also have to be confirmed by the Senate.

The legislation says the governor "shall ensure" that the commission membership reflects the geographical, gender, and racial diversity of the public school enrollment. Members would serve six-year staggered terms.

Republican Rep. Bill Poole, who shepherded the bill in the House, said the goal is have education experts crafting the state’s education policies and making decisions related to K-12 schools.

The proposal would also potentially enable Ivey, who would make all of the initial appointments, to place a large stamp on education policy along with the Republican-dominated Alabama Senate who would confirm the appointments.

Poole argued the goal is to shift away from politics that come with elections.

“My goal is not to cast education policy in the light of Republican or Democrat, but rather put experienced knowledgeable people who understand education issues, who understand the challenges in Alabama and understand the things we need to accomplish in the state and let them make the decisions based upon those factors and not political factors," Poole said.

The legislation also includes a directive for the new commission to set new study standards "in lieu of Common Core" curriculum standards.

Poole said it will be the commission's decision to determine those. He said they could choose to keep the state's current standards, which are derived from Common Core.

The Common Core standards are math and English benchmarks adopted by more than 40 states to describe what students should know after completing each grade. The standards were developed by the National Governors Association but became a frequent target of Republicans after the Obama administration pushed states to adopt them.

Alabamians will vote on the proposal on March 3, 2020, the same day as the presidential and U.S. Senate primaries.
Alabama is getting 164 new Pre-K classrooms

By: Lily Jackson

State pre-kindergarten could expand by 164 classrooms, and 21,000 children, this fall.

The first round of grants from the Alabama Department of Early Childhood Education serve as one step closer to Gov. Kay Ivey's goal of serving up to 70 percent of eligible 4-year-olds statewide. The expansions will add classrooms to 38 counties in the 2019-2020 school year; the total will be 1,202 classrooms.

In addition to student eligibility and service, the expansion for First Class Pre-K -- the largest single-year expansion ever passed by the Alabama legislature -- will include a 4 percent pay raise for teachers.

"Alabama’s First Class Pre-K program is truly the model of the nation," Ivey said in a press release. "By adding 164 classrooms, we are ensuring more of our youngest learners are getting a strong start to their educational journeys, which will lead them to an even stronger finish in their careers."

More grants are to be rewarded, according to the office, as need-based situations arise.
Alabama student loan debt in top 10

Average student debt in state is nearly $36,000, exceeds family income

William Thornton wthornton@al.com

Student debt is rising nationwide, as is Alabama’s share. Experian is out with an analysis that says Alabama is among the top 10 states in the nation with the largest five-year increase in student debt.

According to the consumer credit reporting firm, the average student loan debt in Alabama is $35,674. That’s an increase of 3.3 percent from 2018, but it’s a whopping 30.9 percent increase over the last five years. According to Experian, Americans carry an average of $35,359 in student loan debt. That represents a 26 percent increase in five years and a 2 percent increase compared with the first quarter of 2018.

A survey last year found Alabama 9th in the nation among states where the debt loads of public college graduates are the highest, and one of only five states where average debt exceeds family income.

Drill down to the local level, and five Alabama metro areas are among the top 50 in the nation with the highest average student debt. No. 1 on the list is no surprise — Durham, North Carolina, where Duke and the University of North Carolina are within an eight-mile radius.

At No. 11 is Montgomery, with an average of more than $42,000 in student debt. That amount has grown 7.1 percent over the last year.

Tuscaloosa checks in at No. 15, with almost $41,000 of debt. At No. 40 is Huntsville, with around $38,000, followed closely by Birmingham at No. 41, and the Auburn-Opelika area checks in at No. 48 with $37,800 in debt. Of the top 50, 26 metro areas were located in the South.

For perspective, the New York City area, which also encompasses parts of New Jersey and Pennsylvania, ranks 27th with about $39,700 in debt.

Nationally, student debt ranks behind mortgage debt, representing $1.4 trillion of the economy. A decade ago, student loan debt accounted for $650 billion.
Incentives bill aims to help rural and struggling urban Alabama areas

By: Will Whatley

MONTGOMERY — A bill aimed to spur job growth in rural and urban areas of the state has been signed into law by Gov. Kay Ivey.

Sponsored by Rep. Bill Poole, R-Tuscaloosa, House Bill 540, dubbed the Alabama Incentives Modernization (AIM) Act, is a set of tax incentives designed to enhance development in counties that are experiencing slow economic conditions and to help bring new technology companies to the state. Proponents of the legislation say it enhances current incentives, encourages investments in so-called “opportunity zones,” and offers a capital gains tax cut for tech companies moving to Alabama.

“I think the title signals its importance in terms of modernizing some of our incentives on a couple of levels,” Poole said. “First of all, we want to make sure the existing incentive programs across the state are allowing areas to be eligible, but we also want to open up the industry areas to make sure that technology, research and knowledge-based jobs, industries and investments can be eligible as well.”

The bill passed unanimously in the Alabama House of Representatives and the Senate each time it came up for a vote.

There are also federal “opportunity zones” across the state which are also eligible for incentives. These areas are generally ones that are struggling financially. Poole said this bill will add a layer to those federal incentives in hopes of enticing industry and businesses from outside the state to relocate to these struggling areas. These “opportunity zones” were created when Congress passed the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017.

Additionally, the bill expands the number of rural counties that can qualify for incentives under the Alabama Jobs Act that was passed in 2015. Previously, counties had to have 25,000 or fewer people to be considered rural; under the AIM Act, counties with 50,000 or fewer people now qualify.

Previously, the counties that qualified for rural economic incentives were Greene, Perry, Lowndes, Bullock, Wilcox, Coosa, Conecuh, Sumter, Choctaw, Clay, Censhaw, Lamar, Hale, Cleburne, Washington, Fayette, Henry, Macon, Marengo, Butler, Pickens, Monroe, Bibb, Randolph, Winston, Clarke and Barbour.

Now, Cherokee, Geneva, Marion, Franklin, Lawrence, Pike, Chambers, Escambia, Covington, Dallas, Tallapoosa, Chilton and Dale counties also qualify, according to the Alabama Department of Labor. That’s 40 out of Alabama’s 67 counties.

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Sen. Arthur Orr, R-Decatur, amended the bill in a Senate committee so that the investment credit can be used in “jump-start counties.” According to the bill, a jump-start county has:

- A population more than 50,000
- Negative population growth in the past five years
- Less than two federal opportunity zones

According to Orr and the Legislative Services Agency, those counties, based on the most recent data, are: Etowah, Jackson, Lauderdale, Morgan, Russell, Talladega and Walker counties.

“It will give them the enhanced incentives like a rural county to help them grow,” Orr said this week. “If counties are not growing, it’s a problem.”

Separately, Orr’s amendment allows local economic development organization to apply to the Alabama Department of Commerce for infrastructure improvements at industrial or research parks and capital improvements or economic development activities at inland port or intermodal facilities.

Under the AIM Act, incentives such as investment and tax credits will be awarded to companies that bring in at least 10 new jobs to a county that has had sluggish job growth and a declining population. It also creates specific incentives for tech companies, which would only need to create at least five jobs to qualify for the investment and tax credits.

The act also eliminates the tax on capital gains for investors and employees of technology companies that move to Alabama if they relocate to the state at least three years before being sold, and stay for five years after the company is sold.

“Job creation is one of the top priorities of the Legislature and we have, and will continue to do anything we can to create economic development opportunities that benefit our rural communities and in turn benefit the entire state of Alabama,” Senate President Pro Tem Del Marsh, R-Anniston, said.

Alexander Flachsbart, founder and CEO of the nonprofit Opportunity Alabama, is excited about the new law.

“This thing does a lot more than opportunity zones,” Flachsbart said. “It helps make major capital investments in rural communities, it’ll make major industrial projects more attractive, it creates a whole new tax regime around capital gains. It does a whole lot of really great things for the state of Alabama. It’s truly remarkable that we have in Alabama the first impact-oriented incentives regime around opportunity zones in the U.S.”

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Flachsbart added that, in terms of a return on investment, the state could in theory realize a growth in revenue from these projects and investments coming into Alabama.

One project specifically mentioned in the AIM Act is the planned 5,000-seat, 15,000-square-foot multi-function agriculture event facility to be built in Clanton. Matthew Durdin, director of external affairs for the Alabama Farmers Federation, said the Farm Center at Centennial Park will be able to host events ranging from rodeos and animal expositions to home and garden and car shows.

Clanton and Chilton County are rural, but located within a 60-mile range of 1.2 million Alabamians. Durdin said the center’s aim was to bring in not only Alabamians, but people from the region and around the country as well to come visit and spend money in central Alabama.

“The Alabama Farmers Federation’s 100th anniversary in 2021, so to give back to our members, we planned this farm center in Clanton,” Durdin said. “Our project is calling for 11 total structures out there. We estimate there could be possibly 230 show days at the park.”

Durdin expects for the park to initially open by August 2021 and eventually be completed sometime around the fall of 2022.
Tuscaloosa Civil Rights trail unveiled

By Drew Taylor

Thomas Linton has seen a lot in his life. Linton, the longtime owner of Linton's Barbershop on T.Y. Rogers Jr. Avenue, remembers June 9, 1964, when police officers beat and arrested protesters who were raising their voices against segregation. He remembers how few grocery stores in Tuscaloosa employed black people in the 1960s, causing him and others to start boycotting the stores until the owners changed their ways. Now, Linton is happy to know that the new 18-stop Tuscaloosa Civil Rights History Trail will tell the story of the civil rights movement in the city.

The sites on the trail range from the old jail where blacks were lynched to the church that was the focal point of civil rights activity in the 1960s and places that commemorate black artistic achievements. “I think it’s great that the city and everyone got involved,” Linton said Monday during a special ceremony commemorating the trail at Dinah Washington Cultural Arts Center. “Civil rights is about what happened and a lot of times, people don’t know what happened.”

The trail was the culmination of a couple of years of research and hundreds of interviews with people, conducted by members of the Tuscaloosa Civil Rights History Task Force. Scott Bridges, president of the group, said it is important to document some of the intense times that Tuscaloosa went through during the civil rights movement. “It (segregation) was a terrible mistake and demands a responsible and committed review because history is a resource of patterns,” Bridges said. “Our understanding of these patterns helps us reshape the future. “If we do not know and understand these patterns, how can we understand today's racial issues?”
Protective Life closes on $1.2 billion acquisition

By: William Thornton

Protective Life Corp. has closed on a $1.2 billion acquisition, the largest for the company to date.

Protective Life Insurance Co., and Protective Life & Annuity Insurance Co., has completed the transaction with Great-West Life & Annuity Insurance Co., acquiring its individual life and annuity business. The deal was announced back in January.

The business being transferred includes bank-owned and corporate-owned life insurance, single premium life insurance, individual annuities, and a portion of Great-West’s closed block life insurance and annuities. GWL&A is retaining a block of participating policies, which will now be administered by Protective.

Protective President and CEO Richard Bielen said it is “an exciting time in Protective’s history.”

“The addition of this seasoned, stable block of business diversifies our product mix, while providing strategic opportunities in the bank distribution channel and competitive positioning in new markets,” he said. "We look forward to the opportunity to serve more customers.”

This is the fourth acquisition completed since Protective became part of Dai-ichi Life Holdings in 2015.

Morgan Stanley & Co. acted as financial advisor to Protective for the transaction and Willkie Farr & Gallagher LLP acted as legal counsel.
Dreamland’s ‘Big Daddy’ joining BBQ hall of fame, ‘would be overjoyed,’ says daughter

By: Mark Hughes Cobb

Every barbecue mecca, roadside pit and backyard cookout claims fame through flavor and savor, zest and tang springing from tomatoes, mustards, vinegar, assorted spices and an always-secret ingredient or two, whether buried in a pit, dry-rubbed and hickory smoked, or deep-basted and cooked low and slow.

All barbecue lures with taste, but Dreamland added a face.

The beaming mug of John “Big Daddy” Bishop adorns countless T-shirts, sauce jars, hats, mugs, basting brushes, gift boxes, billboards, signage and just about anything and everything associated with the business he envisioned originally as a neighborhood cafe, offering cheeseburgers, fried fish, ribs, sandwiches and more. Though Bishop and wife Lillie, by family accounts the real cook, both died in 1997, their story continues to resonate.

It wasn’t just flavors, but the family tale, and the fame that rode along with it, influencing the selection of Bishop to this year’s class of Barbecue Hall of Fame members. His name joins fellow inductees C.B. Stubblefield, of Stubb’s Bar-B-Q, from Lubbock and Austin, Texas; and Wayne Monk, of Lexington Barbecue, Lexington, N.C., at a ceremony Sept. 14, during the American Royal World Series of Barbecue at the Kansas Speedway in Kansas City. Previous inductees include luminaries diverse as Henry Ford, Guy Fieri and multiple grand-championship winner Chris Lilly.

“When I heard that, that made my day,” said Jeanette Bishop-Hall, daughter of the founders. “That was really something. If he was here, he would be overjoyed.”

Bishop’s God-denominated vision lives on in the south Tuscaloosa neighborhood of Jerusalem Heights, where he built not only that first restaurant, but also homes for his family. Following explosive growth in the ‘80s fueled partly by sports-media attention, Dreamland and Big Daddy’s face now shine from nine other standalone versions throughout the South, at stadiums including Bryant-Denny, and in the palate-memories of everyone who’s drooled over the world-famous ribs, said by a long-ago patron to “make your tongue want to slap your brains out.”

It’s hardly the first national recognition for 60-plus-year-old Dreamland, one of the inaugural members of the Alabama Barbecue Hall of Fame, lauded from Forbes to USA Today to Southern Living to The New York Times as one of the most distinctive flavors in a field overripe with variations, boasts and claims.

But this particular honor points specifically to John Bishop Sr., and history behind the humble-appearing, now-legendary rib shack, planted in a hand-built spot originally outside the city proper, on a hill teeming with pine, far from other commerce. That original location still stands, not much altered by time, save for the addition of air-conditioning, more signed photos from celebrity guests, framed copies of various periodicals’ praises and awards, and a varied array of merchandising emblazoned with the often-crimson Big Daddy logo, his genial visage topped by a simple white cap, pipe cocked off to one side. License plates, signed dollar bills and Bishop’s

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infamous warning signs — No Profanity, No Dancing, No Farting — continue to adorn the walls, and a pot-bellied stove still squats at the far corner from the entrance.

And the stories aren’t just found on the walls.

“You’ll be hard-pressed to find any other company that knows its history as well as our employees do,” said Jonathan Bird, directing of marketing for Dreamland. “The dishwashers, the servers, everyone knows about Mr. Bishop and his family, as it relates to Southern food culture, and Alabama. It’s really cool that story’s going to be told by his induction into the Hall of Fame.”

Greg Rempe, host of the BBQ Central Show, which first made the Hall of Fame inductee announcement, noted that while Memphis, Kansas City, Texas and the Carolinas are typically thought of as the meccas, Alabama’s claims to barbecue fame continue to grow.

“I think people want to maybe put Alabama in a region,” Rempe said. “And when you talk about Alabama barbecue, there are two names that always come up: Big Bob Gibson in Decatur, and Big Daddy at Dreamland.”

Barbecue Hall of Fame inductees come from yearlong lists of nominations, studied and scaled down by a nominating committee, said Emily Park, manager of the American Royal, a Kansas nonprofit founded in 1899 that sponsors livestock, rodeo and horse shows, in addition to its World Series of Barbecue, the group’s biggest fundraiser. The hall’s just six years old, and inducts three new members yearly, including not only pitmasters and business owners but also writers about barbecue, media personalities and more.

“This year we had about 85 nominations, including 50 unique ones,” Park said. The nominating team asks how the person has impacted the world of barbecue: “Are they changing the landscape?”

Though Dreamland’s reputation preceded, the committee delved more into its history.

“Although we knew about Dreamland, it’s not really in our backyard, so it was great to learn more,” Park said. ”(Bishop) specifically, I think what was kind of unique to him was his story ... how he started this restaurant from the ground up, and turned it into this mega-house, the scope of it. He believed in his dream, and made it into his whole life, and his future family’s life.

“We’ve all talked about Dreamland, how that becomes the destination more than the city, the sought-after place.”

The induction ceremony will take place on a busy weekend, featuring 500 competing teams from around the world, Park said. Jeanette plans to represent her late father, and brother John may come as well, to take part in the black-apron ceremony, akin to the Master’s green jackets. Though the Hall of Fame doesn’t yet have a permanent bricks-and-mortar location, the American Royal’s in the process of moving to a new home, so Dreamland artifacts may someday reside there.

God whispers
Dreamland was built from ground up by a brickmason who wanted another way to earn his daily bread, envisioning originally a cafe and mortuary.

“My mother told him, ‘If you do that, I can’t do it!’ ‘But you’d make money both ways!’ ‘I can’t do it!,’” Jeanette said, laughing.

One day, walking grounds he’d purchased, upset because Miss Lillie didn’t share his vision for the funeral home, “He kept asking, ‘God, I don’t know why I brought this property,’ ” Jeanette said, recounting a story her father loved to share.

“He said God whispered in his ear to name the place Dreamland. He went and told Mom, and she wrote it down.”

Whenever Bishop would retell that tale, and he enjoyed doing so, often, he’d tear up.

“And my Daddy was not a crying man,” she said, “but it’s like he went back to that time. ‘God told me to name it Dreamland.’

“But just a cafe. No funeral home.”

Following instruction, the Bishops opened Dreamland in 1958, the same year another Tuscaloosa legend arose, as Paul W. “Bear” Bryant answered mama’s call for the head football coaching job at the University of Alabama. The Bear struggled a few seasons before catching fire, establishing the Crimson Tide’s dominance, winning national championships and, eventually, more games than anyone. Dreamland, meanwhile, took a bit longer to gain such prominence. While Jeanette and her brother John Jr. were still in school, the cafe cooked along with solid lunch crowds, and pretty good weekends. John Sr. continued working his day job, while Miss Lillie mostly took care of the cafe during daytimes.

“What people didn’t know,” Jeanette said, laughing, “Daddy couldn’t cook worth a damn. He’d work in the back pit, bum everything up, so we’d throw it out.

“My mom, that’s who it was. She taught all of us how to cook.”

All were living behind Dreamland, where John Sr. had built houses, so they’d get up mornings, start the fire going in the pit, and eat breakfast, sometimes potato chips and a Coke. John Sr. would ask his children just one question: Have you done your homework?

“The reason he’d ask, he’d say ‘I’m smart, but I want you to be smarter than me,’ ” Jeanette said.

The kids worked at the family business after school hours, but following graduation, went their own ways, John Jr. to California, Jeanette to Pittsburgh. John Jr. returned first, in the ’80s, as word-of-mouth had begun to buzz. Perhaps remembering his father’s admonition to grow smarter, John Jr. befriended the new coach who’d succeeded the Bear, Ray Perkins, and invited him out to his family’s little barbecue place. Coach Perkins not only became a regular, but began bringing teams, talking Dreamland up to media who’d descend on game days.

“That’s how it all got started, to tell you the truth,” Jeanette said. She moved back to Tuscaloosa, and the business, in 1987. What had been a neighborhood joint, its customers 99 percent black,
mostly from homes around the cafe, was rapidly becoming a nationally known phenomenon. Not just teams, not just the city, but visitors from everywhere, media personalities, other coaches and teams, began finding their way to Dreamland. Soon as tongues rolled back from brains, they talked it up.

“At the time I’d left home, there was no white traffic. By the time I moved back, there was hardly no BLACK traffic,” she said, laughing.

Big Daddy’s atmosphere

Though Miss Lillie remained the secret heart of flavors, the public side, the overall outlook of the place, that was Big Daddy’s joint.

“He set the atmosphere,” she said. “My daddy did not allow no bad talking.”

Even with opposing teams and fans piling in together on game days, Bishop kept large communal tables. He began posting those signs, about no profanity and so on. Many were originally hand-printed, on paper, but vandals kept stealing them for souvenirs, so Bishop reprinted them in hard plastic, the better to affix them to walls.

“ ‘You’re not going to badmouth nobody; everybody is going to eat together.’ By him not allowing no mess when they’d come up in there, it was just so loving,” Jeanette said. If he saw parents trying to corral children, he’d say “Let them kids run. That’s what they supposed to do.’ ”

Their success shocked the whole family, Jeanette not least.

“I asked Daddy, ‘When did it get like this?’ He said, ‘They just love me more, Jeanette,’ ” she said, laughing.

So when Jeanette sat down with attorneys, working to capitalize on the Dreamland name and fame, the logo idea came to her naturally: “Why not use Daddy’s face?”

After first copies of the logo arrived, wrapped around jars of sauce, John Sr. held one up, admiringly, and said “I told y’all I was pretty.” Miss Lillie was perfectly happy with John Sr. being the face. She didn’t like talking to reporters; her husband reveled in attention.

“She didn’t wanna take no pictures. ‘Let your Daddy have it.’ She would get mad; we hardly had any pictures of her,” Jeanette said.

When a billboard lit up by John Sr.’s face went up on the highway, people started calling Jeanette, telling her to come get her daddy: Something was wrong. John Sr. had pulled up alongside the highway in his station wagon, and was just sitting and staring. She pulled up behind, knocked on the car window.

“I said ‘What the hell is wrong with you?’ ” she said, laughing. “He said ‘Ain’t nothing wrong with me. You ain’t up that high.’ ”

Although he didn’t cry much, Big Daddy would sometimes burst into tears, wondering at how his dream had grown, become not only known, and successful, but famous and beloved.

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“He was not a crier, but he was so proud.”

Jeanette’s still trying to talk her brother into joining her at the ceremony.

“John, since he’s gotten older, he’s gotten a lot of Daddy’s little ways. He really looks like Daddy now,” she said. “I was telling John, ‘You should do it. You should really go.’

“He was grumbling, so he got that from Daddy.”
More Universities Shut Down Traditional M.B.A. Programs as Popularity Wanes

By: Kelsey Gee

The 42 University of Iowa graduates who got their master’s in business administration degrees in May marked the end of an era for 160-year-old Tippie College of Business: They were its last class of full-time M.B.A.s.

Tippie joins a growing list of U.S. business schools shutting down their flagship M.B.A. programs in favor of shorter, specialized masters and online degrees.

In May, the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and Stetson University in Florida said they would stop admitting new students to their full-time, on-campus M.B.A. programs, funneling resources instead to more popular online equivalents.

Applications to traditional M.B.A. programs have languished in a strong U.S. job market, declining last year even at Harvard Business School, Stanford University’s Graduate School of Business and other elite schools. Administrators say millennials, saddled with more college debt than previous generations, have grown more reluctant to leave jobs for a year or more to pursue one of the nation’s priciest degrees.

Between 2014 and 2018, the number of accredited full-time M.B.A. programs in the U.S. shrank 9% to 1,189, with schools reporting 119 fewer two-year degrees in the most recent survey by the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business. Wake Forest University and Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, commonly known as Virginia Tech, are among the others to recently cut their traditional M.B.A. programs.

Against that backdrop, shorter and more-flexible graduate business degrees have proliferated. At the business schools in the same survey, there were 140 new masters programs in specialized subjects like data analytics last year, marking a 16% jump from 2014, to 981. The data show online M.B.A. offerings, meanwhile, doubled to 390.

Business is the most popular field for students pursuing post-college degrees, but the strong economy has been hard on other American graduate schools too.

Full-time enrollment is down across master’s and doctoral programs in the arts and humanities, education and social sciences, according to an October report by the Council of Graduate Schools. Over the last five years, online and part-time degrees have gained ground in those fields, the data show. In 2017, there were 1.34 million graduate students over the age of 25 taking classes part-time, according to the latest Census Bureau statistics, reflecting an 8% jump

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on the year. The number of full-time students dropped 12% over that same period, falling just shy of 1.3 million.

“If you were able to get every dean in the U.S. under a lie detector, outside of maybe the top 20 M.B.A. programs, every one of them would admit they were struggling to maintain enrollment and losing money on the program,” said Jeffrey Brown, dean of the Gies College of Business at the University of Illinois. After the incoming class this fall completes its studies, students will no longer be able to pursue part-time or full-time M.B.A.s at Gies, although it will continue to offer an online M.B.A.

Gies College said it had 49 full-time M.B.A. students last year, down from 74 in 2015, and 38 students have paid the $1,000 deposit for the program starting this fall—the last full-time M.B.A. class at Gies.

Applications to the online M.B.A. program have tripled at Gies since 2016. Around 2,000 students are now enrolled in that program, which costs less than $22,000 to complete, the school said. The full-time M.B.A. costs $58,000 or more in tuition and fees, and it is expected to lose $2 million this year, Mr. Brown said.
College Board tries to solve a problem that its unsuited to solve

WASHINGTON

The earnest improvisers at the College Board, which administers the SAT, should ponder Abraham Maslow's law of the instrument. In 1966, Maslow, a psychologist, said essentially this: If the only tool you have is a hammer, every problem looks like a nail. The College Board wants to solve a complex social problem that it and its test are unsuited to solve. The College Board has embraced a dubious idea that might have the beneficial effect of prompting college admissions officers to think of better ideas for broadening their pool of applicants. The idea is to add to the scores of some test-takers an "environmental context" bonus. Strangely, board president David Coleman told the Wall Street Journal's Daniel Henninger that this is not, as the media has named it, an "adversity index." But it is: It purports to measure 15 factors (e.g., poverty or food-stamp eligibility, crime rates, disorderly schools, broken families, families with education deficits, etc.) where these test-takers are situated. Coleman more convincingly says to The New York Times: "This is about finding young people who do a great deal with what they've been given."

Perhaps the board's evident discomfort with the label "adversity score" is because their more benign-sounding "environmental context" gives a social-science patina to the obverse of a category (and political accusation) currently in vogue, that of "privilege." By whatever name, however, the SAT's new metric is another step down the path of identity politics, assigning applicants to groups and categories, and another step away from evaluating individuals individually. But if the adversity metric becomes a substitute for schools emphasizing race, this will be an improvement on explicit racial categories that become implicit quotas.

The SAT was created partly to solve the problem of inequitable standards in college admissions. They too often rewarded nonacademic attributes (e.g., "legacies" — the children of alumni). And they facilitated the intergenerational transmission of inherited privileges. Most importantly, they were used to disfavor certain groups, particularly Jews.

By making an objective — meaning standardized — test one component of schools' assessments of applicants, it advanced the American ideal of a meritocracy open to all talents. However, it has always been the schools' prerogative to decide the importance of the SAT component relative to others. And as "diversity" (understood in various ways) becomes an
increasing preoccupation of schools, the SAT becomes decreasingly important. Any adversity index derived from this or that social “context,” however refined, will be an extremely crude instrument for measuring — guessing, actually — the academic prospects of individuals in those contexts. It might, however, be a good gauge of character. Physicists speak of the “escape velocity” of particles circling in an orbit. Perhaps the adversity index can indicate individuals who, by their resilience, have achieved velocity out of challenging social environments.

But the SAT is a flimsy tool for shaping the world of social inertia. Articulate, confident parents from the professions will transmit cultural advantages to their children, advantages that, as the SAT will record them, are apt to dwarf “adversity” bonuses. As Andrew Ferguson, author of the grimly hilarious “Crazy U: One Dad’s Crash Course in Getting His Kid into College,” says, America’s least diverse classes are SAT prep classes.

The Chicago Tribune warns, plausibly, that the “secret-sauce” of the SAT’s adversity score — schools will know it, applicants will not — will “breed more public mistrust” of colleges’ admissions processes. But calling, as the Tribune does, for more “transparency” implies that the more admissions’ criteria are made public, the better. However, private deliberations and criteria about applicants protect the applicants’ privacy interests. Furthermore, asserting a public interest in maximum transparency encourages government supervision of — and the inevitable shrinking of — schools’ discretion in shaping their student bodies, and ensuring that some cohorts are not largely excluded.

Unquestionably, such discretion often is employed in unsavory ways to serve academia’s fluctuating “diversity” obsessions, some of which contravene common understandings of equity and perhaps civil rights laws and norms. Soon a Boston court will render a decision, probably destined for Supreme Court review, in the case concerning Harvard’s “holistic” metrics, beyond “objective” ones (secondary school transcripts, standardized tests), for — it is alleged — the purpose of restricting the admission of Asian Americans. They, like the Jews whose academic proficiency was a “problem” eight decades ago, often come from family cultures that stress academic attainments.

Caution, however, is in order. Further breaking higher education to the saddle of the state is an imprudent (and, which is much the same thing, unconservative) objective.

George Will is a columnist for The Washington Post. Readers can email him at georgewill@washpost.com.
UWA decides to freeze tuition

Leaders hope decision will help lure more students

By Ed Enoch
Staff Writer

LIVINGSTON — Tuition rates will remain unchanged for the University of West Alabama this fall as part of an operating budget approved by the board of trustees on Monday.

There were two major factors in the decision to keep tuition flat, UWA President Ken Tucker said.

Tucker said an increase could negatively impact enrollment, and leaving rates unchanged would help ease the burden on first-generation college students, which are a significant demographic group in UWA’s enrollment.

“It will help us maintain our competitive position because other universities this cycle are recommending freezing tuition,” Tucker said. “Although, we have been recognized as being the best value for a university in the state, the margin is really thin.”

The University of Alabama System, which is scheduled to meet at the end of the week, announced in April plans to leave tuition rates for in-state students unchanged for the fall.

The UWA trustees approved roughly a 1 percent tuition rate increase last year. The annual tuition rate for on-campus, in-state students would remain roughly $8,450 in the fall. Out-of-state students on campus pay about $16,900.

“But the other thing, and perhaps the most important, the vast majority of our...
students are first-generation college students and they struggle," Tucker said. "Our goal is to keep our tuition as low as possible to help attract those students."

Positive revenue projections for the upcoming fiscal year allowed the university to keep tuition flat, Tucker said. The tuition rate was part of the fiscal year 2020 operating budget. The $61.6 million budget represents an increase of $4.2 million from the current operating budget.

Revenues are projected to grow by $4.3 million. Revenues are projected to exceed expenses by $233,816, Vice President of Finance Affairs Lawson Edmonds said.

The budget saw nominal changes in expenses for salaries and costs such as benefits and insurance. The budget estimates salaries at $26.1 million and fixed expenses at $12.8 million.

The greatest growth came in operating expenses that include student services, scholarships, research and maintenance. The operating expenses are budgeted to increase by about $4 million to $22.7 million.

UWA also saw its appropriation in the state’s education budget increase $1.4 million, Tucker said.

Revenues from the university’s online programs are also expected to increase, Edmonds said. The budget projects revenues will be roughly $29.5 million, an increase of $4 million.

Tucker said enrollment in online programs increased by about 546 students compared to last year.

"It has exceeded our expectations and put us in a healthier position than we have been in a long time," Tucker said.

The budget again did not include raises for staff and faculty, other than increases for promotions, longevity, or increased credentials.

Board President Jerry Smith said he would like to see the university consider increases for faculty and staff next year.

"I think we should be looking at that and thinking about that," Smith said.

Tucker said the university planned to consider increases in the future.

"Our goal is to do exactly that," Tucker said.
How Daniel Coleman is settling into his new role at Birmingham-Southern College

By: Stephanie Rebman

Daniel Coleman jumped right in on The Hilltop.

Not only has the new president been learning the ropes on how Birmingham-Southern College operates, but he also has tackled teaching a 400-level investments class. He'll take a breather this summer to continue learning and focus on the school's large alumni base – many of whom live in the metro area.

"About 6,500 graduates live here, and that's over half of our graduates. They live here and have a big impact here," he said.

The school, where fall 2018 enrollment totaled 1,268, recently graduated another 340 new alumni. It also has 357 employees and an operating budget of $45 million.

Coleman said he wants to embrace BSC's traditions and keep it relevant for the next 100 years, continuing to train the next generation of lawyers, ministers, writers, doctors and more.

Coleman also plans to enjoy every moment of being in the Magic City. He spent 31 years in the financial world, leading companies and tackling the world of global trading and equities. Now, he's happy to take in the beauty of Birmingham's terrain and architecture.

"I grew up here," Coleman said. "Sometimes driving around, I just enjoy being home because I was gone for 25 years."

Coleman is keeping his pulse on the surrounding neighborhood, finding ways to get involved in the business scene and improve the city. He and his wife recently invested in about 10 companies, with six in the Magic City. The BBJ sat down with him to learn more.

How has the presidency gone so far? It's been great. I've taught this semester, which is great because it keeps me engaged with students and faculty. I get to know what their world is like a bit. I have spent the past six months trying to get to know the faculty and staff, trying to get to know the alumni. I think I probably have been to 25 small meetings with alumni, including two in New York and one in Washington, Nashville, Atlanta, Montgomery, Mobile and Birmingham. That's one of the most important things — making sure the alumni feel connected to the school. Trying to understand how things work. Running any organization, you have to literally know how things work.

What steps or any initiatives have you taken with getting involved in West End or the surrounding community? We have several connections with the community here including Bush Hills Neighborhood Association. Lane Estes sits on several committees and the connectivity stays here. I'm still involved with City Hall and I try to keep my ears to the ground with respect to what's going on in the west side of Birmingham. We are an institution that's been here longer than probably any other institution in town and we care very much about it. We are very interested in what is going on in this area.
Is there anything you are targeting specifically that you would like to do? I think we are very interested in what happens to Legion Field. It’s really in our backyard. From a Birmingham-Southern point of view, it’s very important whatever happens. Right now it’s a parking lot, which to be honest, has activity maybe 10 to 12 times a year and that’s going to go down to two times a year or not very big. I believe it’s 60 acres and could be a great focal point for the entire community and not just Birmingham-Southern.

Is there any opportunity for Birmingham-Southern to take over Legion Field? I don’t think so. Our football team was 6 and 4 last year, but I don’t think we’ll be filling it anytime soon. I was just thinking more along the lines of the neighborhood. We saw what Railroad Park did for that neighborhood, and we saw what Avondale Park has helped in that neighborhood. We’re not looking to gentrify the neighborhood, but I think our neighborhood deserves something like those parks. I would love to have things that draw our students off campus and into the neighborhood more. To me, something like that would be fabulous.

How are things going in your involvement with the city committee? I check in every Wednesday, and we do special projects to try to help. I have been focused on the pension fund, and, unfortunately, we have yet to resolve that issue. When you don’t resolve it, it grows. And it’s gotten bigger since we initially looked at it. Because of that issue, two bond agencies did downgrade the city – Fitch and Moody’s. It’s still not too late to resolve it, and I’m hopeful that the city and the pension board can work together to resolve it. It’s very important to the employees who work for the city and for the financial stability of the city to have an appropriately funded pension.

What have you learned from your reading and worldwide studies? I think people should really take a step back and look at the ideas behind the government we have. I think they’ll find that the ideas are pretty brilliant and maybe we can appreciate the things we have better. These are just broad observations. I think right now that we don’t appreciate some great freedoms and some great things we have as a society – some are economic and some are personal. I fear that we’re going to give some things away.
Fomer UAB superstar McDowell still active on PGA Tour

It’s U.S. Open week at famed Pebble Beach Golf Links, and the last person to win the National Open at Pebble Beach was former UAB superstar Graeme McDowell.

This is the likable and cerebral Northern Irishman’s lone major championship, along with three PGA Tour wins, 10 European Tour wins and a standout Ryder Cup record during his four appearances.

It was 2010 and McDowell came from three back of Dustin Johnson, who imploded to a closing 82, to claim the title from Frenchman Gregory Havret by a shot. Pebble Beach always plays tough when hosting the U.S. Open and no one broke par that year, as McDowell won on even, despite a final round 74.

A lot of water has passed under the bridge since then, but McDowell remains an active member of the PGA Tour, including winning earlier this year in the PGA Tour’s Corales Puntacana Resort and Club Championship in the Dominican Republic.

He was the best player to ever swing a club for the Blazers, culminating with him earning the Haskins Award, the top college award, in 2002. He won six collegiate events that year, turning professional later that year after three years in Birmingham. He also played for the victorious Great Britain and Ireland Team in the 2001 Walker Cup.

He became a Blazer after fellow Irishman Chris Devlin, himself a top, top player for UAB, recommended him to coach Alan Kaufman. What a recruit he turned out to be.

Originally hailing from Portrush in Northern Ireland, McDowell has long made his home in Orlando, Fla. With the Open Championship returning next month to Royal Portrush for the first time since 1951, McDowell would love to be in the field, but is not currently exempt. He has played upward of 500 rounds at this storied venue.

“I’m thinking of putting a statement out on Twitter and saying I appreciate everyone’s concern,” McDowell told www.pgatour.com with a smile. “But I’ve pretty much come to terms with the fact that if I play well between now and Portrush I will play.

“If I don’t play well between now and Portrush I won’t and I’ll deserve not to play. I’m OK with that.”

Other players with local ties in the U.S. Open are current Auburn golfer Jovan Rebula, who is paired with former AU stars Jason Dufner and Tuscaloosa’s Patton Kizzire.

Bubba Watson (Faulkner State); Matt Wallace and Danny Willett (both Jacksonville State); and former Crimson Tide star Justin Thomas are all also teeing it up.
June’s now a big month for recruiting

By: Cecil Hurt

When the NCAA recruiting calendar changed a couple of years ago with the addition of a December signing date, hardcore followers of football talent knew that there might be unintended consequences. No one predicted, though, that the month with the most movement, the most visits and ultimately a rapidly increasing number of commitments would be June. One could argue that, even though it has just started, it’s been one of the University of Alabama’s best months, although the Crimson Tide recruits at such a high level that there are few bad months. Nick Saban and staff picked up three commitments in the last week.

Linebacker Demouy Kennedy is one of the top linebackers in the state of Alabama. The most recent commitment, coming on Monday night, is a class of 2021 defensive back. Latrell McCutchin is also highly rated and comes from the absolute left ventricle of the heart of Texas, Lyndon Johnson High School in Austin. (You would have to be George Strait riding an angry bull to be more Texas than that.) The third, also from Texas, is 6-foot-7, 340-pound 16-year old Dameion George, notable both for his planetary size (everything is bigger in you-know-where) and because he may be part of one of the iconic recruiting storylines, the package deal. The tradition of taking one player in hopes that it will help you with another was especially common in the days before stringent scholarship limits, and has been part of Alabama lore dating back to the days when coach Frank Thomas and staff brought in several young men from the area around Pine Bluff in Southeastern Arkansas, a group that included a big end from Moro Bottom named Paul Bryant. Robert Lester from Foley High School was good enough to make it to the NFL on his own merits. Having a teammate named Julio Jones certainly gave him some extra exposure, and a friend for Jones’ college days.

In George’s case, the high school teammate and friend is Zachary Evans. If you don’t follow recruiting closely, the name may not ring a bell just yet. If you are a recruiting devotee, you probably know Evans’ name as well as those of your own children. He is the No. 1 running back in the class of 2020 — that’s for the entire nation — and he and George have talked openly to the hardworking recruiting writers who cover things on a daily basis about their desire to play at the same school.

That’s a lot of activity in what used to be the summer doldrums. There could be more. Alabama may get yet another commitment in the coming days, and there could be additional activity when the Crimson Tide hosts its annual cookout — a sort of a five-star buffet — on June 21. Early summer recruiting (or late spring, if you go strictly by the solstice) has become so important because once practice starts in August, coaching staffs have far fewer hours to devote to recruiting. Prospects certainly attend games and get a whirlwind tour, and Nick Saban, always the recruiter, shakes hands and sets aside office time on Sunday as his schedule allows. Most of the legwork, though, is being done now. Prospects can always change their commitment, although most don’t. (We aren’t talking Hugh Culverhouse Jr., here, for goodness’ sake.) There is still enough drama in December, and the unsigned prospects still around in February get an extra amount of attention. But the old days of waiting around with a Christmas list of prospects for Santa Claus are over — the best staffs want to have a pretty good idea of which way things are going by the Fourth of July.
Season to remember for Tide duo

Mazen Osama, Patrick Kaukovalta runner-up in NCAA doubles tournament

By Tyler Martin
Special to The Tuscaloosa News

It was an historic season for Mazen Osama and Patrick Kaukovalta. It didn’t end the way they wanted, but realized sometimes the journey is more important than the outcome.

The Crimson Tide tennis duo lost to Maxime Cressy and Keegan Smith of UCLA in the NCAA national championships last week, becoming the first doubles team from UA to reach the finals.

"Before this season we had never played together in doubles," Osama said. "The more matches we played together we could tell our dynamic was starting to grow. Our communication got better as the season went on, and we understood each other and what we wanted to do on the court."

Osama and Kaukovalta’s tournament run included wins against Arizona State, North Carolina, Wichita State and Mississippi State before losing to UCLA.

"Our first goal was to finish in the top eight so we could get All-American status," Kaukovalta said. "After each match we felt like we had a good chance to win the next one. Nothing felt impossible to us."

See DUO, C3

See next page
The doubles team they faced from UCLA had not lost a match all season, so Osama and Kaukovalta knew it was going to be an uphill battle.

"We knew if we could keep focus on the serves and returns we could make it happen," Osama said. "Obviously that did not happen, but it was close. Maybe not in terms of the score, but tennis-wise it was really close."

UA head coach George Husack had a front-row seat all year to the duo's success and knew they were set up for a great run.

"The match against Wichita State was tough for them," Husack said. "Once they won that one it became a real possibility that they could go all the way. We are very proud of the way they played, and this season was truly special."

Osama, a senior who will be graduating this fall, is unsure of what the future holds for him, but his impact around UA tennis will be missed.

"Mazen has impacted the name and credibility of our program," Husack said. "He was recruited as the best player, and during his four years he stayed at the top as the best player, which is really hard to do."

Kaukovalta will go back home to Finland over the summer to train for his junior year.

"A big piece of our puzzle will be missing next year," Kaukovalta said. "I know the other guys will step up and do their best to replace Mazen."

In the final doubles ranking of the season, Osama and Kaukovalta finished tied for fourth, which is tied for the best in program history.
Former UA standouts on HOF ballot

Samuels, Junior on National Football Foundation's 2020 ballot

Two former University of Alabama football greats were on the ballot for the 2020 College Football Hall of Fame announced by the National Football Foundation on Monday.

E.J. Junior III, an All-American defensive end on two of Coach Paul "Bear" Bryant's national championship teams (1978, 1979) and 1999 Jacobs Award winner and All-American offensive tackle Chris Samuels of Mobile were both listed on this year's ballot. Samuels is a first-time nominee while Junior was also on the ballot for the 2019 class.

Both also had standout NFL careers, Junior most notably with the St. Louis Cardinals and Samuels as a Washington Redskin.


Bryant is a member of the Hall of Fame as a coach, although he also played at UA.

See HOF, C3
Also on this year's ballot as a coaching nominee is Cordon native Larry Blakeney, the all-time winningest coach in Sun Belt Conference history during his tenure as head coach at Troy. Blakeney led the Trojans to eight conference titles (five in the Sun Belt, three in the Southland) and seven FCS playoff appearances in his career.

The criteria for Hall of Fame consideration include:
First and foremost, a player must have received First-Team All-America recognition by a selector organization that is recognized by the NCAA and utilized to comprise their consensus All-America teams.
A player becomes eligible for consideration by the Foundation's Honors Courts 10 full seasons after his final year of intercollegiate football played. While each nominee's football achievements in college are of prime consideration, his post-football record as a citizen is also weighed. He must have proven himself worthy as a citizen, carrying the ideals of football forward into his relations with his community and his fellow man, with love of his country.
Federovitch Selected as ASWA Small College Athlete of the Year

TUSCALOOSA, Ala. | The 2019 Alabama Sports Writers Association awards banquet was held on Sunday at the Capstone Hotel, and The University of Alabama in Huntsville women's lacrosse team was represented by Nicole Federovitch as the organization's Small College Athlete of the Year at the event in honor of her terrific senior campaign.

A native of Barnegat, New Jersey, Federovitch is the first UAH student-athlete to garner the honor since former UAH men's basketball standout Jaime Smith was selected in 2013.

Federovitch – who was recognized as a Gulf South Conference Top Ten Award winner last month – has been the UAH women's lacrosse program's offensive leader from the team's inaugural season in 2016 through the 2019 GSC Championship campaign, as she became a three-time GSC Player of the Year this season by leading the league and ranking sixth in NCAA Division II with 115 points on 67 goals and 48 assists.

She led all active career players nationally in 2019 with 400 career points on 271 goals and 129 assists, ranking fourth all-time in career points in NCAA Division II history.

Federovitch additionally finishes in the top 10 in NCAA Division II history in career goals with her 271 career tallies.

In her time with the Chargers, Federovitch led the squad to the GSC invitational final all four years along with GSC regular season titles in 2017 and 2019, while boasting an overall record of 57-17 and 22-5 in GSC play since 2016.
Rivers, Mize highlights ASWA awards

Los Angeles Chargers quarterback Philip Rivers was named Professional Athlete of the Year by the Alabama Sports Writers Association at the organization's 48th annual awards banquet Sunday night in Tuscaloosa, while former Auburn pitcher Casey Mize was named Amateur Athlete of the Year.

Rivers, an Athens High School graduate, enjoyed one of his best seasons in 2018 at age 36. The 15-year NFL veteran passed for 4,308 yards and 32 touchdowns as the Chargers went 12-4 and reached the playoffs for the first time since 2013.

Mize was a first-team All-American and a finalist for the Golden Spikes Award and Dick Howser Awards in his junior season at Auburn. He posted a 10-6 record with a 3.30 ERA and 156 strikeouts in 114 innings in 2018 before being drafted No. 1 overall by the Detroit Tigers last June.

Jeff McIntyre of the Times Daily in Florence was posthumously presented with the Bill Shelton Award, the ASWA’s professional service award. McIntyre died June 2 after battling cancer.

Basketball player Demarkus Lampley of Wallace State Hanceville as the Community College Athlete of the Year.

Lampley, a 6-foot-2 guard from Phenix City, averaged 26.6 points and six rebounds per game for Wallace State's men's basketball team during the 2018-2019 season, leading the Alabama Community College Conference in scoring. He also shot 42.5 percent from behind the 3-point line and a league-best 89.9 percent from the charity stripe, guiding the Lions to a 24-7 record and the ACCC North Division championship.

The Tuscaloosa News received four first-place awards from the ASWA. Ben Jones won for best baseball story and Joey Chandler won for best golf story. The Tuscaloosa News won top honors for best layout and design as well as best special section.

Other awards presented by the ASWA:

Small College Athlete of the Year: Nicole Fedorovich, UAH lacrosse
Mr. Baseball: Gunnar Henderson, Morgan Academy
Miss Softball: Libby Baker, G.W. Long High School
Jimmy Smothers Courage Award: Scott McAlpine, Haleyville High School baseball/football

Awards presented at previous ASWA events:

Mr. Football: Bo Nix, Pinson Valley High School
Mr. Basketball: Trendon Watford, Mountain Brook High School
Miss Basketball: Annie Hughes, Pisgah High School
Recruiting news and notes for Alabama, Auburn and UAB

By: Josh Bean

Lanett athlete Kristian Story -- a high school quarterback who projects as a receiver or defensive back in college -- announced on Twitter that he plans to commit on July 18.

Story previously narrowed his list to five finalists: Alabama, Texas A&M, LSU, Notre Dame and Tennessee. He was previously committed to Tennessee as a sophomore before backing away from that verbal pledge.

Story, a 6-foot-2, 205-pounder and the son of Lanett coach Clifford Story, threw for 2,424 yards, ran for another 1,207 yards and accounted for 56 touchdowns last season as Lanett finished 10-2 and lost to Maplesville in the Class 1A quarterfinals.

Bama, Auburn in mix for top athlete

Marietta (Ga.) tight end Arik Gilbert released his top 10 schools via Twitter, with Alabama and Auburn making the list.

The 6-foot-4 1/2, 245-pound Gilbert is ranked as the nation's No. 1 athlete and No. 10 overall player, according to the 247Sports Composite rankings. He prefers to play tight end, but also plays defensive end in high school.

Other schools on Gilbert's finalist list include Georgia, Oklahoma and Clemson.

Changing schools

Two Alabama commits -- in-state defensive back De'Rickey Wright and receiver Traeshon Holden changed high schools this spring.

Wright transferred from Etowah to Gadsden City, a team that's won six games the last two years and hasn’t made the playoffs since 2016.

Holden played last year at St. Frances Academy in Baltimore and transferred to Narbonne High in Harbor City, California. Southern Cal and UCLA stepped up their recruiting efforts with Holden now that he's playing locally.

George Pickens arrives at Georgia

Hoover receiver George Pickens reported to Georgia last weekend, ending any speculation that he would not qualify academically.
Pickens, a 6-foot-3 receiver who finished the 2019 recruiting season as a 5-star prospect, flipped from Auburn to Georgia on National Signing Day in February. He's expected to immediately push for playing time at Georgia -- despite not participating in spring practice -- after receiver Riley Ridley and Mecole Hardman and tight end Isaac Nauta went to the NFL draft early and Terry Godwin graduated.

Pickens finished 2018 with 69 catches for 1,368 yards and 16 TDs in 2018, helping Hoover advance to the Class 7A semifinals. In last month's Alabama-Mississippi All-Star Classic, he caught nine passes -- all from Nix -- for 155 yards and two touchdowns in a 24-20 loss. He was named Alabama's MVP.

**UAB adds to 2019 class**

RaJae Johnson, a 6-foot-4 receiver from College of San Mateo (Calif.), recently announced via Twitter that he's committed to UAB.

Johnson was rated a 3-star prospect and the nation's No. 1-ranked junior college receiver and No. 20 juco player, according to the 247Sports Composite rankings. He becomes UAB's highest ranked player in the 2019 signing class.
Alabama basketball gets five-star transfer Quinerly

By Cecil Hurt
Sports Editor

The University of Alabama men's basketball program added its seventh signee for the 2019-2020 season and brought its roster back to a full 13 players on Sunday as Jahvon Quinerly, a sophomore transfer from Villanova, indicated that he would sign with Nate Oats' Crimson Tide program.

Quinerly was a McDonald's All-American and a consensus 5-star recruit in 2018 after a stellar career at Hudson Catholic High School in Hackensack, N.J. He originally committed to Arizona but cancelled that commitment after his name was mentioned in the investigation that led to Wildcats' assistant coach Emanuel "Book" Richardson being indicted and pleading guilty to a federal bribery charge earlier this month. After backing away from his Arizona commitment, Quinerly signed with Villanova.

"Jahvon is a dynamic guard that plays best in the open floor so he is a perfect fit with the way we play," Alabama head coach Nate Oats said in a UA release. "He's a playmaker that makes plays for both himself and his teammates. He makes everyone around him better. I've thoroughly enjoyed getting to know him and his family throughout this recruiting process. He comes from a great close-knit family and is the type of high-character individual we're looking to bring into our program here."

Under NCAA transfer rules, Quinerly would be required to sit out the upcoming season unless he was granted a waiver. He has three years of eligibility remaining.

On Wednesday, Oats announced that forward Tevin Mack had entered the transfer portal and was not expected to return to UA for his final season. Evan Daniels of 247 Sports reported earlier this week that Mack had been contacted by Clemson, Houston, Illinois, Cincinnati, Oregon, West Virginia, Georgia Tech, Missouri State and San Diego State as possible transfer destinations.

Reach Cecil Hurt at cecil@tidesports.com or on Twitter @CecilHurt.

See QUINERLY, C3

QUINERLY

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He appeared in 25 games for Villanova this season, averaging nine minutes and 2.1 points per game. Following the season, he and Villanova coach Jay Wright came to an agreement that Quinerly would transfer. He visited Alabama last weekend and was on Pitt's campus on Wednesday. He was also considering Georgia and Arkansas but cancelled those visits after committing to Alabama.

Under NCAA transfer rules, Quinerly would
Bohannon continues long-term rebuilding effort

By: Cecil Hurt

Brad Bohannon isn’t standing still and he doesn’t intend to let the University of Alabama baseball program stand still either.

“Since the season ended (on May 18), I think I’ve been at home two nights,” Bohannon said on Friday during a lengthy interview with The Tuscaloosa News. “I’ve been to Canada, the Dominican Republic, Wisconsin plus all over this state and the states around us. I don’t plan on spending much time in Tuscaloosa this summer.”

Bohannon’s focus is on recruiting, part of what continues to be a long-term rebuilding effort for the Crimson Tide. He said he was proud of the effort put forth by the 2019 team and expects improvement in 2020, but repeats, almost like a mantra, that his focus has to be long-term in nature.

“You can’t get your butt kicked in recruiting for three or four years and expect it to get fixed in one cycle,” Bohannon said. “Not in the SEC West.”

Another factor, as Bohannon noted, is baseball players (like softball players) tend to make their college decisions early.

“A lot of players already know where they are going to (college) by the time they are in the 10th grade,” he said. “So you have to have done the groundwork.”

The gradual process continues and the next immediate step for Alabama, which finished the 2019 season 30-26 overall and 7-23 in the SEC, comes on Monday when the Major League Baseball draft begins. The Crimson Tide will be affected early, Bohannon said. The question is how deeply Alabama will be impacted.

“CJ Abrams (an infielder from Alpharetta, Georgia) should go fairly high in the first round and get a few million dollars to sign,” Bohannon said. “We knew that when we signed him, but signing him was based on a two-year relationship with his family and it was a good thing for our program. But the rest of the draft will have a huge impact on us. We should have a better idea of where we stand by Tuesday afternoon.”

Myles Austin, a shortstop/center fielder from Atlanta who is rated the No. 94 overall prospect in the draft, is “probably 50/50 depending on where he’s drafted,” Bohannon said.

See next page
None of Alabama’s draft-eligible players from the 2019 roster are likely to be drafted highly but some could be chosen and face a decision about whether to return.

“Deacon Medders and Brock Love (both pitchers) and (second baseman) Morgan McCullough could all be picked,” Bohannon said. “We’d like to have them back but it just depends on exactly what it is that they are looking at, draft-wise.”

Alabama will also be looking to replace four seniors who contributed in 2019: outfielders Joe Breaux and Keith Holcombe and pitchers Sam Finnerty (the staff workhorse who finished with a 6-8 record against stiff SEC competition) and Jeremy Randolph.

The core of next year’s team will come from the returning position players, Bohannon said.

“You take Tyler Gentry, Drew Williamson, T.J. Reeves, Brett Auerbach, Sam Praytor and Matt McCullough and that’s six legitimate SEC players right there,” he said.

Gentry, an outfielder, finished 2019 as Alabama’s leading hitter, batting .310 with 13 home runs and 42 RBIs. Williamson at first base and Reeves in the outfield are in-state players who became regulars and showed promise as freshmen. Auerbach was a regular at third base and McCullough, who hit .309, would be a solid second baseman pending his draft status.

Praytor, a sophomore from Helena who was projected as the Crimson Tide’s starting catcher and cleanup hitter, appeared in just six games in 2019 before being sidelined by an elbow injury.

“Sam had Tommy John surgery and his rehab is progressing on schedule,” Bohannon said. “He’s expected to be full go by opening day.

“You take that group plus (shortstop Colby) Robertson, plus you add in Owen Diadati who is a corner outfielder with big power from Canada. We will have to watch him in the draft, too, but I was just in Niagara Falls (Ontario, Diadati’s home) to visit with him. That’s a good group and we can fill in around them.”

Pitching may be more problematic for the 2020 Crimson Tide.

“Some of it will depend on what happens with Brock and Deac (Medders),” Bohannon said. “Connor Shamblin was up and down this year but has a good arm. Garrett Rukes needs to be a contributor for us. Davis Vainer transferred to Arizona (but) we will have some returning guys — Casey Cobb, Brock Guffey, Chase Lee, Tyler Ras (who also saw outfield duty in 2019), Jacob McNairy and the group coming in, which includes some good arms but will be young and inexperienced.

“We pieced it together last year. Jason Jackson (the Crimson Tide pitching coach) is fabulous, the best there is, in my opinion. But when you get late into the season and you are playing high-end SEC teams, your pitchers have to have stuff. Everyone has you scouted by then. You aren’t
fooling anyone. For instance, we go to Georgia for the last series and their No. 1 guy is throwing 97 or 98, and their No. 2 guy is throwing 95 with a strong slider. We are just not at that point yet."

Despite those frustrations and limitations, Bohannon called 2019 "a year where we made some progress."

"It didn’t end the way we wanted it to end, like a lot of seasons where you don’t win your last game," Bohannon said. "We did a really good job with the non-league schedule. We were 23-3 in the non-conference. Our RPI was No. 41 (nationally) If you include South Carolina, we did a really good job when the talent was equal. But we didn’t get enough big plays, big hits, in the games where the other team had more (talent) than we did.

“We had some young guys who did some good things. That’s encouraging. We have some obstacles but we also have some advantages. We’re going to keep it moving in the right direction.”
Tide signee taken in MLB draft

CJ Abrams goes No. 6 in first round; Oregon State's Rutschman the No. 1 pick

Staff, wire report

CJ Abrams, who signed a baseball scholarship with Alabama last November, was the No. 6 overall pick in the first round of Monday's Major League Baseball amateur draft and is expected to sign with the San Diego Padres.

Abrams, who played at Blessed Trinity High School in Alpharetta, Georgia, was the Georgia state high school Player of the Year after hitting .431 in 2019.

The lefty-hitting Abrams was considered by many to be the fastest player in the draft. He batted .418 with eight home runs and 100 RBIs in his high school career.

Alabama head coach Brad Bohannon said in an interview with The Tuscaloosa News last week that he "absolutely expected" that Abrams would be one of the first players chosen in the MLB Draft.

"Our expectations are for him to sign and make millions of dollars and we wish him well," Bohannon said. "I've had a great relationship with CJ and his family and was glad to sign him to show the caliber of player we can attract."

Adley Rutschman, a switch-hitting Oregon State catcher, was the No. 1 overall pick, going to the Baltimore Orioles.

"It's unbelievable," Rutschman said from Goss Stadium in Corvalis, Oregon, shortly after becoming the top pick. "Just to look back on how I was as a kid and seeing what my expectations were, how far I've come from there. It's special."

The announcement by Commissioner Rob Manfred at MLB Network studios marked the second time the Orioles led off the draft — they took LSU pitcher Ben McDonald in 1989.

See DRAFT, C3
"I met with all the teams over the course of the year and knew the Orioles were going to be the first overall," said Rutschman, a 40th-round pick by Seattle three years ago. "As the year progressed and went along, it looked like it was a possibility more and more. It just worked out that way."

With the No. 2 choice, the Kansas City Royals grabbed Texas high school shortstop Bobby Witt Jr., the son of former big league pitcher Bobby Witt. The younger Witt has draft-day bragging rights on his father, who won 142 games over 16 seasons after being selected No. 3 overall in 1985.

"Now I've got him beat," Bobby Witt Jr. said.

The Witts became the highest-drafted father-son duo, topping Tom Grieve (No. 6, 1966) and Ben Grieve (No. 2, 1994). They are the seventh father-son combination of first-rounders, and first since Delino DeShields (1987) and Delino DeShields Jr. (2010).

"The dreams are kind of turning into reality," the younger Witt said.

The 21-year-old Rutschman had been the favorite to go first overall since he led Oregon State to the College World Series championship last year and was selected the most outstanding player. He followed that up with a dominant junior season at the plate — and behind it. He hit .411 with a career-best 17 homers to go with 58 RBIs and a school-record 76 walks, and threw out 13 of 27 runners attempting to steal.

University of California slugging first baseman Andrew Vaughn went to the Chicago White Sox with the third pick. Vaughn batted .381 this season with 15 homers, 50 RBIs and a .544 on-base percentage that ranks among the national leaders. He also showed a terrific eye at the plate and struck out just 74 times in three college seasons.

The 6-foot, 214-pound Vaughn is also looking to become the first repeat winner of the Golden Spikes Award after earning the honor as a sophomore last year.

The Miami Marlins drafted Vanderbilt outfielder JJ Bleday at No. 4, adding the Southeastern Conference player of the year who has a quick, left-handed swing and leads Division I players in home runs with a school-record 26. A finalist for the Golden Spikes Award, the 6-foot-3, 205-pound Bleday is hitting .351 and brings a 42-game on-base streak into next weekend's super regionals round of the NCAA Tournament.

With the fifth pick, the Detroit Tigers took Florida high school outfielder Riley Greene. Gatorade's Florida state player of year hit .422 with eight homers, 27 RBIs and 38 runs as arguably the country's top prep outfielder. He has a smooth left-handed swing that produces consistent line drives.
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World Series run ushers in a new era for Tide

Michael Casagrande mcasagrande@al.com

Hugs met tears when the reality of the moment settled in a mostly empty stadium Sunday night. The 23rd edition of Alabama's softball program saw its fight from the depths of the Women's College World Series losers' bracket fall short in a 7-3 loss to Oklahoma.

It was the end of a grueling two-day slog for a shot at the championship series that just ran out of gas. As they pulled it together for one more ALA ... BAMA call-and-re-sponse with their parents and fans, four seniors knew they'd never be there again.

At the same time, this felt like the begin­ning of something new for a program that slipped ever so slightly over the previous two seasons. This 23rd team went from eighth-place expectations to an SEC regular-season title. That included a 33-game winning streak and the emergence of a young core that figures to be back in Oklahoma City again.

This 2019 team that finished 60-10 was “one of the most fun teams, most enjoyable years” in his 21 years leading the program.

“I just think they re-energized me honestly,” Alabama coach Patrick Murphy said Sunday night. “They really did. They taught me a lot. I was talking to a couple of you guys the other day at our batting practice. There’s some years where you’ve got enough. There’s other years where you don’t want it to end. That was one of those this year.”

Departing senior Caroline Hardy put it more simply.

“These guys, man, you better watch out for them,” said Hardy, who had the game-winning hit in a 1-0 win over Oklahoma earlier Sunday. “This freshman class really gets it, really wants it. I’m really excited for them. I know they’ll be right back here next year.”

The only other departing seniors are starting catcher Reagan Dykes, leftfielder Merris Schroder and pitcher Courtney Gettins.

Sitting down from Hardy in the postgame news conference was Skylar Wallace, one of the rookies who helped pump life into the program. She had a home run in the loss to cap a season that also featured a walk-off job in the SEC tournament.

And next to Wallace in the interview room was Montana Fouts, the freshman ace pitcher who threw perhaps her best three games against Oklahoma (twice) and Arizona in OKC.

“I think the sky’s the limit because (Fouts is) just really learn-
ing how to pitch," Murphy said. "She can throw it by people in high school and summer ball. Steph (VanBrakle Prothro) has done a heck of a good job with all our pitchers this year."

Starters Sarah Cornell — the SEC pitcher of the year — is a senior to be as is Krystal Goodman. The Tide went with Goodman in the final game after Fouts went well over 100 pitches in Saturday night's game and Sunday's first one.

Murphy likes what Goodman does with the ball in her right hand.

"There's something about her that's just a little different," Murphy said. "We were talking about it in the dugout. Her ball moves weird. It's difficult to describe."

Before turning the page to the 24th Alabama softball team, Murphy wanted to honor the seniors who did more behind the scenes perhaps than in the spotlight. They took the locker room after losing in super regionals at Washington last spring and kept the young group in line for 12 months.

Hardy still had a smile on her face writing the postscript to her career on a day it ended three days sooner than planned.

"I can't think of a better way to go out than finishing with this group at the World Series," Hardy said. "I think when Coach Aly hugged me at the end of the game, she said, 'You're going to be a champion in life.' I think that's what's so important about women's softball, is that when I take the jersey off for the last time, I'm fully prepared for that."

*Michael Casagrande is an Alabama beat writer for the Alabama Media Group. Follow him on Twitter @ByCasagrande or on Facebook.*
After strong finish, Alabama softball looks to be a contender again in 2020

By Edwin Stanton
Executive Sports Editor

There are a few things that made the 2019 season special for Alabama softball coach Patrick Murphy:
• A school-record 33-0 start.
• A conference championship.
• Winning 60 games for the first time since 2012.
• One win short of playing for the national championship.

But the on-the-field success all pales in comparison to what "Team 23" did for Murphy personally.
"I just think they reenergized me, honestly," he said. "They really did. They taught me a lot. There's some years where you say, 'OK, I've had enough.'

Players are greeted by fans as the Crimson Tide softball team returned from its College World Series trip to Oklahoma City at Tuscaloosa National Airport on Monday. [STAFF PHOTO/GARY COSBY JR.]

In Good Hands

Players are greeted by fans as the Crimson Tide softball team returned from its College World Series trip to Oklahoma City at Tuscaloosa National Airport on Monday. [STAFF PHOTO/GARY COSBY JR.]

There's other years where you don't want it to end. That was one of these this year. Everybody just wanted to keep playing. It was a lot of fun. One of the most fun teams, most enjoyable years I've ever had."

Alabama's season ended Sunday in Oklahoma City with a 7-4 loss to Oklahoma in the semifinals of the Women's College World Series.

Leading up to that moment, Alabama had to fight off Florida and Arizona in elimination games Saturday to earn another shot with OU.

The Crimson Tide provided some Sunday drama, defeating the top-seed Sooners when Caroline Hardy knocked in the game's only with a walk-off single, forcing the if-necessary matchup later that night.
"There is no way that team should have been an eight seed," Oklahoma coach Patty Gasso said of the Tide. "No way."

After the 7-4 loss, Hardy and her three other senior teammates, Reagan Dykes, Courtney Gettins and Merris Schroder, helped lead the team in one final cheer with the fans in their final game in an Alabama uniform.
"It was sad. Really sad," Hardy said. "You don't think it's going to come. All of a sudden it's there."

The cupboard isn't bare for 2020. Alabama returns second-team All-American and SEC Freshman of the Year pitcher Montana Fouts, and All-SEC Freshman Team second baseman Skylar Wallace.
"These guys, man, you better watch out for them," Hardy said. "This freshman class really gets it, really wants it. I'm really excited for them. I know they'll be right back here next year."

Just like last season, when Hardy and the other seniors immediately started prep work for 2019 on the plane ride home from a season-ending super regional trip in Washington, the groundwork for "Team 24" is already in motion.

There are pieces to fill, but there is another strong senior class to lean on, including SEC Pitcher of the Year Sarah Cornell, second-team All-American first baseman/catcher Bailey Hemphill, All-SEC Defensive team outfielder Elissa Brown, shortstop Claire Jenkins, pitcher Krystal Goodman and infielder Taylor Clark.
"We're going to be pretty good for a long time," Murphy said.

See SOFTBALL, C3

Montana Fouts, and All-SEC Freshman Team second baseman Skylar Wallace.

Online

See more photos and video of fans welcoming the team home at TuscaloosaNews.com.

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Alabama falls to Oklahoma, eliminated from WCWS

By: Edwin Stanton

It just wouldn’t feel right if the Women’s College World Series didn’t have a classic showdown between Alabama and Oklahoma.

Both put on one heck of a show Sunday, complete with extra-inning pitching duels, spectacular defensive plays, big home runs and even a walk-off win.

Alabama fought its way through the elimination bracket over the weekend and pushed the Sooners to the brink Sunday but fell 7-3 in Sunday’s if-necessary game, coming up short of reaching its third WCWS championship series. Earlier in the day, Alabama got a 2-1 walk-off win to force the nightcap.

It was the final game for a Crimson Tide team that won the Southeastern Conference regular-season title with its best record (60-10) since 2012’s national championship season (60-8). Alabama finished last season 36-20.

“It was one heck of a ride,” Alabama coach Patrick Murphy said. “Sixty wins with basically a new infield, three new pitchers and a new outfielder. They have taught me and make me a tremendous coach.”

After a shaky start, in Game 2, Alabama pitcher Krystal Goodman battled her way out of jams for four innings. But with two outs in the fifth, OU’s Jocelyn Alo belted a two-run home run for a 4-1 lead.

Skylar Wallace put Alabama right back in the game the next inning with a two-out, two-run home run to make it a one-run deficit again.

But Goodman gave up another two-run homer in the sixth, to Nicole Mendes, that made it 6-3. Sarah Cornell then relieved Goodman.

Oklahoma struck early in the second game, taking a 2-0 lead in the first inning.

Alabama senior catcher Reagan Dykes gave the Crimson Tide a spark in the second with a solo home run off Giselle Juarez to cut the deficit in half and prompting OU coach Patty Gasso to bring in reliever Mariah Lopez. Juarez had pitched all eight innings of the first game.

See next page
For eighth innings in Game 1 Alabama had no answer for Oklahoma All-American ace Juarez, who held the Crimson Tide to just one hit through six innings.

Finally the Crimson Tide broke through and all it took was someone who hadn’t faced Juarez.

Pinch-hitter Caroline Hardy delivered a two-out RBI single to score pinch-runner Kloyee Anderson to give Alabama a 1-0 win.

“When she hit that everybody just went crazy,” Alabama pitcher Montana Fouts said. “No one cared who hit it, no one cared who scored, it just happened. That’s what we are all about with this team.”

It was a pitcher’s duel for all eighth innings of Game 1 between Juarez and Alabama’s Montana Fouts, the SEC Freshman of the Year.

Fouts pitched all eight innings, allowing four hits with four walks and five strikeouts. The Alabama defense helped her out several times, including a double play when third baseman Maddie Morgan caught a line drive and doubled up the runner on first base to get Fouts out of a jam in the fifth inning. Morgan made another big catch in the fourth.

On the other side, Alabama was unable to get to Juarez, who allowed the one run on four hits with eight strikeouts.

Kaylee Tow got a double in the seventh, but Alabama couldn’t get her home, thanks to some great defense from the Sooners. Nicole Mendes, OU’s hero against Alabama in Thursday’s 3-2 win, made a diving catch on a liner by Merris Schroder to end the inning.

In the eighth, senior leader Reagan Dykes led off with a single to put Alabama in business. A sac bunt moved pinch-runner Anderson to second, setting the stage for Hardy’s heroics later in the inning.

“I just thought Caroline could do it,” Murphy said. “She has come through in the clutch and it was her turn.”
Big pickups for Alabama football

Crimson Tide lands four elite recruits, including state's top linebacker prospect

By Edwin Stanton
Executive Sports Editor

It's been a busy month of recruiting for Alabama football.

It's been a good week, too. The Crimson Tide received three verbal commitments for the 2020 class, and even got a jump start on the 2021 class.

On Tuesday, Quandarius Robinson (6-4, 217), a four-star linebacker from Jackson-Olin High School in Birmingham announced he plans to come to Alabama. He's the No. 1 ranked linebacker in the state and the 53rd-ranked payer in the nation according to 247Sports.

"Ya'll know it's been a long road with me and my family," Robinson announced to his Jackson-Olin teammates via phone. "You know I'm just ready to commit now. I feel like I'm 100 percent sure - Roll Tide."

Robinson is 20th commitment for the Crimson Tide's 2020 class.

Big news for Alabama came Monday when four-star corner back Latrell McCutchin, from Austin, Texas, announced his commitment to the Crimson Tide's 2021 class. Also, in-state linebacker prospect Demouy Kennedy

(6-3, 205), a four-star recruit out of Theodore High School, announced his decision to attend Alabama as part of the 2020 class.

McCutchin (6-1, 176), an upcoming junior from Lyndon B. Johnson High School, is ranked No. 121 for the 2021 class by 247Sports.

The University of Texas was also in the mix, but McCutchin told CBSSports.com the Longhorns didn't as good a job as the Crimson Tide to get his commitment.

"Alabama just recruited me harder," McCutchin said. "With Texas, they have a really slow recruiting process. They told me things that they were going to do and then didn't do them until after the fact that Alabama offered me and I started to blow up in my recruiting process and I really didn't respect that too much."

McCutchin made his

See ALABAMA, C4
announcement to attend Alabama on Monday via Twitter.

"As a child I always dreamt of playing football at the next level," he wrote. "Now that things have fallen together, I have no one to thank more than the man upstairs. I would like to thank my mother and father for being there through the ups and downs, as well as guiding me to ensure that I stay on the right track.

"I am beyond blessed to have family and friends like I do, and you all should know that a child could never ask for a better support system. With that being said, I am BEYOND EXCITED to announce that I am Committing to the University of Alabama."

Arizona, Arkansas, Baylor, Missouri, Oklahoma, Oklahoma State, and others also extended offers to McCutchin.

Earlier this month Alabama snagged another player from the Lonestar State in three-star offensive lineman Damieon George (6-6, 348) of North Shore High School in Houston.

"Would like to say thank you to all the colleges and coaches for recruiting me during the past couple of years," George said via his Twitter account. "It has truly been a blessing and an amazing experience but at this time I would like to Announce that I will be Committing to the University of Alabama."

Three-star tight end Cam Large (6-5, 240) of Dedham, Massachusetts, made a visit to Tuscaloosa this past weekend and announced his decision is narrowed to four schools - Alabama, Georgia, Ohio State and Wisconsin.

2020 ALABAMA COMMITMENTS

- Chris Braswell, DE, 5-star, St. Francis Academy (Baltimore, MD)
- Drew Sanders, Ath., 5-star, Ryan (Denton, TX)
- Quandarrius Robinson, LB, 4-star, Jackson-Olin (Birmingham, AL)
- Jayson Jones, DT, 4-star, Calera (AL)
- Dazzlin Worsham, WR, 4-star, Hewitt-Trussville (Trussville, AL)
- Jackson Bratton, ILB, 4-star, Muscle Shoals (AL)
- Demouy Kennedy, LB, 4-star, Theodore (AL)
- Javier Morton, CB, 4-star, Stephenson (Stone Mountain, GA)
- Malachi Moore, CB, 4-star, Hewitt-Trussville (Trussville, AL)
- Thaiu Jones-Bell, WR, 4-star, Miami Carol City (Opa Locka, FL)
- Roydell Williams, RB, 4-star, Hueytown (AL)
- Brian Branch, DB, 4-star, Sandy Creek (Tyrone, GA)
- Javon Baker, WR, 4-star, McEachern (Powder Springs, GA)
- Traeshon Holden, WR, 4-star, (Narbonne (Harbor City, CA)
- Jah-Marien Latham, DT, 4-star, Pickens County (AL)
- Jahquez Robinson, DB, 4-star, Sandalwood (Jacksonville, FL)
- De'Ricke Wright, LB, 3-star, Gadsden (AL)
- Damien George, OL, 3-star, North Shore (Houston, TX)
- Caden Clark, TE, 3-star, Archbishop Hoban (Akron, OH)
- Seth McLaughlin, OL, 3-star, Buford (Buford, GA)
Saban responds to online sports book that sets over/under on Tide coach’s retirement

By Cecil Hurt
Sports Editor

VESTAVIA HILLS — Hypothetically, Nick Saban could make a killing in Las Vegas.

An online sports book — not quite the MGM Grand but still a legal betting establishment — has set an over/under of 5.5 years before Saban announces his retirement as the head football coach at Alabama. That would put Saban’s tenure at an end in 2023 or before for bettors taking the “under,” or 2024 or beyond for those taking the “over.”

While Saban controls what happens, his reaction in Thursday as he met briefly with reporters before his annual Nick’s Kids charity golf event at the Old Overton Golf Club was one of bemusement.

“I haven’t seen that one,” he said when asked about the proposition wager by a Birmingham television reporter. “It’s amusing.”

Saban said his short stint of home rehabilitation after hip replacement surgery in April was an indication that retirement would not be appealing at this point.

“That’s not something I enjoy,” he said. “When I was at home for a few hours after surgery, I started walking around the yard and I think Miss Terry was about to call the police. So (retirement) is not something I want to do anytime soon, I can tell you that.

See SABAN, C4
"I just enjoy being back on a team so much, the relationships. To have Julio Jones come back the first two days I was doing my rehab on my hip, he was there with me doing it. Tua (Tagovailoa, the starting quarterback for the Crimson Tide) actually came by yesterday when I was doing rehab and gave me a medical examination. Those kind of things are really special.

"So, no time soon. I don't know what Vegas knows that I don't know."

Saban said his hip was "near 100 percent" after the replacement surgery and noted that the self-imposed limits on overextending himself on the charity golf circuit had improved his game.

"I've learned a lot about the game," Saban said as he headed for the practice green. "It's a target game, so it's not about how far you hit it. You actually play better when you hit it straight, so that's been a good thing."

Nick's Kids has raised more than $8 million to help children throughout the area since Nick and Terry Saban arrived in Tuscaloosa in 2007. Nick's Kids completed its project with the Tuscaloosa County Juvenile Detention Center this past year and will partner with Phoenix House and PARA of Tuscaloosa County in 2019.

Reach Cecil Hurt at cecil@tidesports.com or on Twitter at @cecilhurt