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Matt Calderone to step down from Tuscaloosa City Council

By Jason Morton

District 4 representative Matt Calderone has announced that he will be stepping down from the Tuscaloosa City Council by the end of the summer.

Calderone, 28, said his growing family has forced him to relocate to a new home that is outside of his council district, which encompasses the University of Alabama, the nearby historic district neighborhoods and most of downtown Tuscaloosa.

Since council members must live in the district they represent, Calderone said he will resign his post when he completes his move to the Riverdale neighborhood, which is in District 3 in north Tuscaloosa.

“I believe finishing my term is the right thing to do and am more than capable of doing so, and certainly willing to maintain residency in District 4,” the two-term councilman said in a memo to his fellow council members. “However, the commitment that supersedes all others is that to my God, my children, and my wife.

“Although I desire to continue my service on the Council, in order to do what is in my family’s best interest, I will soon no longer be a resident of District 4, which will force me to vacate the remainder of my term. I feel I have always put the best interest of the entire city of Tuscaloosa, not just District 4, first and am tremendously proud of what we all have accomplished together.”

A definitive date has not been set on when Calderone will vacate the seat he has held since 2013, but he told The Tuscaloosa News that he is announcing his plans now in the spirit of transparency.

“I'm not looking to pull the wool over anybody's eyes,” Calderone said. “I don't want anyone questioning my integrity or questioning my family.”

State law requires that the City Council call a special election to fill the position, rather than appointing someone, because it will be more than a year until the next municipal election. Calderone’s term doesn’t end until 2021.

The council will have 30 days from Calderone’s official departure date to call the election. According to state law, the special election must be held not less than 60
days nor more than 90 days from the day the council calls for it, said City Attorney Glenda Webb.

Citing his family and work responsibilities as the deputy secretary of the University of Alabama System’s board of trustees, Calderone said he had not decided whether he would run for elective office again in the future.

Calderone and his wife, Claire, welcomed their third child, Jane Dabney, two months ago. She joins siblings Abigail, 6, and Buddy, 2.

“I wouldn’t rule out getting back into politics someday,” he said, “but it’s all about what you’re called to do.

“My goal is to wake up happy every day.”

Calderone’s election at age 22 made him the second University of Alabama student to be elected to the City Council to represent District Four, after Lee Garrison, who also was 22 and a UA student when he was first elected to the council in 1997.

Garrison served four terms before leaving to run for chairman of the Tuscaloosa City Board of Education in 2013. Garrison won that election and served one term before stepping away from local politics.

Calderone, who came from a working class family in Trussville, said it was the opportunities afforded to him while a UA undergraduate that led him to the City Council.

He said he was particularly proud of founding Live at the Plaza, a free, outdoor concert series hosted by City Hall on Government Plaza that’s now in its fourth year, and the efforts that led to the Tuscaloosa Police Department’s opening of a downtown precinct in February 2015.

His advice for whoever follows him on the council is to listen and learn before making a decision.

“I can say with certainty that every vote I cast, I meant,” Calderone said. “I believe in holding people accountable and voting your conscience. I always voted how I thought was best.
Dr. James Griffith Taaffe

1932 - 2019

Dr. James Griffith Taaffe, age 86, of Tuscaloosa, Alabama, passed away on July 3, 2019.

Dr. Taaffe was born on September 15, 1932, in Cincinnati, Ohio to Griffith Cleve Taaffe and Mary (Ropp) Taaffe. Dr. Taaffe spent his formative years in Washington, D.C., where his father was a loaned executive "dollar a year man" with the War Production Board. After his return to Cincinnati, Dr. Taaffe received an extraordinary education at Walnut Hills High School, a nationally-ranked public college-preparatory high school founded in 1895, before being named a National Scholar recipient and earning his Bachelor of Arts degree (with commendation in English) from Columbia College in 1954, his Master of Arts degree in English in 1956, and his Ph.D. degree in English under the supervision of Professor William Riley Parker in 1960 from The University of Indiana, Bloomington.

After completing his doctoral studies, Dr. Taaffe began his distinguished fifty-year academic career as a Milton scholar at Williams College (1959-62) and Vassar College (1962-64). He then accepted a position at Western Reserve University (now Case Western Reserve University) where he worked from 1964 until 1990. Dr. Taaffe held numerous posts at Case Western, including Department Chair of English, Assistant to the President, Dean of Graduate Studies, Vice President for Undergraduate and Graduate Studies, and University Vice President for Academic Affairs. He holds the titles Professor Emeritus of English and University Vice President Emeritus of Academic Affairs from Case Western Reserve University.

In 1990, then President Roger Sayers recruited Dr. Taaffe to come to The University of Alabama as Academic Vice President and then Provost, a post he held from 1990 until 1996. Dr. Taaffe also held an academic appointment at Alabama as a Professor of English, serving there until his retirement from the University in 2005. He holds the title Professor Emeritus of English from Alabama. Dr. Taaffe authored or co-authored six books on Seventeenth Century poems, poetry, and literary terms, and numerous articles on Milton, Donne, and Jonson, among others. His classes on Seventeenth Century English literature were known for their rigor and were popular among students. Dr. Taaffe directed twenty dissertations and many more MA theses during his many years of service. He introduced thousands of undergraduates to English literary classics.

Dr. Taaffe was also a representative of the College Board, chairing the Advanced Placement English Exam from 1967-73, and a consultant for Boards of Education throughout Ohio. Over his career, Dr. Taaffe received numerous honors, including National Scholar at Columbia, New York State Fellow in Oriental Literature, Newberry Library Fellow, and the National Endowment for the Humanities Fellow.
Dr. Taaffe was married to Donna Kay Click until her death in 1986. They had two children, Lauren Taaffe and Patrick Taaffe. In 1987, Dr. Taaffe married Allison Scott Blair of Cleveland, Ohio, adding another son, Michael Taaffe, and they remained married until his death.

Dr. Taaffe was preceded in death by his parents, his stepmother Alma Click, his brother Stephen Taaffe, his sister Mary Taaffe Thomas, his wife, Donna, and his son, Michael. He is survived by his wife Allison; his children, Lauren and Patrick and their children; his nieces Mary Jane Stuart (David Stuart) and Karen Thomas Griffith (Fred Griffith) and their children; his nephew Bill Thomas (Amy) and their children; and numerous other loved ones in Cincinnati, Cleveland, Tuscaloosa, and elsewhere.

Dr. Taaffe enjoyed traveling and fine dining, especially with Allison. One of his favorite places to dine was Galatoire’s where he shared special meals with family and friends. Dr. Taaffe was also an avid fisherman, sharing that hobby with many of his closest friends at Case and Alabama. In recent years, he often fished with friends such as, Joab Thomas, Doug Jones, Bill Darden, Tom Rogers, Alan Goode, Don Crump, Barry Mason, and Stan Murphy at Roger Sayers’ farm, where they enjoyed fall days of fishing, dinners of venison, and good libations and conversation by the fireplace. Dr. Taaffe also enjoyed attending UA baseball games.

Memorials may be made to Walnut Hills High School in Cincinnati, Ohio. The family sends special thanks to the doctors and nurses at DCH Regional Medical Center for providing excellent care for Dr. Taaffe. As John Milton wrote, "Death is the golden key that opens the palace of eternity."
Cooper Green leader to resign

By: Tyler Patchen

 Arnika Berkley, executive director of Cooper Green Mercy Health Services, has resigned her position.

 "The county was disappointed to receive the resignation of Cooper Green Director Arnika Berkley on Tuesday," said Jefferson County CEO and County Manager Tony Petelos. "However, we have hired a new deputy director for Cooper Green, Laura Hurst, and she will be starting on July 8. It will be great to have some overlap in leadership between these two professionals for a smooth transition."  

Berkley was not immediately available to comment.

Hurst came to Cooper Green from the Wyoming Department of Health's Public Health Division, where she served as section chief for Health Readiness and Response.

"While we regret Berkley's departure we believe we are gaining solid leadership for the future," Petelos said.

The resignation comes as Jefferson County and UAB Health System are in a due diligence period to negotiate the potential creation of a health care authority that would oversee Cooper Green, which provides indigent care in the Birmingham and is an important piece of the local health care landscape.

Berkley, a recent Top 40 Under 40 honoree, came to Cooper Green after previously working in Memphis, where she held several administrative and board positions throughout some of the city's health care organizations.
Patrick Murphy: Inspiring entrepreneurship at UAB

By: Tyler Patchen

On Wednesdays at the newly built Collat School of Business, students, faculty and business leaders meet around lunchtime to discuss different topics in business and entrepreneurship. It’s one of the many new ideas that Patrick Murphy is bringing to the table as UAB looks to bridge the education and business communities in Birmingham and establish an even larger presence in the Magic City’s entrepreneurial world.

In 2018, Murphy was hired for the Goodrich Endowed Chair of Innovation and Entrepreneurship after spending several years in academia, culminating in professor of management and entrepreneurship at DePaul University in Chicago.

In Chicago, Murphy built a successful entrepreneurship program that made significant contributions to the Windy City’s entrepreneurial ecosystem, and he’s looking to do the same in Birmingham.

Prior to his career in academia, Murphy worked for a French multinational company and served in the United States Navy, where he was a certified harbor tugboat chief engineer at the age of 19.

The BBJ sat down with Murphy to learn more about where he wants to take UAB’s foray into entrepreneurship and his stance on bridging the academic and business worlds.

What advice do you have for those mentoring entrepreneurs? Never let the learning process or the slow progress of students ever frustrate you. If you do, you’re not being professional. Also, “treat the big things like they are little things, so you remain bold. Treat the little things like they’re big things so that you remain careful.” When you’re building something or trying to launch a new venture, or make a big impact, it’s important to be bold, but you also have to be careful.

If you could have any other job, what would it be? Outside of academia, I would like to be a professional writer and author who gives lectures and things like that. Probably an author. To me, freedom and free time are the most important things of all.

Terry Humphryes said he looked in the surrounding villages in Mountain Brook but was unable to find a location that fit what he was looking for.

Hoover City Council OKs incentives for grocery store development
Planning documents show a planned 48,000-square-foot grocery store at a development in Hoover.

If you could go back, what would you say to your 22-year-old self? Work harder. I mean, I’ve always been a hard worker and taken my career very seriously, but I would try even harder. I would tell myself I’m on the right path, but just push harder.

What is your favorite thing about Birmingham? The authenticity in the culture that exists around people and identity. I’ve had a lot of very authentic conversations here, with a lot of different people. There is an authenticity and genuineness here that is refreshing. People actually will tell me if they don’t like something. Whereas in some other places I’ve lived, people don’t always put all their cards on the table right away.

How does Birmingham’s entrepreneurial atmosphere compare to other places you’ve lived? I like the revitalization that is occurring in the local ecosystem. I have a lot of experience in developing an entrepreneurial ecosystem. I was part of a big one. The culture is different here, but the underlying principles are pretty much the same. How the principles are expressed behaviorally and the actions and the decisions that you make need to be tailored to fit the culture, but the fact that we’re on the front end of this developing community of entrepreneurial energy is probably the most exciting thing to me.

What are some things Birmingham can do to improve? Make it easier for a lot of young people to live downtown. I think things are moving generally in that direction, (with new developments in Five Points), but it is very important because I’ve met a lot of young people in this region who want to live in the city but can’t due to availability, price or whatnot. And therefore they live in their hometowns and commute in. Make it easier for a lot of young people to live as close to the city center as possible. I think things tend to be moving in that direction, but that is one thing that I think should be a strategic focus.

Where would you like the center to be five years from now? I want us to have a UAB entrepreneurship ecosystem with a couple of principled components. The first one will be a well-defined community of UAB students who are aspiring entrepreneurs and they’ll be in classes at the moment, or they’ll be in the process of graduation. Our job will be to serve them with resources and knowledge but connect them with resources to help them grow their businesses. The second one will be the Birmingham entrepreneurship community. I’m meeting with a local firm right now — we’re going to build a web app that will serve the entrepreneurial ecosystem with a go-to place if they are looking for interns, if they want to advertise, if they want to know about events, if they want to announce important milestones in their business for all the ventures in Birmingham.
Why UAB's new Learfield IMG deal is big win for Blazers

By: Tyler Patchen

The University of Alabama at Birmingham Department of Athletics has inked a long-term multimedia rights extension with Learfield IMG College that will provide significant revenue for UAB.

According to the contract, the new 10-year agreement, which runs through 2029, includes $15.825 million in guaranteed royalties for UAB. It also includes a $1 million signing bonus, as well as other potential revenue from a revenue-sharing agreement.

"We are excited to continue our strategic relationship with Learfield IMG College," UAB Director of Athletics Mark Ingram said. "The company plays an integral role in our efforts to drive additional revenue that allows us to provide a world-class experience for our student-athletes, and position the UAB brand for continued growth."

Ingram said the deal will offer financial stability for the athletic program, which has recently found success both on the field and on the fundraising trail after the reinstatement of its football program.

"Financial stability allows you to provide a world class experience for your student athletes. And that's what we're aiming to do here," he said. "Our students get a world class education in the classroom and so it's my job to help provide them the same world class experience as an athlete and that is what we're intending to do."

The guaranteed royalty would start at $1.245 million for the 2019-2020 athletic season and rise to $1.92 million by 2028-2029.

The revenue sharing threshold would start at $2.3 million in 2019-2020 and rise to $3.65 million by 2028-2029.

The agreement will allow Learfield IMG College to create opportunities for corporate brands and UAB fans to engage with the athletic teams through digital and broadcast platforms as well as through promotions, signage and other advertising assets.

"It's a privilege to represent the Blazers. We're honored to work with Mark and the entire athletic administration to help grow the UAB brand in new and innovative ways," Learfield IMG College president and CEO Greg Brown said.

Billy's Sports Grill in English Village to close after 40 years
Terry Humphryes said he looked in the surrounding villages in Mountain Brook but was unable to find a location that fit what he was looking for.

According to the contract, starting in the third through the seventh year of the deal, the guaranteed royalty includes an annual equipment stipend equal to $300,000 to be utilized by UAB for the purchase of mutually agreed upon equipment to create new sponsorship equipment to be installed throughout UAB athletic facilities.

This includes an I-65 billboard, and advertising on the baseball stadium scoreboard, softball and track boards.

“It’s a professional organization, it's well known nationally to be a leader in this space, so the relationship with them will certainly help to legitimize who we are to partner with a company like that,” Ingram said.
Study reveals HudsonAlpha generated $2.45B impact on Alabama economy

By: Kyle Morris

A new study by the Center for Management & Economic Research at the University of Alabama in Huntsville found the HudsonAlpha Institute for Biotechnology has generated a $2.45B impact on Alabama’s economy.

The study, which was released Monday, measured impacts from employment, revenue and capital expenditures, including construction and equipment purchases. The institute’s largest impact dollar-wise, 71%, was due to its research, testing, and medical labs.

“HudsonAlpha has been instrumental in growing the business of biotech in North Alabama. Just over ten years ago, there were only a few people and companies dedicated to working in biotech, but now HudsonAlpha has a remarkable track record of success and growth,” said Jim Hudson, co-founder of HudsonAlpha. “These numbers show that the model we [Hudson and co-founder Lonnie McMillian] created works and that we’re positioned for the future.”

According to HudsonAlpha, the study evaluated data through 2018 from more than 30 resident associate companies. The company now serves more than 40 resident associate companies.

“This study reflects our ability to train, recruit and retain top biotech talent in Alabama and help strengthen the state’s economy,” Rick Myers, PhD, HudsonAlpha president and science director stated. “It’s important to have our campus contribute economic value and provide higher-wage jobs in Alabama in an industry that is advancing human healthcare and the sustainability of food and energy resources.”

According to the study, “HudsonAlpha has contributed 2,063 direct and multiplier jobs to Alabama with an estimated $863 million in payroll since 2006.”

“HudsonAlpha is a critical component to Alabama being in position to expand our bioscience activity,” Alabama Gov. Kay Ivey stated. “The positive impact of HudsonAlpha and the 40+ biotech companies to Alabama’s economy is remarkable but there is so much more that they do for our state.”

She added, “HudsonAlpha is making breakthroughs on cancer, working with Alabama farmers for better crops, diagnosing rare disease for children and educating students, teachers and the public. I can’t wait to see what’s next for HudsonAlpha.”
Second man charged in killing of UAB student

'This was not a random shooting'

Carol Robinson crobinson@al.com

A second suspect has been arrested in the fatal shooting of a UAB student outside the Riverchase Galleria six days ago.

Hoover police on Tuesday announced capital murder charges against Dannarious De Shon Washington, 20, in the death of Zachariah Taylor Music.

"I think by now everyone knows this situation involved drugs and an armed robbery attempt," said Hoover police Capt. Gregg Rector. "There was some planning in advance by the suspects, and we are continuing to sort out everyone's specific involvement.

"Additional arrests are certainly still a possibility."

Police have also charged 20-year-old Michael Jabari Akamune with murder in Music's death.

Hoover police and firefighters responded about 1:30 p.m. on June 26 to the fifth floor of the North Parking Deck at the shopping mall in Hoover. They arrived to find Music inside a vehicle suffering from multiple gunshot wounds. He was pronounced dead on the scene at 1:39 p.m.

"This was not a random shooting, and we were aware of that within the first 10 minutes of arriving on the scene," Rector said following Akamune's arrest. "We have several individuals who were engaged in high-risk activities, and sometimes those activities turn tragic."

Police said a group of people were together atop the mall parking deck when Music was shot.

"Some of those individuals are being cooperative and some are not," Rector said. "It's outrageous, but not surprising, that some people who have knowledge of someone being murdered are less than cooperative with investigators."

Detectives obtained the warrant against Akamune on Saturday. He was booked into the Jefferson County Jail just before 2 p.m. His bond was initially set at $60,000 but now is $150,000.

Police said Washington will be transferred to the Jefferson County Jail, where he will be held without bond.

"There were lots of terrible decisions made last Wednesday," Rector said, "and all of those individuals are now going to be held accountable for their actions."

Music is Hoover's third homicide victim of 2019 and the 87th in all of Jefferson County this year.

Anyone with information about the case is asked to call Sgt. Matt Savage at 205-739-6780. Tipsters who want to remain anonymous and qualify for a cash reward can call Crime Stoppers at 205-254-7777.
Conecuh named official smoked sausage of the Crimson Tide

By Staff report

Fans can have a little extra pig with their pigskin on Bryant-Denny Stadium Saturdays this season.

Crimson Tide Sports Marketing announced Monday that beginning this season, popular Alabama-based Conecuh Sausage will be the exclusive smoked sausage marketed by the Crimson Tide Sports Network.

“We’re excited about reaching more Crimson Tide fans with Conecuh Sausage, and we are pleased to be working with (Alabama) Athletics and Crimson Tide Sports Marketing,” said John Sessions, owner/operator of Conecuh Sausage Company in Evergreen. “We look forward to a successful partnership and can’t wait to get started with Alabama football.”

As part of the relationship, the Alabama Football pregame tailgate show will be titled The Conecuh Sausage Crimson Tide Tailgate Party. The brand also will receive exposure at University of Alabama athletic facilities, and Conecuh Sausage will be served as a concessions menu item at Bryant-Denny Stadium and other on-campus sports venues during the collegiate athletics season.

“It’ll be great to kick off the relationship with Conecuh Sausage next season, and we look forward to adding Conecuh’s high quality, Alabama-made smoked sausage as one of our valued partners,” said Learfield IMG College Vice President and Crimson Tide Sports Marketing General Manager Jim Carabin.

News of the addition to the Bryant-Denny bill of fare was greeted warmly on social media on Monday.

Conecuh Sausage Company is a family owned and operated business which began in 1947 in Evergreen, Alabama.

The Southeastern Conference also has an official smoked sausage, Johnsonville, which will continue to be represented at SEC events.
Alabama football ranks highest among UA athletics teams last year

By Edwin Stanton / Executive Sports Editor

It’s hard to dethrone the king.

The Alabama football team didn’t win its 18th national championship this past season, but its runner-up finish was the best among UA athletic teams in the 2018-19 year.

For the fifth straight year and sixth time in nine seasons, the football team took the No. 1 spot in the annual rankings of Alabama sports.

The football team finished 14-1, its only loss coming against Clemson in the national title game. The last time the football team didn’t hold the top spot in The Tuscaloosa News rankings was for 2013-14, when it checked in at No. 5 after finishing the season 12-2, despite being ranked No. 1 in the country for most of that season.

Alabama’s softball team jumped from sixth in last year’s rankings to No. 2 after a 60-10 record with an SEC title and a semifinal appearance in the Women’s College World Series.

Women’s track finished in seventh place in both the indoor and outdoor NCAA championships and earned the No. 3 ranking.

Men’s and women’s golf were second and third, respectively, last season, but the men fell to No. 8 and the women were No. 7 this year.

Rankings

Alabama Football

Record: 14-1

SEC record: 8-0

SEC finish: First

National finish: Second
Softball
Record: 60-10
SEC record: 18-6
SEC finish: SEC champions, second in SEC tournament
National finish: Semifinals of Women’s College World Series

Women’s track
SEC finish: third indoor, fifth outdoor
National finish: seventh indoor, seventh outdoor

Men’s swimming
SEC finish: sixth at SEC Championships
National finish: Seventh at NCAA Championships

Men’s track
SEC finish: Fourth indoor, fifth outdoor
National finish: Eighth indoor, 10th outdoor

Gymnastics
Record: 6-7
SEC finish: Third
NCAA finish: Third at NCAA regionals

Women’s golf
SEC finish: 11th in stroke play
NCAA finish: Tied for eighth at Auburn Regional

Men’s golf
SEC finish: 14th
NCAA finish: 11th at Athens Regional

Men’s basketball
Record: 18-16  
SEC record: 8-10  
SEC finish: 10th  
NCAA finish: First round NIT

**Women's swimming and diving**
SEC finish: 11th at SEC Championships  
NCAA finish: 34th at NCAA Championships

**Men's tennis**
Record: 16-11  
SEC record: 5-7  
SEC finish: Second round SEC tournament  
NCAA finish: First round NCAA regional*  
*Runner-up in NCAA doubles championships

**Rowing**
Conference: Second in the Big 12 Championships  
NCAA finish: Did not make postseason

**Women's tennis**
Record: 18-12  
SEC record: 6-7  
SEC finish: First round SEC tournament  
NCAA finish: First round NCAA regional

**Men's cross country**
SEC finish: Sixth  
NCAA finish: Sixth in South Regional

**Women's cross country**
SEC finish: Ninth
NCAA finish: Eighth at South Regional

Volleyball
Record: 20-12
SEC record: 7-11
SEC finish: Seventh
NCAA finish: Did not make postseason

Baseball
Record: 30-26
SEC record: 7-23
SEC finish: Seventh in SEC West
NCAA finish: Did not make postseason

Women’s basketball
Record: 14-17
SEC record: 5-11
SEC finish: 11th
NCAA finish: Did not make postseason

Soccer
Record: 8-8-3
SEC record: 1-6-2
SEC finish: 11th
NCAA finish: Did not make postseason

See next page
Men’s swimming jumped four spots to No. 4 after a seventh-place showing in the NCAA Championships.

Baseball, women’s basketball and soccer finished at the bottom of the list.
By: Staff

University of Alabama at Birmingham

• Selwyn Vickers, M.D., senior vice president and dean of the University of Alabama at Birmingham School of Medicine, has been named as the 2019 Dr. James T. Black Award recipient by the 100 Black Men of America, Inc. Vickers accepted the national award, which is given to one physician annually, at The Chairman’s Awards Luncheon in Las Vegas last week.

Vickers learned the value of a mentor and community servant as a teenager. Born in Demopolis and raised in Tuscaloosa and Huntsville, he was inspired by his uncle, Leroy Vickers, M.D. The younger Vickers was 15 when his uncle became the first physician to graduate from Tuscaloosa’s Stillman College in the early 1970s. He had the opportunity to see how his uncle cared for the sick, and it motivated him to seek a career in medicine, where he has become a world-renowned surgeon, pancreatic cancer researcher and pioneer in health disparities research.

Vickers currently leads the research collaborative Center for Healthy African American Men through Partnerships, which is a first-of-its-kind consortium of academic centers and community organizations that works to develop, implement and evaluate interventions to improve African American men’s health through research, outreach and training.

Vickers was named dean of UAB’s School of Medicine in August 2013 after leading the University of Minnesota Medical School’s Department of Surgery. He previously served on UAB faculty from 1994-2006.
Here’s a look a some of the top stories of 2019 (so far)

By: Staff

The University of Alabama returned a donation of more than $20 million, the city of Tuscaloosa advanced plans for a 1-cent sales tax hike and UA mourned the loss of a superfan and a super quarterback. At the midway point of 2019, it’s already been an eventful year for big stories in the Tuscaloosa area. And we haven’t even mentioned the renegade python whose escape transfixed the city. While there’s still six months left in the year, some might already be referring to 2019 as the Year of the Python in Tuscaloosa.

Jan. 8: Alabama’s bid to win back-to-back national football championships ended in Santa Clara, California, with a 44-16 crushing at the hands of Clemson. UA’s loss also led to a substantial changes in the coaching staff, with Nick Saban bringing in Steve Sarkisian to run the offense and elevating Pete Golding to defensive coordinator for the fall. The game also marked Jalen Hurts’ last action in a Crimson Tide uniform as the quarterback announced he would transfer to Oklahoma.

April 9: The Tuscaloosa City Council moved closer to the city’s first sales tax increase since 1991. The push to raise the city’s sales tax from 9 cents to 10 cents on every dollar was led by Mayor Walt Maddox as a way to fund the Elevate Tuscaloosa plan. Elevate Tuscaloosa calls for spending more than $500 million in education, transportation, recreation and public safety projects over the next three decades

May 26: Bart Starr, who played college football at UA before having a stellar career with the NFL’s Green Bay Packers, died at the age of 85 in Birmingham. Starr quarterbacked Green Bay to five NFL championships, including wins in Super Bowl I and II. The NFL legend was remembered not only for his winning ways on the football field, but also for the strength of his character.

June 6: Walt Gary, a superfan of UA athletics, died at the age of 36. Walt, who was born with Down syndrome, worked at the UA Supe Store and was known for his pregame meetings with Nick Saban, when Walt would give his prediction for the Crimson Tide’s upcoming game. “Walt did way more for me than I ever did for him,” Saban said during a celebration of Walt’s life held in the north zone at Bryant-Denny Stadium. “His optimism was fantastic. Just the passion and being positive. I think the inspiration he had on all of us was because of those two things.”

June 7: The University of Alabama System board of trustees approved the return of a nearly $26 million donation to Florida lawyer and investor Hugh Culverhouse Jr. Culverhouse made the donation to the UA School of Law in September 2018 and UA named the law school after him. But in late May, Culverhouse publicly urged a boycott of the state and UA over the Alabama Legislature’s recently approved near-total ban on abortion. Culverhouse also took to the pages of
the Washington Post, asserting that UA was returning his donation over his stance on the abortion law. A statement from UA disputed Culverhouse's version of events, saying the decision to return Culverhouse's donation was because of his interference with the administration of the law school.

June 9: The fatal shooting of 18-year-old Elexis McCool led to the arrest of two teenagers. Police say a 14-year-old boy who was a passenger in McCool's SUV fired the fatal gunshots. He was charged with murder. His 15-year-old brother was charged with theft of the vehicle, abuse of a corpse for abandoning a body and obstructing governmental operations. This shooting and a subsequent shooting in the parking lot of a payday loan business on McFarland Boulevard in the middle of midday traffic prompted Mayor Walt Maddox to give Police Chief Steve Anderson authority to take measures to get guns off the streets.

June 17: A 15-foot yellow python was reported missing in the Alberta area. Animal control officers searched yards, trees, storm drains and crawlspaces across the Arcadia and Windsor Drive areas, with no luck. Spurred by television coverage, the sneaky snake became a social media darling. The Twitter account "T-Town Python" topped 5,000 followers. The official account for Alexander Shunnarah's Birmingham law firm tweeted "Give me a call!" and Mayor Walt Maddox invited the snake to attend Friday night's Live at the Plaza event. Greg Byrne, UA's director of athletics, tweeted that the snake was not welcome at Bryant-Denny Stadium but that the rambling reptile was welcome to cheer on the Tide from any other location. Egan's Bar was serving a Yellow Python 'shot in the snake's honor. Tuscaloosa probably hasn't talked this much about a snake since Kenny Stabler quarterbacked the Crimson Tide. As of press time, the python was still on the loose.
State funding puts focus on graduation rates

By: Mary Sell and Todd Stacy

MONTGOMERY — Auburn University at Montgomery recently implemented "intrusive advising" on campus.

Students at risk of not doing well academically have to meet with an adviser to talk through their progress, whether they want to or not.

"We try to get to the student early to find out why they're struggling," Auburn Montgomery Chancellor Carl Stockton recently told Alabama Daily News. Do they not understand the material? Are they working too much to pay tuition and other bills? Or is it something else?

"It they're honest with us, we have ways to help those students," Stockton said.

But getting to them early is key to their success, and though it is improving, the Capital City commuter university's graduation rate still lags behind. Of all the first-year, full-time students who entered Auburn Montgomery in 2011, 28 percent graduated within six years.

AUM is not alone among state institutions. And as the Alabama Legislature looks to move toward performance-based funding for state universities, campus leaders are eager to show improvements.

The national average for more than 2,300 universities was 55.5%. Only two Alabama universities — the Auburn University and the University of Alabama flagship campuses — did better than that national average.

Several state universities told Alabama Daily News their rates have improved in recent years and highlighted plans to build upon those gains. Some noted their missions to educate Alabama students, even those unprepared for college, as a factor in their rates.

Jim Purcell, Executive Director of the Alabama Commission on Higher Education, pointed to some statewide initiatives to get more students to graduate, including stressing 15-credit hour semesters and more financial aid opportunities.

"Often, time is the enemy," Purcell said.

The commission recently began publishing university "accountability metrics" on its website, including graduation rates. University leaders met for more than a year about how to assess their performances.

Accountability at all levels of public education has become a focus for some state leaders in Montgomery and soon at least some university funding could be tied to graduation rates. The state will allocate about $1.2 billion to the 14 public universities in its 2019-2020 education budget.
Graduation rates of 20 and 30-some percent rates aren’t acceptable, the Senate education budget chairman Sen. Arthur Orr, R-Decatur, said recently.

“If we’re — the taxpayers — investing in students, in their high education, but they’re not receiving degrees, we’re not getting a good return on our investment,” Orr said. “Meanwhile, the students, who may be going into debt, are’t receiving a return on their investments.”

Orr said it’s “very possible” a framework for outcome-based funding for the state’s four-year colleges will be finalized in the 2020 legislation session.

Besides graduation rates, a funding formula could include factors like student-teacher ratios and debt load, Orr said.

**Funding factor**

State lawmakers passed a record-high education budget in the recently-concluded legislative session. However, while the K-12 portion was funded at or above pre-recession levels, the higher education portion was not. Each state university received a funding increase of at least 6%, but overall funding still lags behind what it did in the mid-to-late 2000s.

Gordon Stone, who advocates for state university funding as the executive director of the Alabama Higher Education Partnership, said boosting state funding is key to improving graduation rates.

“If we increase state funding to universities, we lower the pressure that we have on tuition, fees, and ultimately student debt — and that’s important,” Stone said.

“The reality is that the numbers can be a little misleading. But if we had more resources we could help these students catch up, and what we don’t want to do is discourage them from pursuing that four-year degree that gives them that greater income potential.”

The University of North Alabama specifically cited funding when talking about graduation rates. At UNA, the graduation rate for the 2012 enrollees increased to 46 percent, officials said.

“Unlike many peer institutions in the state, UNA is growing and launching new, in-demand programs at the graduate and undergraduate levels that lead directly to good jobs,” in myriad sectors, UNA Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost Ross Alexander said.

“More than 85% of all UNA students are Alabama residents, and more than two-thirds choose to remain in Alabama to pursue careers. The university is quite proud that its six-year graduation rate is improving, as it will be one important criterion for eventual performance funding.”

Purcell has said some universities have been underfunded by the state. Alexander said UNA is 63% funded compared to its national peers.

“So, despite this historic pattern of underfunding, UNA is growing, adding relevant programs, increasing its graduation rate through an intentional strategy, and educating the current and future workforce of Alabama,” Alexander said.
Pell factor

Several universities told Alabama Daily News that if they’re going to be judged by their graduation rates, the number of Pell Grant recipients they enroll needs to be considered.

Federal Pell Grants usually are awarded only to undergraduate students who display “exceptional financial need,” according to the U.S. Department of Education. Unlike loans, Pell Grants don’t have to be repaid. But the grants don’t cover the tab for most educations. The maximum Federal Pell Grant for the 2019–20 award year is $6,195.

At every Alabama university, Pell Grant recipients are significantly less likely to graduate within six years than students without the grants or subsidized loans, according to ACHE data. Alabama A&M University and Alabama State University have the highest percentage of students with Pell Grants. They also have some of the lowest graduation rates.

“Some students face more barriers to college completion than others,” ASU President Quinton Ross told Alabama Daily News. “Research has shown that students who are the first in their family to attend college, and come from families that lack the monetary resources to financially support their education, face particular challenges in college, making it more difficult to complete. In addition, some students arrive on college campuses less academically prepared and have to complete additional work, which takes more time.

“Approximately 75% of ASU students come from low-income households, and as many as 50% are first-generation students. Additionally, a large number of our students are from under-resourced K-12 school systems, resulting in some requiring additional academic support.”

At Alabama A&M, 71% percent of students receive Pell Grants and 37% are first-generation college students, according to spokesman Jerome Saintjones.

“Institutions that strive for accessibility tend to have lower graduation rates nationally, while those that are more selective have higher rates,” Saintjones said in an emailed statement.

“States that are serious about social mobility should provide greater resources and support for institutions that seek to expand access to underrepresented populations,” Saintjones said. “As a public (historically black college and university), the core of our mission speaks to access and opportunity, and we remain committed to this cause. While we continue to work toward improving our graduation rate, our current graduation rate is reflective of our mission.”

Auburn University had the highest graduation rate in the state at 77%, according to recent data. The University of Alabama in Tuscaloosa had the second-highest graduation rate at 68%. Auburn and Alabama also have the first- and second-lowest percentage of students with Pell Grants, respectively.

“Universities that are more selective like Alabama and Auburn would have a greater graduations rates,” Purcell said. That’s the national trend.

That should be taken into account, Orr said. The performance-based funding formula won’t compare universities’ graduation to one another, but improvements should be expected Orr said.

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"We have to realize that some schools have higher needs," he said.

"It’s unreasonable and unfair to say that all publicly-supported institutions need to be at 70%.”

Transfer-out rates

At the University of West Alabama, the 33% graduation rate is one advisers are working to improve, focusing especially on early intervention with freshmen and sophomores.

But Richard Hester, UWA’s vice president for student affairs, said another number is important.

For the entering freshman in 2011, 27% transferred to another university.

“The (graduation rate) formula does not allow us to count the graduates in the two-year programs that we offer in the School of Nursing or the College of Business and Technology,” Hester said.

AUM’s Stockton agreed that smaller schools get penalized by the transfer rates.

“Those kids count as dropouts for us,” he said.

The University of West Alabama is a rural, low-income, high-poverty area.

“A great many of our students will come to UWA and no other university,” President Ken Tucker told Alabama Daily News. “Or stated differently, if they don’t come to us to get a higher education, they don’t go anywhere else to attend college. We provide them with the knowledge, skills, ability, and confidence to embark on a good career with good benefits, where they can make meaningful contributions to their community, the economy, and society in general.”

"... The important thing to keep in mind about performance-based funding is that all schools are not created equal. There are major differences in mission and role, as well as student populations, which will certainly impact performance measures. As long as these and other factors are objectively accounted for, the performance-based funding model can be successful.”

Making improvements

Several universities said their graduation rates have improved in recent years and continue to do so, according to the yet-unpublished 2012 enrollee data.

According to AUM, their graduation rate has improved from 22% to 34% for first-year, full-time students.

Six years ago, Jacksonville State University’s graduation rate was 29%. The Alabama Commission on Higher Education published number is 37% and the school said the most recent number is 39%.

The university pointed to expanded tutoring services, a better method for determining freshmen’s math placement and readiness and a “Grades First” early alert system to identify and support struggling students “before they reach a point of non-recovery.”
In a written response from JSU, officials said that if the Alabama Legislature plans to implement a performance-based funding approach, the university hopes metrics are developed that are based on fair and accurate data points.

“As a regional university, JSU has a large population of first-generation college students,” the statement said. “Our students have less support than those from larger flagship schools and are often working multiple jobs and even supporting a family while attending college. Many of our students are pulling themselves out of poverty and lifting entire families, neighborhoods and communities along with them. Therefore, they often need more time to reach their academic and career goals.”

**Students need support**

Stockton, the AUM Chancellor, said about his students what several regional universities told Alabama Daily News.

“The challenge really is, for us, the students that come to AUM really need a lot of support,” he said.

“You take in a student with 32 ACT (score), whose family has gone to college, who doesn’t have to work, they are going to be more successful,” Stockton said.

But that’s not always the situation of AUM students.

In the 2016-17 academic year, 44 percent of AUM students received Pell Grants. More than half the student population are first-generation college enrollees, and most students qualify for some other form of financial aid.

“Being a student-centered campus means paying attention to our students,” Stockton said.

Knowing what’s going on with students is what Orr said state leaders want from universities.

“When Johnny doesn’t show up for class for two weeks, is he at the bars, or is he at home caring for a sick parent because he’s the only one who can?” Orr said.

"... Schools need to not just take a tuition check, but be invested in the whole student.”
‘Be Like Walt’ T-shirt sales raise money for scholarships

By: Drew Taylor

Walt Gary loved the Supply Store at the University of Alabama.

The way his grandmother, Betty Shirley, remembers it, former UA President Robert Witt once went to visit Gary during his shift years ago. Witt and Shirley’s husband, George, were close friends from his time on the UA board of trustees. In fact, Shirley said Witt saw to it that Walt got a job at the store.

“He saw him and said, ‘Bob, I can’t talk to you now. I’m busy,’ ” Shirley said Friday.

Walt, a longtime Alabama fan known to meet with Nick Saban every Thursday during the football season to give his prediction for that Saturday’s game, worked at the Supply Store for 10 years. He died June 6 following a series of health problems. Walt, who had Down syndrome, was 36.

“He had a lot of people that were good to him there,” Shirley said.

Now, the Supply Store is selling merchandise celebrating Gary’s life, all with the phrase “#BeLikeWalt.” Proceeds from the merchandise, which includes T-shirts and buttons, will go toward the Walt Gary Scholarship in Special Education, which will help students who want to major in special education get into college at UA.

“When we were notified that the Walt Gary Scholarship in Special Education was created, our staff wanted to continue Walt’s legacy,” said Bernadette Chavira-Trull, director of the UA Supply Store, in a news release. “We decided to sell a couple of products where 100% of the profits from the sale of the merchandise will benefit the scholarship. This fundraising project would not have been possible without the support of the Gary family and UA.”

Shirley said she and her family have been touched by the outpouring of love and support from the community since Gary’s death.

“We miss him, but we’re doing well,” she said.

Saban was one of the many who have celebrated Gary’s life, calling him one of the most inspirational people he had ever met.

“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.
College campus construction in Alabama shows no sign of slowing

By: Lily Jackson

It’s unlikely colleges and universities in Alabama will slow the pace of construction anytime soon.

Competition and research will continue to push them, and there is no clear line for what is enough.

Approximately $1 billion is being spent this summer by just five universities looked at this week by AL.com. But Alabama isn’t alone. More than 50 percent of all projects nationwide that started in 2018 were major renovations or modernizations and more than 20 percent were new buildings, according to College Planning and Management, a best-practices magazine.

More than $90 billion was spent on educational construction in the United States in 2018, a total that includes both public and private institutions. EducationDive.com says the campus building boom began after the Great Recession.

The University of South Alabama is building a simulation lab this summer.

Meanwhile, 39 percent of universities surveyed said the amount of funds available for these massive capital projects has not changed.

More than $90 billion was spent on educational construction in the United States in 2018, a total that includes both public and private institutions. The research suggesting these innovative changes and additions to campus are necessary is overwhelming, said Julie Huff, director of Strategic Initiatives and Communications for Auburn’s Office of the Provost, and ignoring such would “hamper” a students’ education.

The University of South Alabama has budgeted $12.9 million for a medical simulation lab, Auburn University is close to finishing its engineering student achievement center with a $22 million price tag and the University of Alabama is dedicating $40 million to a performing arts center -- a mere fraction of the $400 million it is spending and of the funds across the state dedicated to new research, activity and residence halls.

This three-story building for engineering student achievement will house classrooms, study space, a wind-tunnel laboratory and space for academic advising, tutoring, and professional development.

Colleges and universities are no longer just places for learning, said a post from the College Planning and Management, they are “living laboratories.” New facilities translate to leveled-up learning and experience, Huff said.
“Higher education must constantly evolve as we learn from solid research on how to best facilitate learning environments and prepare students for post-graduate success,” she said. “For example, medical schools should offer the best facilities to train the best doctors who will provide the best health care.”

Research isn’t the only driving force. Student recruitment and ongoing competition among state colleges and universities hold the key to many in higher education decision-making. And some schools and colleges are working to correct neglected upgrades and maintenance while the economy is strong.

Sixty-seven percent of students said facilities are critical when deciding where they’d like to attend college, according to a survey published by the Association of University Directors of Estates. This might explain the $21 million aquatics center at the University of Alabama or the $32 million recreation and wellness center at Jacksonville State University.

Facilities like these -- recreation facilities, student centers and more -- are a necessity to compete in today’s higher education realm, said Michael Harkins, vice president of marketing and communications for the University of South Alabama, on a driving tour of the university.
New book chronicles Alabama’s success under Nick Saban

By: Mark Hughes Cobb

In the 1960s, legendary University of Alabama football coach Paul W. “Bear” Bryant led teams to 90 victories and 10 bowl games, scoring three national championships, with a potential fourth had picks not been made pre-bowl back then. In the ’70s, as college teams averaged 11 games per season, Bear’s squads won 103 games, tacking on three more national championships.

Before Bear, UA had rolled other bright crimson decades. Under Wallace Wade, the Crimson Tide won three national championships between 1923 and 1930, and became the first Southern team to blossom in the Rose Bowl. Other programs can boast of streaks — Florida State in the ’90s, Nebraska in the ’80s, Oklahoma in the ’50s — but by a multitude of rubrics, the greatest 10-year-run belongs to the ongoing Nick Saban era, specifically the span from 2009-2018.

“When they kept winning national titles, where do you draw the line? Where do you start it? Where do you finish it?” said Christopher Walsh, writer of the book “Decade of Dominance,” building on a 10-part series he wrote for SEC Country following the same assertion. “Certain statistical things have always been in the back of my mind, so when we got toward the end of the first decade of Saban …. I thought there might be something like a project or a book there.

“And for me, the defining moments are the national championships, so the book starts with 2009, and ends with 2018.”

That encompasses five golden rings, six Southeastern Conference championships and eight division titles, a win-loss decade record of 127-13. From tsunami recruiting classes sprang more consensus All-Americans (35) and NFL draft selections (87, with 29 first-round picks) than anyone, including the Tide’s first two Heisman winners, Mark Ingram Jr. and Derrick Henry. Each team spent all or part of its season ranked No. 1.

This is the 26th book for Walsh, who’s been covering Alabama football for SEC Country, The Tuscaloosa News and others since 2004. Other recent Walsh books include “Sweet 16: Alabama’s Historic 2015 Championship Season,” “Nick Saban vs. College Football,” and “100 Things Crimson Tide Fans Need to Know & Do Before They Die.”

With editor-publisher Tom Brew, Walsh will be promoting his 336-page work Tuesday from 1-4 p.m. at the SUPEstore, Ferguson Center on the UA campus, and 5-8 p.m. at Barnes & Noble Booksellers in Midtown Village. On Wednesday they’ll be in Birmingham, noon-3 p.m. in The Summit’s B&N, 5-8 p.m. at Hoover’s Patton Creek B&N.

Brew’s Hilltop Publishing jumped at manuscript, illustrated with 50 photos by TG Paschal.
"It took all of about two seconds for me to say yes," the publisher said. "First, it’s Alabama football, so we knew it would sell. And Christopher Walsh is a great writer, a very good storyteller."

The dominance claim spun around the five rings.

"But it’s not just that," Brew said, "it’s how they were won," with none of the past’s split championships. And Bama’s won not only from within the most competitive division, the SEC West, but against waves of ranked teams.

"In titles won, in games against top 25 opponents," Brew said, "this decades just blows all others away."

Though Walsh and Brew burned late night-early morning hours to reach print before fall, "Decade of Dominance" isn’t a quickie rehash collection.

"If anything, it’s the antithesis of that," Brew said.

Each season sports five chapters each, told through choices, players, coaches, and other factors that fed the process. Between years, there’s focus off field, how stellar success transformed not only the program, but other sports at UA, along with the campus, the city and state, Brew said.

"In between each year," Walsh said, "there are 10 stories that tell the big picture."

That scope encompasses numbers in growth and economics, but also ranges over less tangible effects, like restored school pride, and quality of life enhancements.

Post glory decades with The Bear, UA struggled to find a coaching fit, striding forward under Ray Perkins and Bill Curry, then adding another national championship in 1992 courtesy of a powerhouse defense. But crippling NCAA sanctions and Gene Stallings’ retirement left a void filled at times ineptly — or as in the cases of Mike Price and Joe Kines, exceedingly briefly — by Mike DuBose, Dennis Franchione and Mike Shula. Lured from the NFL for $32 million over eight years, and following a $45 million Bryant-Denny Stadium expansion, Saban became the best investment UA’d ever made, former UA president and then-chancellor Robert Witt said on a "60 Minutes" profile. Should Saban stay through 2024, his newest extension reportedly pays $65 million.

For 2016, Crimson Tide football reported $103.9 million in revenue, with $47.7 million profit, honed to $18.7 million after funding other sports. Every home game weekend, Tuscaloosa enjoys a $19 million boost. According to studies from the UA Center for Business and Economic Research, UA’s statewide economic and fiscal impact rose from $1.8 billion in 2006-2007 to $2.597 billion in 2015-16.
After edging out a 7-6 first season in 2007, Saban and staff roped in the first of many top-ranked recruiting classes, including Ingram and fellow future first-round picks Marcell Dareus, Julio Jones, Mark Barron and Don'ta Hightower. Behind those and other stars, the Tide finished 12-2 in 2008, and in 2009 claimed the first of those five rings.

“The book starts with setting the table, paying tribute to those guys in that class, the ones who started it all,” Walsh said.

Each year-by-year follows differing formats.

“That’s one of the things I really prided myself on,” Walsh said. “I mixed it up. Some chapters, it’s just about a single play. Others might be about a game, or a player, or a coach, or what kind of impact trainers have made. ... I tried to show how broad the effort has to be to pull this off.”

For example, the 2009 section naturally includes “Rocky Block,” when Terrence Cody — aka Mount Cody for his 6 feet, 5 inches and 354-pound stature — stunningly slapped down two field goals against bitter rival Tennessee, the latter with four seconds left to protect Bama’s 12-10 lead.

“Because you’ve gotta have that,” Walsh said, laughing. ”... But I’ve also got Greg McElroy talking play-by-play how they went through that drive.”

That drive’s another titled moment from that title season, known, aptly, as “The Drive,” a 15-play, 79-yard, almost five-and-a-half-minute feat engineered by ice-water-veined quarterback McElroy, capped by a touchdown pass to Roy Upchurch, pushing Bama past Auburn 26-21.

“Having covered the team for 15 years now, seeing every aspect of the program, I don’t think there’s anything I could do on the beat that I haven’t done before,” Walsh said. So “Decade of Dominance” grew from outside the bounds of moment-by-moment coverage.

“If it stood out to me, I’m guessing it’ll stand out to readers,” he said.
CrossingPoints will offer 3-year certificate program to students with intellectual disabilities

By Ken Roberts / City Editor

This fall, six students will inaugurate a three-year academic program designed for people with intellectual disabilities at the University of Alabama.

Participants in the CrossingPoints Certificate in Occupational Studies will receive a certificate after completing the program.

The certificate will add a third tier to UA’s Crossing Points, an on-campus postsecondary program that helps students with significant disabilities develop skills that will make them more independent.

CrossingPoints launched in 2003, then in 2016 added the annual Summer Bridge program, which will create a pipeline for the new certificate program.

“Creating this certificate program is a milestone for CrossingPoints and UA, and we applaud those who have worked diligently to make this happen,” said Kevin Whitaker, executive vice president and provost, in a news release. “It’s been a collaborative effort with many offices on campus providing input and expertise, and we’re excited to make this new program available.”

The certificate program will include 24 UA course hours, 10 CrossingPoints specialized hours and 54 internship hours. The UA courses will include 12 core hours in various classes, like computer applications, public speaking and English composition, as well as 12 additional hours based on students’ preferences.

Amy Williamson, CrossingPoints program coordinator, said the customizable course design will make UA’s certificate program unique.

“We didn’t want students to come in and take classes we think they should take, but the ones they want that will truly lead to a career,” Williamson said. “That what college is for.”

Establishing the Summer Bridge program laid the groundwork for the new certificate program, administrators said.

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Summer Bridge became a reality after the U.S. Department of Education’s Office of Postsecondary Education awarded UA a grant to create an immersive college experience for people with intellectual disabilities who were interested in attending college full-time.

CrossingPoints launched Summer Bridge in 2016, offering these students an opportunity to live on campus, enroll in courses and engage in on- and off-campus social activities.

Summer Bridge allowed CrossingPoints to build relationships with faculty members to determine which courses worked best and how the students would be graded. Summer Bridge has also provided data about what level of support these students would need while on campus.

In four years, 51 students have participated in Summer Bridge.

Kagendo Mutua, director of CrossingPoints, said Summer Bridge allows students to live independently and decide whether college life is for them.

Mutua said the experience of administering Summer Bridge will help participants in the new certificate program.

“Summer Bridge has taught us the lesson that, ‘You don’t know what you don’t know until you’ve experienced it,’” Mutua said. “We’ve learned that the supports typically available are great, but by and large, they’re intended for students who’ve met the normative requirements to enter the university. In the data we’ve collected, we’ve learned some things that we’d never thought about, like self-care and social reciprocity, that have shaped what our program will look like.”

More information, including admissions requirements, costs and course options can be found on the program’s overview page at www.education.ua.edu/programs/spe/ccos. Applications for fall admission are due July 17.

“We’re excited to welcome a new specialized population to the University of Alabama and we’re ready to support them,” Mutua said.
University of Alabama law professor calls for review of Tuscaloosa jail

By: Stephanie Taylor

A University of Alabama law professor is calling for an investigation into the Tuscaloosa County Jail and a commission to examine practices within the criminal justice system here.

Steven Hobbs, the Tom Bevill chairholder of law at the University of Alabama law school, is asking government leaders to form what he proposed calling the Tuscaloosa Justice Commission to review the policies and practices of local agencies.

"Too often, citizens are treated unfairly or have their civil rights violated without effective methods for seeking redress and for ensuring that such violations of rights do not continue to happen," he said at a press conference at the law school Tuesday. "Each person who interacts with legal authorities or public officials should be treated as human beings worthy of dignity and respect."

Hobbs said his son was raped while incarcerated in the Tuscaloosa County Jail when he was 18. He said his son came to him in 2013 and told him that he was sexually assaulted by at least 30 inmates during a single incident while he was being held on a criminal trespassing charge.

Hobbs said he has filed complaints with the U.S. Department of Justice and with local officials.

"I seek some measure of justice ... even if it is only an acknowledgement of the wrongs done to him," he said. "No one has been held to account for this injustice. That face alone warrants some form of investigation to ensure that fair justice in the Tuscaloosa criminal justice system is possible."

County attorney Robert Spence said the county hasn't received a complaint from Hobbs or his son.

"We don't know what he's talking about," he said. "If he had filed a complaint at the time, there would have been a thorough investigation and possibly a criminal prosecution. We don't know why he didn't come forward with it and I don't know what I can do now to satisfy his complaint."
Federal law requires county jails to report all rapes and sexual assaults. Spence said he can recall one or two reports during the last decade.

But Hobbs said he believes officials within the law enforcement and judicial systems are covering up what his son says happened, and he’s calling for any other potential victims to come forward.

The Justice Department recently found that Alabama prisons violate the constitutional rights of prisoners housed in men’s prisons by failing to protect them from prisoner-on-prisoner violence, sexual abuse and by failing to provide safe conditions. The report focused only on state prisons.

“There is a serious need to review the situation in local jails as well,” Hobbs said. “Such a review may encourage others to come forward. Often victims of sexual violence may not disclose that fact until much later.”

“This investigation will consider processes whereby victims of jail sexual violence can have their voices heard, an official review conducted and efforts made to prevent sexual violence in the future,” he said.

Hobbs said that his proposed commission to study issues related to justice would examine practices that impact the civil rights of all citizens. He believes there is a pattern of disrespect by police and others in the system, especially against black men. He said his son once called police to report his clothes stolen from a laundromat.

“When he called police, he was taken into custody until he proved that his clothes were stolen,” he said. “Day to day interactions with police are often tainted with disrespect and a non-recognition of individual dignity.”
Sarah Parcak Thinks We Need to Learn From the Fall of Egypt’s Old Kingdom

By: Joshua Sokol

Sarah Parcak, an archaeologist at the University of Alabama at Birmingham, has scoured the globe for the faded outlines of Egyptian cities, Viking ruins and other ancient sites — often with a camera crew watching over her shoulder.

She specializes in finding good places to dig in satellite imagery before anyone even lifts a trowel.

In a book to be published on Tuesday, “Archaeology From Space: How the Future Shapes Our Past,” Dr. Parcak recounts her globe-trotting adventures and describes how the view from above has revolutionized her field.

On a recent morning, I talked with her via Skype about how the rise and fall of ancient civilizations might light the way through our own struggles. Below are edited excerpts from our conversation.

Let’s say you want to find some new ruins from orbit. How do you start?

Before we even start looking, we spend a lot of time looking at articles and books. What are the types of features that you might find in this area? And then we start testing different algorithms, or different remote sensing processing techniques.

It’s kind of like a detective investigation, right? We’re looking at what techniques, what satellites, what processing methods work — 999 times out of 1,000, you fail miserably, because welcome to science. But you have those one or two things that may be a hint of something. And you just keep noodling at it until you figure out what works.

You’ve been doing this for about two decades. Did you run into any opposition at the beginning?

Yeah, so I was actually known as “that satellite girl,” which is problematic on so many levels. But there was a cohort of us in the early 2000s that really started applying the technology on a much larger scale. I think the work that I and many of my colleagues did helped to open a lot of people’s eyes.

I gave a talk at a big archaeology conference about 10 years ago, and this creaky, elderly professor from Harvard, a very eminent scholar, came up to me. I thought, “Oh no, he’s going to say something.” He goes, “When I get home, I’m going to do a Google.” Like, he was going to check out Google Earth and look at his sites. I’m like, yes!

So yeah, it’s been a battle. But I think we’re there.
You’ve been a lead character in BBC documentaries, a National Geographic Explorer, a TED Fellow. Why did you want to write a book?

When you look at what books are in the archaeology section of a bookstore, it’s mostly these pseudo-archaeological books by people who write that aliens built pyramids or other outlandish theories. And that’s not what archaeology is.

Archaeology is this incredibly rich field that helps to show the full trajectory of our humanity, all the good and all the bad, all our creativity, all of our foibles, the fact that our common humanity hasn’t evolved in 300,000 years — while our technology has.

That’s really why I wanted to write this book. I wanted to show how archaeology really works, and what we actually do with the evidence we have, and how all these amazing new technologies are helping us to ask new, bigger and better questions about the past.

How do you think the popular accounts of your field get it wrong?

There are two different strands. On the one hand, you have something like a PBS “Nova” special, which is beautifully shot and carefully researched. Keep doing those.

And then you have “Ancient Aliens,” on the History Channel. If you look at a survey that was done by Chapman University, we’ve seen a significant increase in the number of people in the U.S. who believe that ancient aliens built or had an influence on ancient cultures.

I watch these shows because I want to be educated, and you have engage with these people to try to change minds.

You also have this king, Pepi II, who ruled for about 90 years. And you had a weakening economy. So you had political instability, economic insecurity — and obviously the drought as well — causing social instability.

As a result of this, you had no foreign expeditions, you had no more pyramid building. You have this massive drop in the quality of the art. It’s like no one was going to college to learn how to draw anymore. It was definitely at least a generation, if not two, before things started to get better.

So the Old Kingdom fell because of political instability, economic insecurity, social instability and climate change?

It’s real familiar. Yeah.

As you write in the book, they obviously did manage to rebound, during the Middle Kingdom. Any tips we should take away?

If somehow we can figure out how to make economic opportunity more equitable, we’ve got a chance of getting through this. And that’s certainly the lesson that the end of the Old Kingdom teaches us.
You obviously had massive power, massive wealth focused in the hands of the king and his court. There was a very clearly defined lower class that wouldn’t have had, say, opportunities to get money to have nice burials — that’s really how we look at economic differences in the archaeological record.

But as the money toward the end of the Old Kingdom flowed to the provinces, there was more economic and artistic social independence. More people had more access to more opportunities. And that’s when you really see the developing of more regional art styles in Egypt, as well.

So yeah, I think there’s a big lesson for us. More economic opportunities in more regional areas could lead to flourishing.

Setting the fate of the civilization aside, what do you think is next for space-based archaeology?

We’re not far away from satellite imagery that has a resolution of three inches. Imagine being able to zoom in from space and see a shard of pottery — we’re really close to that.

The other thing is that the field is shifting from satellite to drones. We’re not quite there yet, but within a couple years, we’re going to be able to capture very high resolution hyperspectral data, and laser mapping from autonomous vehicles, and that is going to transform the field as much as satellite imagery has.
It is the wonder. I keep coming back to the wonder.

There is a point, somewhere near the end of UAB star archaeologist Sarah Parcak’s new book, where she writes of the power of wonder, of awe and possibility inspired by the marvels of the world.

“In an age of a thousand distractions, we have to ask what wonder can really do,” she writes, and begins to answer the question in ways that relate to her field.

It can make people act in more responsible ways toward archaeological sites. It can convince people not to act in ways that are destructive. It can point them toward museums, or study, or a better understanding.


That’s what the book is about, really. It’s about a kid who was inspired by her grandfather and Indiana Jones and the great women of archaeology to grow up brash and questioning, to win the TED Prize and bust glass ceilings to pioneer ways to identify unexplored archaeological sites from satellites. In real life this woman literally looks at the world from a 30,000-foot-view (actually a lot higher than that) to find the unexplored history of humanity and of civilization. Then she gets down and dirty and digs it out with excavating tools.

In the book Parcak – pronounced par-kak – uses her experience to imagine the daily life of a young girl thousands of years ago in the northeast delta of Egypt. Parcak called her Meryt, the beloved, and she lived among the reeds and crocodiles of the Nile, weaving baskets and weeding the vegetable gardens, working and worshipping and watching a world Parcak came to know from the remains of the dead.

Parcak uses her knowledge of present technology in the field of archaeology – drones and artificial intelligence and more – to imagine a future, too, a world 100 years from now in which machines called digbots do the excavation dirty work. She takes this moment of ours that seems to hurtle through time, and uses it to see both the distant past and the future.

It is useful not just to see how small and fleeting we might be in the grand picture of the world. As Parcak points out, the people of Tanis in 1000 BC would be stunned to know their city’s entire footprint would be lost to time. It can also be used to help examine the questions of our day, such as what happens when small towns crumble and urban centers rise.
I sometimes think I see everything in metaphor. Which can be a problem, because sometimes a 3,000-year-old sarcophagus is just a sarcophagus. Sometimes it is just history and science and informed theory about where we have been, and where we are going.

But it is hard for me not to see metaphors as I read these stories. That our lives are remembered most, for good or for ill, for what we leave behind, and what we do not leave at all. That we as a human species are built on those who came before, and the future will just as surely be built on our dust of our bones.

What we leave becomes who we were. And what we are is what sets the course for the future.

I wonder if that’s what she meant. I wonder.
Alabama Athletics places 79 on SEC first-year Academic Honor Roll

By: TideSports

A total of 79 University of Alabama student-athletes earned a place on the 2019 Southeastern Conference First-Year Academic Honor Roll, the conference office announced. Alabama was one of just five schools with more than 75 honorees.

The Crimson Tide led all SEC women’s basketball teams with six rookies earning a place on the SEC Academic Honor Roll. Rowing led all Alabama programs with 14, followed by football with 11, which ranked third among conference football squads.

The 2019 SEC First-Year Academic Honor Roll is based on grades from the 2018-19 academic year. To earn a place on the honor roll a student-athlete must have a cumulative GPA of 3.00 or above at the nominating institution and have been a member of the varsity team for the sport’s entire NCAA championship segment.

The Crimson Tide also had 90, 66 and 126 students-athletes named to the SEC Fall, Winter and Spring Academic Honor Rolls, respectively. This gives Alabama a total of 361 on the honor roll for the 2018-19 academic year.
The Tuscaloosa News
Thursday, July 4, 2019

Rece Davis a fan of more freedom for college football players

By: Cecil Hurt

Technically speaking, Rece Davis is not one of college football’s Founding Fathers. Despite the fact that he resides in New England these days, Davis is too young to play that part and has never worn a powdered wig in his life.

On the other hand, Davis, the host of ESPN’s College GameDay, the Saturday morning prelude to autumn afternoons and the primer for a huge audience on the major stories of the week, carried a certain gravitas. He steers a middle course on almost all stories and while the fact that he attended Alabama rankles a few fiery fans of other constituencies and conferences, he’s probably as close as the sport comes to having an honest broker these days.

So when we had a preseason telephone chat on Wednesday, observing, among other things, how the gradual trend of conferences having their media gatherings some early means that the echo of the final firecracker on Thursday will also be the opening bell, from a media standpoint, for College Football. And that conversation then moved to the most relevant of all Fourth of July topics: freedom.

“I think the biggest story going into the season is how the transfer portal has changed things,” Davis said. “And you know what? I’m good with it. That doesn’t make me too popular with some of the coaches. But I don’t mind going on the record with it.

“Anything that gives the player more freedom, then I’m for it.”

The gradual easing of the transfer rules hasn’t been universally embraced. Davis says he understands “the frustration of fans and of coaches who want to have more control.” He agrees that there “has to be more consistency in place” in terms of the way transfer waivers are applied. In some cases, like Luke Ford’s transfer to Illinois, the waiver system works against them. Then in some cases, and I don’t want to single anyone out, but in some cases, guys get approved just because they didn’t think they were playing enough.”

Davis said that, even in those cases, he tends to side with the player.

“But maybe a player has given everything he has to give and it just hasn’t worked out for him, and he doesn’t need to stay to the finish. Do kids make mistakes in those situations sometimes? Sure. But sometimes coaches make mistakes, too. Maybe not as often, but it happens. They

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decide a guy is just a special teams player, and he thinks he’s a starter, and I think he has every right to pursue that.

“I don’t think every kid is looking to leave the first time things don’t go his way. I think people underestimate the one that is formed between a player and his team, his coaches and his teammates. But I think we need to give the kids a little more of a say in their lives, just like we all have if we don’t like our job.”

Much of that debate is philosophical. Some of it is economic. But it is also an issue that will affect the 2019 season in a profound way, a development that Davis is astute enough to recognize.

“For an Oklahoma (with Jalen Hurts) or an Ohio State (with Justin Fields), it might be the quarterback who transferred in. For some other teams, it’s the guy who transferred out and isn’t available. It’s that old cliche about every team ‘being a sprained ankle away from disaster,’ but it could be true. And it’s not just injury. I went to Clemson’s second game last year (at Texas A&M), and Kelly Bryant really bailed Clemson out in that game. Look at Jalen in the SEC Championship Game. Now, there are teams with one proven quarterback or a talented freshman, but they don’t have that other guy.”

All of that will play out with college football starting in just a few weeks — and, speaking a sentiment that unites us all, not a minute too soon.
Road work to affect UA campus

Paving project set for Colonial Drive

Staff report

Sections of Colonial Drive and adjacent streets on the University of Alabama campus will close Thursday for a paving project.

Colonial Drive between University Boulevard and Paul W. Bryant Drive, sections of Eighth Street, and the intersection of Judy Bonner Drive and Magnolia Drive will be closed Thursday and Friday. The closure will begin at 6 a.m. Thursday and should end by 5 p.m. Friday.

Judy Bonner Drive directly behind the Rose Administration building is also closed for another project, but is scheduled to re-open near the end of July.

The paving is among a series of projects near the intersection of Colonial Drive and Paul W. Bryant Drive.

As part of an ongoing project, Paul W. Bryant Drive between Wallace Wade Avenue and 10th Avenue is scheduled to be closed until July 26. The sidewalk on the south side of Paul W. Bryant Drive will also be closed during this time.

The university expects to re-open the section of Second Avenue between University Boulevard and Paul W. Bryant Drive in front of the newly constructed Capstone Parking Deck by the end of July.
INSIDE THE STATEHOUSE: For the most part, legislative session was a success

By Steve Flowers

The 2019 legislative session was one of the most controversial yet productive sessions in memory.

Gov. Kay Ivey's first session of the quadrennium was a roaring success. It's hard to remember a governor getting everything they wanted, since George Wallace's heyday.

Wallace in his prime simply controlled the Legislature. It was more like an appendage of the governor's office. Ivey has apparently taken a page from the old Wallace playbook. By the way, that is probably apropos as she cut her teeth in Alabama politics working for and learning from the Wallaces.

Gov. Ivey started out the session by leading the way on the passage of the gas-tax increase, which will fund major transportation needs in the state. She ended the last week of the session by garnering legislation to give the governor control of the state Board of Pardons and Paroles and then topping that off with legislation that will allow a vote next March on an amendment that would create an appointed state school board instead of an elected one. If this controversial amendment is approved by voters, then the governor will make most of the initial appointments.

One would have to say that Ivey has got a lot of influence with this Legislature. Her years of experience and — probably more importantly — her relationships with legislators are paying dividends for Alabama's female Republican governor.

Any legislative session could be considered a success if both state budgets — general fund and education — pass. It is, by the way, the only constitutional mandate for a regular annual session.

The 2019-2020 Education Trust Fund budget is the largest in history. The $7.1-billion-dollar budget is $500 million more than this year's budget. It includes a 4% cost-of-living raise for teachers and other education employees and will increase funding for the state’s heralded pre-kindergarten program. Alabama community colleges also will get a significant increase. Legislators seem to realize the importance of technical training in attracting manufacturing jobs to the state. Sen. Arthur Orr, R-Decatur, and Rep. Bill Poole, R-Tuscaloosa, the chairmen of
the education budget committees in the Senate and House, did an excellent job of shepherding the budget through the legislative labyrinth.

The General Fund budget, which generally lags behind the education budget, was also passed on a positive note. The $2.2 billion budget includes a 2% cost-of-living increase for state employees as well as an 8% increase for the state’s understaffed prison system.

One downside of the session was the Legislature’s inability to pass a proposed constitutional amendment that would enable Alabamians to vote on whether to allow a state lottery. It would pass overwhelmingly. Forty-five states, including all of our neighboring states, already have a lottery and Alabamians are simply tired of seeing their money going into the state coffers of Georgia, Mississippi, Tennessee and Florida.

State Sen. Jim McLendon, R-Springville, sponsored the best and potentially most profitable lottery proposal. However, his bill was ignored in deference to the Indian casinos legislation, which was overtly written to continue to give these Indian casinos a monopoly on electronic gaming in the state. The Indian casinos flaunted their influence in the Legislature by offering a watered down, archaic, paper-only lottery that would be obsolete within five years.

McLendon’s bill would have generated $250 million. The Indian casinos lottery proposal would have given the state a paltry $100 million at best for a few years. The House Democrats boldly and wisely killed the bill with the hope of eventually passing a lottery that would benefit the state, not the Indian gambling syndicate.

In essence, the Choctaw Indian casinos in Mississippi killed the proposed lottery amendment 20 years ago with last-minute money before the vote. The Poarch Creek casinos beat it this time before it could get out of the gate. The power that the Poarch Creek casinos are building in the Alabama Legislature is dangerous.

CBS-42 in Birmingham polled viewers during the last week of the legislative session asking them to rate the Legislature and the session. It was 86 percent negative, but this is nothing new. Alabamians have always rated the Legislature negatively. However, if you ask them about their own legislators they will either like them or not know who they are.
If you live in rural Alabama, you might spend a lot of time worrying about the survival of your local hospital. If you’re one of the unfortunate folks who have already seen their community hospital shuttered, your concern then shifts to access to and distance from quality health care services for your family. It’s an issue that impacts far too many of my constituents.

Suppose an emergency trip to the hospital takes you to an out-of-network hospital or doctor. Weeks later, you get an unexpected and astronomical medical bill for the cost of care not covered by your insurance plan. Shockingly, this scenario isn’t even limited to out-of-network emergency room visits—it can happen when a patient visits an in-network hospital, but ends up being treated by an out-of-network physician—often without the patient’s knowledge. This is a more common occurrence than you might think, especially given the sheer number of health care plans on the market. Not every hospital or health care provider is contracted with every insurance plan, which means even though the hospital is in network, the physician treating you might not be.

Either way, the result is the same: the patient gets stuck in the middle, essentially becoming a pawn in a billing dispute between their insurance company and the hospital. When that happens, the patient is left on the hook, often for significant amounts of money. According to a recent University of Chicago study, roughly 57 percent of Americans have been subjected to this unfair practice, which is commonly referred to as “surprise billing.”

Thankfully, Congress is considering a real solution to fix this problem once and for all. The STOP Surprise Medical Bills Act—introduced by Senators Bill Cassidy (R-LA) and Michael Bennet (D-CO) and supported by a bipartisan group of senators—would go a long way in preventing patients from getting stuck in the middle of these kinds of disputes, removing a burden that never should have been placed on their shoulders in the first place.

Senator Doug Jones (D-AL), who sits on the Senate Health Committee, will be among the first in Congress to consider the legislation later this month. Whether you are a Republican like me or a Democrat like the Senator, I think we all can agree that patients already going through a difficult enough time...
should not be hit doubly hard by surprise billing. I am grateful that the Senate is considering this much-needed legislation and hopeful that Senator Jones will see the merit in protecting Alabama patients by throwing his full support behind this effort as well.

At the heart of the STOP Surprise Medical Bills Act—the mechanism that makes it so effective—is Independent Dispute Resolution, or IDR for short. This process would allow insurers and providers to settle payment disputes amongst themselves, removing patients from the equation altogether. Inspired by Major League Baseball’s process to settle salary disputes between players and teams, this is a commonsense approach that would bring physicians and insurance companies to the negotiating table with a neutral mediator to determine payments. That would encourage both parties to negotiate in good faith and find a reasonable middle ground.

Some states have tried addressing surprise billing, but for the most part, the problem remains persistent—which is why federal action is needed. If passed, the STOP Surprise Medical Bills Act would protect patients from billing disputes and ensure they are only responsible for paying their share of in-network costs. It would also increase transparency and incentivize fair negotiations between health care providers and insurers.

Given our divided political climate, a bipartisan opportunity like the STOP Surprise Medical Bills Act is rare indeed. That’s why I’m hopeful Senator Jones takes this opportunity to stand up for rural hospitals and quality health care by supporting this bill with the key IDR language when his committee meets later this month. Congress should pass this much-needed legislation without delay and, in doing so, help protect tens of millions of patients not only in Alabama, but nationwide.

Kyle South is a two-term member of the Alabama House of Representatives. His district includes Fayette County and portions of Lamar, Jefferson, and Tuscaloosa counties. He is also Vice Chairman of the General Fund Committee.
Alabama has one of the nation’s strongest ... campus free speech laws?

By: J. Pepper Bryars

Alabama has been in the news lately for recently passing the nation’s strongest anti-abortion law, but it also just enacted what is being hailed by one expert as “one of the most comprehensive and effective campus free-speech laws in the country.”

Last week Gov. Kay Ivey signed a law requiring the state’s public colleges and universities to adopt a number of significant policies and procedures to protect free speech on campus.

"Freedom of expression is critically important during the education experience of students, and each public institution of higher education should ensure free, robust, and uninhibited debate and deliberation by students," the law states.

It goes on to declare that it is not the proper role of schools to "shield individuals from speech that is protected by the First Amendment to the United States Constitution, including ideas and opinions the individuals may find unwelcome, disagreeable, or offensive." The state’s powerful higher education lobby didn’t fight the bill, and the only opposition came from a handful of lawmakers who expressed concern that it offers protections to racist speech.

But as shown in the landmark Skokie ruling, such protections are already offered by the United States Constitution.

Alabama’s strong move comes on the heels of a trend on college campuses that is chilling the free speech rights of faculty, students and visiting speakers who dare mention controversial or unorthodox views. In recent years some institutions of higher learning have created “free speech zones,” which are meant to move certain discussions away from where they could offend listeners, or be heard at all. Others have speech codes, which limit acceptable topics to an ever-shrinking list of progressive-leaning beliefs.

And some quickly yield to the heckler’s veto, giving the power of censorship to a loud minority. The issue has been mostly observed on campuses located in the progressive-leaning areas of the northeast and the west coast. But is campus free speech really a problem in conservative-leaning states like Alabama?

Yes, at least according to one expert who has helped draft other campus free speech laws in other states.

“Although it’s sometimes argued that the campus free speech crisis only affects deep-dyed blue states like California and Massachusetts, the problem is national,” wrote Stanley Kurtz, a senior fellow at the Ethics and Public Policy Center.

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Kurtz noted how Alabama A&M recently made it on the "10 Worst Colleges for Free Speech" list maintained by the individual-rights advocacy group FIRE for having the most "red light" rated policies that, in their view, restrict free speech. The Washington Examiner wrote an article last year accusing the University of West Alabama of having a "free speech zone" by limiting any demonstrations to a spot near its student union building.

And at the University of South Alabama, a pro-life student club founded by Katherine Sweet was told that they had to set up their display on an arguably low-traffic portion of the campus that's designated for free speech.

"I went to South thinking it would be a place where I could debate freely with other students, engage in discourse, and ultimately learn from not only our professors, but each other," Sweet wrote in an AL.com guest opinion article. "Aren't universities supposed to be atmospheres that promote just that?"

Yes, and Alabama's recent action seeks to ensure they do through various measures, including:

• Ensuring that faculty and students are free to take political positions, to express themselves in outdoor areas of the campus, and to assemble, speak and pass out literature,
• Prohibiting the establishment of any "free speech zones,"

• Keeping the campus open to anyone invited by student groups to speak,

• Forbidding the imposition of excessive security fees that discourage some speakers,

• And suspending members of the "campus community" who disrupt the free speech of others.

"Free speech is the cornerstone of our rights as American citizens — and those First Amendment rights certainly apply to college students on university campuses. Around the country, there have been chilling examples where administrators and professors have discriminated against students," said the bill's sponsor, State Rep. Matt Fridy, R-Montevallo. "With this law, we are making it very clear that in Alabama, the First Amendment rights of all students, liberal or conservative, will be protected from unfair and discriminatory university speech policies."

Indeed, yet it remains troubling that such legislation is even needed in a nation founded upon the unalienable freedoms of expressions recognize by our First Amendment. Voltaire's beliefs in freedom of expression were once famously summarized with the phrase, "I disapprove of what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it." But unless our lawmakers in other states follow Alabama's lead, what you may hear on your local college campus could someday be: "I disapprove of what you say, so I will restrict your right to say it."
City directs $45,000 in aid for sex abuse treatment

By: Jason Morton

City leaders have approved a $45,000 allocation for a Tuscaloosa agency tasked with aiding victims of sexual assault.

With a 6-1 vote, the Tuscaloosa City Council approved this funding Tuesday night for the Tuscaloosa SAFE Center, which opened last year on University Boulevard to offer treatment, counseling and other services to victims of these crimes.

“We’re just very grateful,” said Pam Jones, executive director of the center. “As a facility, it is a real expensive program to run, but it’s so necessary.”

The Tuscaloosa SAFE Center began operations Nov. 1 next to Emergi-Care Family Medical Clinic in Alberta and offers free and confidential services to sexual assault survivors 14 years old and older in Tuscaloosa and surrounding counties.

It is equipped to meet these needs through specially trained nurses who work closely with a local response team made up of law enforcement and counselors.

One of those nurses is certified through the Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE), and the cost of retaining this position as well as the costs of treating the 80 or so patients that already have come through the facility’s doors are among the reasons Tuscaloosa City Councilman Matt Calderone pushed for this funding last week.

Aware that the Tuscaloosa SAFE Center opened after the fiscal year 2019 started on Oct. 1 and too late to apply for a grant through the city’s agency funding process, Calderone said he wanted to fund this center now in order to support an organization that he sees as vital to the city’s slate of medical services.

“The Tuscaloosa SAFE Center provides a necessary medical service to not just the citizens of Tuscaloosa, but all of west Alabama,” Calderone said. “I am proud that the council was able to provide the center agency funding to support their mission and help them grow to expand services to victims of sexual assault.”

By the end of June, the Tuscaloosa SAFE Center already had treated and served more patients than it had planned for in its first year of operation.

Jones said the city’s funding will help it maintain its mission despite the unfortunate demand.

“For the city to allocate money for operating expenses is just vitally important to us in order to keep the center open,” Jones said. “Having that support will help us to keep the nurses on staff and serve the victims.”
Tuscaloosa’s civil rights trail tells the story of a movement and a city

By: Drew Taylor

Years in the making, Tuscaloosa now has its own civil rights trail.

Many across Alabama are aware of key moments in the civil rights movement that occurred in the state, from the Selma-to-Montgomery march in 1965 to the Birmingham Campaign in 1963. But some might not be as familiar with important moments that happened in Tuscaloosa, from its first black legislator to significant protests that occurred across the city as part of the effort for civil rights.

In June, the Tuscaloosa Civil Rights History Task Force unveiled the 18-stop Tuscaloosa Civil Rights History Trail, with most locations having a marker explaining its historical significance in downtown Tuscaloosa.

Here are the stops along the trail:

1. Capitol Park (2800 Sixth St.): A building once stood in Capitol Park that served as a meeting area for the Alabama Legislature. In 1833, the Legislature enacted slave codes to regulate the lives of enslaved people, as well as free people of color. These codes were aimed at curbing the rising number of slaves running away from their masters, preventing slave rebellions and maximizing the profits of slave owners.

2. Lynching and Old Jail (2803 Sixth St.): From 1856 to 1890, the building served as the county jail and was later a boarding house. In addition, eight lynchings took place in front of this building between 1844 and 1933.

3. Druid Theatre and Hollywood (2400 block of University Boulevard): The former Druid Theatre in downtown Tuscaloosa was formerly a whites-only theater. After the Civil Rights Act was passed in July 1964, a group of black teenagers at the theater were met by a mob of angry white people who threw bottles and rocks at them. This was also the same theater where actor Jack Palance was confronted by another white mob. Speculation from the time about why Palance was harassed was either the belief that he was in Tuscaloosa to support civil rights or that he himself appeared to be a black man because of his tan and because he was escorting a black woman into the theater.

4. The Mob at the Flagpole (2410 University Blvd.): Located at the corner of Greensboro Avenue and University Boulevard, there once stood a flagpole that served as a meeting place for
its citizens. This was the location where an angry mob met with a group of black people to protest the integration of the University of Alabama in 1956.

5. Woolworth’s and Sit-Ins (2319 University Blvd.): Sit-ins were a form of peaceful protest during the civil rights era throughout the 1950s and 1960s. One incident was on June 4, 1964, when a group of black protesters began marching outside the former Woolworth’s at 2319 University Blvd.

6. First Black Legislator Shandy Jones (2300 Block of University Boulevard): Born a slave in 1816, Shandy Jones started Tuscaloosa’s first black Methodist Church, now known as Hunter Chapel AME Zion. He was also Tuscaloosa’s first elected black lawmaker to the Alabama House of Representatives, serving from 1868 to 1870.

7. Kress Building and Bus Boycott (2223 University Blvd.): There was once a bus stop located at the former Kress Building on University Boulevard. On May 5, 1962, three black students from Stillman College and a high school student were ordered by a white bus driver to give up their seats to two white riders. The students later got into an argument with the driver and were later arrested and charged with disorderly conduct. Following years of other documented harassment of riders, members of the black community began a boycott of the city buses until a non-discrimination policy was put into place.

8. Paul R. Jones Museum (2308 Sixth St.): Paul R. Jones was an art collector who was rejected from entry in the University of Alabama’s law school in 1949 because he was black. Over the years, Jones amassed a wide collection of black-created art, later donating 1,700 pieces to the University of Alabama in 2008 for an estimated $5 million. The Paul R. Jones Museum was created in 2011 to exhibit the collection.

9. Alston Building and the KKK (2400 Sixth St.): The Alston Building was the first skyscraper in Tuscaloosa, standing more than seven stories tall and located at the site of the former Tuscaloosa County Courthouse at the corner of Greensboro Avenue and Sixth Street. The building once housed the office of Robert Shelton, Imperial Wizard of the United Klans of America.

10. Dinah Washington Cultural Arts Center (620 Greensboro Ave.): Named after the Tuscaloosa-born jazz and blues singer Dinah Washington, this center serves as a meeting area for many groups.

11. Tuscaloosa County Courthouse and Marchers (714 Greensboro Ave.): For years, the Tuscaloosa County Courthouse had segregated water fountains and bathrooms. On June 9, 1964, a group of black protesters marched outside the courthouse to push for integration, but were violently met by Tuscaloosa law enforcement officers. The incident is known as “Bloody Tuesday.”
12. Greensboro Avenue Churches (800 Greensboro Ave.): Early churches on Greensboro Avenue were seen to advocate for keeping the races separate. In fact, Basil Manley, pastor of First Baptist, was a slaveholder and later became president of the University of Alabama. Following the Civil War and the emancipation of slaves, many blacks began forming their own churches after their majority-white churches refused to acknowledge them as full-fledged congregants. That led to the formation of churches such as Hunter Chapel, First African Baptist, Bailey Tabernacle Christian Methodist Episcopal and Salem Presbyterian Church.

13. Blue Front District (811 23rd Ave.): Located near the corner of 23rd Avenue and Seventh Street, this area thrived for black business owners who had been denied access to the main commercial centers in town. These stores became an important space for the black community.

14. Bailey Tabernacle Baptist Church (1117 23rd Ave.): Founded in 1870, Bailey Tabernacle placed a vital role during the fight for civil rights in Tuscaloosa. For years, it served as a meeting area for civil rights organizers and supporters.

15. Hunter Chapel AME Zion Church (1105 22nd Ave.): Hunter Chapel AME is the oldest black church organized in Tuscaloosa, founded in the 1866.

16. First African Baptist Church (2621 Stillman Blvd.): First African Baptist was the home church of the Rev. T.Y. Rogers, Jr., one of Tuscaloosa’s most important civil rights leaders. Martin Luther King delivered a sermon at the church in 1964.

17. Murphy-Collins House (2601 Paul W. Bryant Drive): This building served as the office of Will J. Murphy, Tuscaloosa’s first black embalmer and mortician. After Murphy’s death, local teacher Sylvia Collins purchased the home and later sold it to the city in 1986. Today, it is the Murphy African-American Museum.

18. Howard-Linton Barbershop (1311 T.Y. Rogers Jr. Ave.): This barbershop served as the center of many gathering places in the black community. Its owner is the Rev. Thomas Linton, who was actively involved in the city’s civil rights movement by organizing a boycott of grocery stores and meeting with organizers to enact change.
Lawmakers send $850,000 to fee-charging Ole Miss preschool

By: The Associated Press

JACKSON, Miss. — Lawmakers have earmarked $850,000 for a tuition-charging University of Mississippi preschool between 2016 and 2019 as they struggled to find money to expand other preschools statewide, The Clarion Ledger reported.

The Oxford preschool is operated by the Ole Miss School of Education and is a teaching school for education students. Tuition for one year at the Willie Price Learning Lab costs $5,850 for university-affiliated families and $6,850 for community members.

The money spent at Willie Price was enough to fund about 100 matching grants for free, public preschools in each of those four years, under Mississippi’s state preschool program. Instead, it went to a preschool that currently serves 72 preschoolers whose families can afford the tuition.

Gov. Phil Bryant criticized the spending in 2017, when he vetoed an earmark for an education vendor and singled out other programs receiving earmarks.

“Going forward, I hope the Legislature will closely examine existing programs, and ask tough questions,” Bryant wrote. “For instance, does a single child care center housed at the University of Mississippi that charges $6,000 in annual tuition merit $200,000 in annual funding?”

Lawmakers decided it did, continuing $200,000-a-year appropriations in 2018 and 2019.

Outgoing Senate Education Committee Chairman Gray Tollison, an Oxford Republican, defends the spending. He says the school instructs future teachers, helping to spread good ideas.

“I thought it was important that we have a school that is providing research and resources that is providing best practices (for Mississippi),” Tollison said.

Ole Miss spokesman Rod Guajardo wrote in an email that Willie Price will have a sliding tuition scale starting next year that will be based on a family’s income. Enrollment is projected to climb to 108 next year.

Guajardo said the money was used to achieve and maintain accreditation from the National Association for Education of Young Children, which he described as “a rigorous accomplishment achieved in 2018.” He said Willie Price used the money in part to improve graduate student research, install and maintain audio and video systems for observation and create programs for art and physical activity and wellness.
Prekindergarten programs at Mississippi State University, Delta State University, Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College and the University of Southern Mississippi have the same accreditation. Unlike Willie Price, they haven’t received legislative earmarks.

A Clarion Ledger investigation has found lawmakers pumped nearly $10 million to 13 education vendors without bids or contracts since 2016, and several vendors hired influential lobbyists or made donations to key lawmakers. For instance, from 2011 to 2016 lawmakers gave $1.5 million to Weight Watchers with little documentation and oversight.

The Willie Price Learning Lab didn’t go through any competitive bidding for its earmarks, which aren’t overseen by state education officials.

The school is located in the district of Tollison, an Ole Miss law school graduate.

“I’m an advocate for education. I’m an advocate for Ole Miss. And I’m an advocate for my home district,” Tollison said, again stressing that Willie Price has a statewide benefit.

Jean Cook, spokeswoman for the Mississippi Department of Education, said the state helps send children to preschool through its early learning collaborative program. Mississippi provides $2,150 per student in some areas as long as the local community chips in at least the same amount, Cook said. Fewer than one in five Mississippi 4-year-olds are enrolled in free state and district-funded programs.

Statewide, only 36 percent of entering kindergarteners last fall were considered ready for school. More than 70 percent of children participating in the state’s program left ready for kindergarten in 2018.

Lawmakers added $170,000 to the state’s $6.5 million preschool grant program for the 2020 budget year.

Sen. Brice Wiggins, a Pascagoula Republican, sought this year to increase funding for early learning collaboratives.

“It’s a program that has been proven by the data, by the research, that we are getting a return on our investment,” Wiggins said.

Wiggins’ failed bill would have invested another $8 million. He declined comment on the Willie Price spending, but said state spending needs more scrutiny.

“There’s probably money throughout those appropriations bills that could be better spent and go to programs like the early learning collaborative centers,” Wiggins said.
‘These Cuts Have Real Consequences’: A New Study Surveys the Damage of State Disinvestment in Public Universities

By: Liam Knox

A new National Bureau of Economic Research working paper examines the effects of a decades-long decline in state funding for public universities. According to the results, the decrease has had, and will continue to have, damaging repercussions, and suggesting reason to be concerned about the future of public higher education.

The study behind the paper, “Public Universities: The Supply Side of Building a Skilled Workforce,” was conducted by a team of researchers, who compared trends at public universities in states where cuts in higher-education funding have been steep, such as Michigan and Wisconsin, with those in states where appropriations for public institutions have remained fairly stable, like New York and Texas. The conclusion? That the continuing decline in state funding will very likely lead to a shortage of skilled workers with degrees, as well as the erosion of universities’ “long-term research capacity, which contributes to economic growth.”

It also illustrates how the decrease in funding has led many public institutions to adopt strategies for endowment growth traditionally associated with private universities. For the more elite public universities, that may undermine certain central goals, like funding general research and providing higher education to in-state students. For others, those strategies are simply out of reach.

The Chronicle spoke with two of the study’s authors: John Bound, a professor of economics at the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor; and Sarah Turner, a professor of economics and education at the University of Virginia, who responded to questions via email. The other co-authors are Gaurav Khanna, an assistant professor of economics at the University of California at San Diego, and Breno Braga, a research associate at the Urban Institute. The interview has been condensed and edited for clarity.

Q. What are some of the major causes of the decline in state funding for public universities?

Bound. First of all, the fraction of the state money going to higher education is declining. So, it’s not just that state budgets have declined — cuts to state budgets, they happen.

But the fraction of their money that states are spending on higher education has declined. Now, there is some really conventional wisdom of why this is happening that has to do with funding for other programs, the big one being Medicaid. But we found that while that plays some role, it
can’t explain anything close to the total. And we really didn’t find strong evidence for any alternative.

If you try and look at political actors’ influencing these cuts, it doesn’t scream at you that that’s what the major cause is. For example, Michigan has had major cuts, as has Wisconsin. And in Michigan’s political context, there was not the same political revolution as there was in Wisconsin. So, I don’t think it’s simply something you can label as progressives versus conservatives. That makes me think there are fundamental economic factors at work that are pushing states to fund higher education less than they did in the past. Do I think that might be really disastrous in the long run? I would say yes. In some sense, the old model for funding public higher education in the U.S. is breaking down — that state model that resulted from states feeling they had a vested interest, economically.

Q. Your report gives a kind of historical overview of how state funding for public universities greatly contributed to economic growth throughout the 20th century, before declining over the past 30 or so years. Are states investing less in education now mostly because of budget cuts, or does it have to do with how state economies have changed?

Bound. What you’re suggesting is certainly consistent with what I would claim to be both common sense and simple economic models. Both in terms of the education that states provide their students and the return from that education that states experience, states have become less of a closed economy than they were before. The money that Wisconsin spends on higher education, for example, does less for the state of Wisconsin now than it would have 30 years ago. More and more, the best and the brightest high-school graduates are going out of state to go to college. Also, research and development returns less to the state of Michigan than it might have 100 or 50 years ago. The New York Times columnist Thomas Friedman talks about the flattening of the world, but the U.S. is also flattening in the sense that we’re less state-centric and more integrated with each other, and that reduces the viability of the state as an economic beneficiary from education.

Q. Your study also brings up some of the different ways that public universities are dealing with the shortage of funds, and it specifically notes the disparity between what public research universities can do and what other, what you call “broad-access,” public institutions are capable of. What are these differences, and do research institutions have an edge when it comes to adapting?

Bound. Research universities, typically being some higher-profile universities, have various ways to somewhat limit the damage being done to undergraduate education. Increasingly, top state schools are going to out-of-state students or out-of-country students, who pay high fees, to try to replace some of the money from the state coffers.

Public universities are privatizing, depending more on tuition, depending more on private contributions, things like that. And as that happens, it’s reasonable to think that state universities,
since more and more money is coming from tuition, will be more and more oriented toward the interest of the people paying those tuitions. And that will have consequences for the nature of the education they provide but also for the research being done. So in a certain way, the consequences to the students at the research universities may be less than at the non-research universities. But the consequences for research may be greater at the research universities just because more research is done there.

Q. What do you mean when you say it’ll have an impact on the kind of research that’s done there?

Bound. There are two parts to that. One is that subsidies given to research will be taken away to some extent and given to the undergraduate program. That’s kind of tilting things away from research toward students, so that the students are less impacted. The other thing you can see happening is that emphasis will be put on research that can be externally funded. With the increasing pressure to get money from external sources, people might have different perspectives on whether that’s good or bad. It’s easier for researchers to get funding for things that have very clear, fairly short-term tangible output. But my own belief is that a lot of unfunded research, in the very long run, produces important developments. Even if the only thing you care about is GDP per capita, it may have long-term positive effects.

Q. Is that difference between top-tier and lower-tier public universities a result of those top-tier public universities’ ability to adopt private universities’ model of endowment growth and funding?

Bound. Yes, partially. But also, an increasingly important source of revenue is tuition from out-of-state students, including foreign students. So, it’s the capacity to attract the people who have enough money to pay. They’ll look at the U.S. News & World Report rankings for the University of Michigan and say, Oh, that’s a great school. It’s not Harvard or Swarthmore or something, but it’s pretty good. So we’ll be willing to pay that money for the University of Michigan. But if you ask, Are they willing to pay for Eastern Michigan? They haven’t even heard of it.

Q. What’s the impact of this decrease in state funding on the ability to bring in students who can’t pay full tuition and on the incentive to populate classes with wealthier students from out of state who can pay full tuition? Is there a worry that the socioeconomic diversity of public institutions will approach the levels of disparity present at private institutions?

Turner. The “affordability” challenges that have gotten so much attention recently are real, and changes in state appropriations are definitely a contributing factor. The increase in tuition levels in response to declines in appropriations tends to increase the challenge of paying for college for all but the most affluent students.

Where the narrative gets complicated is in measuring the impact on “net price” (cost of attendance minus grant aid) for students from different income groups and at different types of
institutions. Preliminary work finds that a small group of resource-intensive universities, those that belong to the Association of American Universities, have been able to largely insulate low-income students from increases in tuition by also increasing grant aid. Broad-access institutions, which often lack resources from private philanthropy or out-of-state students, are simply unable to provide additional grant aid.

The representation of students from across the income distribution at public research universities has been a problem for decades; it is not "caused" by the decline in state appropriations. What has happened is in the larger economy — the increase in the stratification of family incomes exacerbates the problem. Declines in appropriations make it difficult for institutions to fund investments to increase the pool of low-income students, and they also make it more difficult for universities to provide the resources to make college affordable for "near poor" and "middle-income" families.

Q. What kind of practical actions can state lawmakers and university administrators take to address the problems that are brought up in your study?

Bound. Well, from the point of view of state legislatures, the answer simply would be more money. But we actually have only a very partial diagnosis of why the money is falling. We weren’t thinking about this as giving advice to people. This is a serious issue, which is not to say that we have a solution. The main point is: These cuts have real consequences for individuals who might get a college education, who might not otherwise or might not get high-quality education because of the decline. And also for the research that is done in the United States, which presumably has an impact in the long run on things like GDP per capita.

In terms of if I have advice or a message for university administrators, my answer would be no. We basically think university administrators are doing the best job they can, given the resources they have. For example, the University of California system, which used to have a very limited number of seats available for out-of-state students, increased the number of out-of-state acceptances dramatically after the Great Recession. And the administrators have to go argue with Sacramento and say, No, we’re not taking it away from the in-state students; what we’re doing is we’re using these people to subsidize them. So, I think that to try to micromanage university administrators is a mistake. What I do think is that an administrator at the University of Michigan has options available to him or her that an administrator at Eastern Michigan does not.
Ditching the Dazzle in College Housing

By: Lisa Prevost

The millennial generation attended college in a golden era for student housing, as investors poured money into luxurious off-campus communities packed with resort-style amenities: rooftop pools, golf simulators, tanning beds, climbing walls.

The wow factor increased with every new development. Many universities amped up their campus dorms and amenities in an effort to bolster recruitment, with a few going so far as to put in “lazy rivers” for floating around pools.

“It was crazy to see what was going to beat the last new thing,” said Dan Oltersdorf, a senior vice president and chief learning officer at Campus Advantage, which manages about 70 off-campus student housing communities around the country. “You were just asking, what’s next?”

But as millennials move on and so-called Generation Z moves in, student housing is shifting away from recreational dazzle and toward amenities that reflect the gig economy: digital conveniences, ample spaces indoors and out for studying and collaborating, and cutting-edge fitness facilities to maintain wellness.

“Shared study rooms, a pickup spot for Uber and GrubHub, Amazon lockers — this is the ‘everything at your fingertips’ generation,” said Carl Whitaker, the manager of data analytics at RealPage, a provider of software and data to the real estate industry.

At the same time, as college costs continue to rise, more students — and their parents — are looking for ways to get the most value out of their education, said Jim Curtin, a principal at Solomon Cordwell Buenz, an architecture firm in Chicago that works on university housing around the country. Climbing walls and tanning beds are far less likely to impress them than, say, innovation labs and maker spaces.

“They don’t want needless things,” Mr. Curtin said. “It’s almost like school is becoming more of a career boot camp: ‘How am I going to graduate with the highest-paying job I can get so I can pay down my loans?’”

Construction of off-campus student housing is expected to continue apace this year, with an expected 47,000 new beds being made available this fall, Mr. Whitaker said. That rate has held steady, peaking at 62,000 in 2014.

Such widespread upgrading of college student accommodations has occurred only twice before in the history of student housing design, said Carla Yanni, a professor of art history at Rutgers University and the author of “Living on Campus: An Architectural History of the American Dormitory.”

Rapid construction of luxurious fraternity houses came in the late 19th century, driven by rising competition for the nicest house, she said. In the early 20th century, universities began to realize
that the fraternities were dominating campus social life and had housing that was far better than that of most students. “They wanted to offer a social alternative, and focused their energies on building dormitories,” Ms. Yanni said.

Now, the design of new student housing complexes is largely dictated by the university environment, the student body demographic and the local marketplace. But as overall student expectations are changing, developers and management companies are rethinking much of what they are delivering.

“The standard has become highly amenitized — almost all of our communities have fitness facilities and pools, game rooms,” Mr. Oltersdorf said. “But in the upgrades we’re doing and some of the new developments, there’s a more practical focus.”

For example, Campus Advantage, in a partnership with Stark Enterprises of Cleveland, is building a 618-bed apartment-style complex near the University of Florida in Gainesville that will have more than 3,000 square feet of study space in eight rooms when it opens in 2020. That’s four times the amount of study space Campus Advantage put into a project it built in Knoxville, Tenn., three years ago, said Madison Meier, the company’s vice president for business development.

Campus Advantage has also developed a package of less tangible amenities for its communities aimed at helping students succeed, including bringing in staff to critique résumés and take professional head shots, as well as reporting on-time rent payments to credit agencies to help students establish a credit score.

Mr. Curtin’s firm recently worked with American Campus Communities, a real estate investment trust that teams up with universities to build housing, on a 1,600-bed residence hall for engineering undergrads at Arizona State University in Tempe. Called Tooker House, the community includes a maker space with 3-D printers, digital classrooms, 12 study rooms and Wi-fi bandwidth strong enough to accommodate several devices per resident.

In contrast, a 1,860-bed apartment community American Campus built at the university in 2008 dedicated only 1,000 square feet to academics, and instead featured a 23,000-square-foot community center with a fitness room, game room, theater, pool and basketball court.

In another selling point, Tooker House was built to maintain high efficiency standards, earning it the LEED Gold certification, said Jason Wills, the chief marketing officer at American Campus. Rates for the upcoming school year are $8,460 to $9,080 per person, depending on whether the room is shared or private.

“This generation has grown up recycling, with solar, and being aware of consumption,” Mr. Wills said. “They expect their communities to reflect their values and what they’ve grown up with.”

When given a choice, students are also likely to choose higher-quality public spaces over large bedrooms, said Thomas Carlson-Reddig, the community practice leader at Little Diversified Architectural Consulting in Charlotte, N.C. His firm has experimented with space trade-offs in
some “micro” student housing projects, including one in 2017 at the College of Charleston in South Carolina.

His firm designed the renovation of the Rutledge Rivers Residence Hall, dividing the space into apartments with four single and double sleeping pods clustered around a central living area and kitchen. The pods, with loft beds equipped with ledges for plugging in devices, are 75 to 105 square feet. A survey of residents conducted this year yielded “very positive” results, Mr. Carlson-Reddig said.

“We are looking at trying to create more efficient designs in order to give students more social space or a great outdoor hangout space,” he said. “And students are absolutely on board with that.”

Mr. Curtin said he believed housing designs would only continue to become “more strategically robust” in an effort to be responsive to the pressure that students feel to succeed.

A 550-student complex his firm worked on for the University of Illinois in Chicago is trying something new in this regard: integrating 52,000 square feet of academic space, including classrooms, lecture halls and a tutoring center, into the residence hall. Scheduled to open this fall, the complex will also have a ground-floor cafe and study lounges on every floor. Rates will range from $9,550 to $13,560 per person per year.

“You’ve got full-fledged academic space sharing a lobby with a residence hall,” Mr. Curtin said. “It opens the door to so many possibilities, like extending the hours of academic use and having resources available to students off-hours. We think it’s going to be a whole new way of looking at mixed use on campuses.”
Alabama slips in final NACDA Cup standings

By: Cecil Hurt

The University of Alabama slipped to 31st nationally in the 2018-2019 NACDA Directors Cup rankings of all-sports performance released on Friday. UA had finished a school-best 14th the previous year.

Alabama accumulated a total of 721.85 points in the rankings, sponsored by the National Association Of Collegiate Directors Of Athletics. Crimson Tide teams accumulating points were, in order: football (90), softball (83), women’s track and field (72), men’s swimming (72), men’s indoor track and field (70.5), women’s indoor track and field (70.5), men’s track and field (67.5), women’s gymnastics (66.75), women’s swimming (36), women’s golf (35), women’s tennis (25), men’s tennis (25) and men’s golf (8.6). UA failed to score in its other NCAA sports of baseball, men’s basketball, women’s basketball, women’s soccer, women’s volleyball and women’s rowing.

Stanford won the overall title with 1567.75 points. The Cardinal scored in 18 of 19 possible sports, led by six national championships, four on the women’s side (volleyball, swimming, tennis, water polo) and two men’s titles (gymnastics, golf).

Florida was No. 3 nationally and posted the best score in the SEC with 1157.75 points. The rest of the league rankings, in order, were LSU (11th nationally), Kentucky (14th), Texas A&M (15th), Georgia (21st), South Carolina (22nd), Arkansas (23rd), Tennessee (25th), Alabama (31st), Auburn (37th), Mississippi State (44th), Vanderbilt (45th), Missouri (51st) and Mississippi (56th).
MR. GOLF: Alabama commit Michaela Morard retains Girls State Junior title

By Ian Thompson

Michaela Morard is a 2020 University of Alabama golf team commit. I bet head women’s golf coach Mic Potter can’t wait for her to get to the Capstone.

On Wednesday, the Huntsville native fired a final round four-under-par 68 to defend her title and claim the 56th Girls State Junior Championship at Goose Pond Colony Resort (Lake Course) in Scottsboro. She closed with a final nine of four-under-par 32 to seal the deal and capture her fourth Girls State Junior in the last five years.

With the victory, Morard now shares the state record for most Girls State Junior titles with former UA legend Martha Lang, who won it from 1967-70. Morard will have the opportunity to close out her junior career in sole possession of the record at Valley Hill Country Club next summer, which is her home club.

Morard won previously at Montgomery Country Club last year by seven shots. In 2017 she was 11-under-par at Valley Hill and won by 14. And in 2015 she won her first at Heron Lakes in Mobile.

Micheala Williams of Athens, who is now on the golf team at the University of Tennessee, won the title in 2016.

Erika Allen of Berry carded a final round 72 to finish in second place this year, while her sisters Ashlee (14th) and Karlee (19th) also both finished in the top 20.

Twin sisters Kate and Caroline MacVicar of Tuscaloosa finished tied for 16th.

Virginia Anne Holmes of Montgomery shot three consecutive rounds of 76 for an overall score of 12-over-par 228 to win the 14-15 Age Division, and Molly Brown Davidson of Birmingham shot a final round 74 to close out a wire-to-wire victory in the 12-13 Age Division.

And the week got even better for Morard as on Thursday she earned medalist honors with a five-under-par 67 to qualify for the 71st U.S. Girls Junior Championship. Morard’s round included an eagle and three birdies and was also played at Goose Pond Colony.

See next page
Emelia Smith of Enterprise defeated Morgan Jones of Auburn on the first playoff hole to claim the second qualifying spot. Both shot 71. Jones will be the first alternate and Lauren Gilchrist of Spanish Fort earned second alternate.

The 71st U.S. Girls Junior Championship will take place at Sentry World Golf Course in Stevens Point, Wis. July 22-27.

**Todd Pebbles has a round to remember**

Last week Todd Pebbles had a round to remember at Ol' Colony Golf Complex in Tuscaloosa.

First, he holed out for an eagle two on hole 9 with a wedge from 115 yards; then he made a hole-in-one on No. 17, using an 8-iron from 151 yards.

He won't forget the round in a hurry, that's for sure.

His two special shots were witnessed by playing partners head golf professional John Gray, along with Ron Aldy, Dick Gardell and Hal Thurmond.
Neglect rampant in college baseball

By: Mike Bianchi

The biggest travesty in college athletics has nothing to do with the ridiculous notion that football and basketball players should be paid lucrative salaries to compete in their sports.

No.

Not even close.

By far, the most monumental injustice in all of big-time intercollegiate athletics is happening in college baseball, where hundreds of “volunteer” assistant coaches are working full-time and not getting paid a salary or medical benefits, and thousands of players are leaving school in debt because they get only partial scholarships or no scholarship at all.

“For whatever reason, college baseball has always been the whipping child of the NCAA,” new FSU baseball Coach Mike Martin Jr. laments.

“At the College World Series, there are 30,000 people at every game and millions more watching on ESPN,” UCF head Coach Greg Lovelady says. “Our game is growing, but we’re still stuck in these archaic times when it comes to funding coaching and player scholarships. There’s a feeling in college baseball like we’ve been neglected and left behind.”

NCAA member schools should be ashamed of themselves for the cheap, chintzy way they treat college baseball’s players and “volunteer” coaches. This was brought to light by two of the most prolific figures in the sport during the just-completed College World Series in Omaha, Neb.

After his team was eliminated, Mississippi State senior center fielder Jake Mangum, one of the game’s best players, made an emotional plea to the NCAA for more scholarships and to pass a measure for transforming “volunteers” into a third full-time assistant. The legislation for a third full-time assistant was defeated in April when big-time, money-making leagues such as the Big Ten and Big 12 shamefully voted against it.

“College baseball is evolving,” Mangum said. “It is. I just want to let everyone know, it’s time for a third paid assistant coach. Every year we’ve had assistant coaches that have not been paid who spend hours upon hours upon hours doing all they can for our program, sleeping in the offices, scouting for us, dealing with camps.

“… In this dugout, on that field, there were 27 players on each team. You start off with 35, you come (to Omaha) with 27. Of those 35, there are 11.7 on each team on scholarship. Like, man, this game is getting way too big for that. Come on. It’s time to change. It really is.”

Vanderbilt Coach Tim Corbin, whose team beat Michigan to win the national championship, blasted the NCAA for turning down a proposal in April that would have made the “volunteer”
position into a third full-time assistant. He eloquently and powerfully painted the picture of the
typical unpaid volunteer’s life.

"I’m 32 years old," Corbin described to the assembled media. "I’m married, I have a child, I leave the home at 7:30 every morning, I come back at 8, 9 at night. I do it Sunday through Sunday. I don’t get paid. I don’t get compensated. My wife stays home with a baby, can’t afford day care. And God forbid he goes to day care, gets sick; I don’t have benefits, so I can’t pay for that.

"I make camp money, I come home, put stress on my wife, can’t have another child. Costs money to have children; can’t do it. I’m a volunteer."

Finally, Corbin, concluded: "It’s the most short-sighted-thinking aspect of our game that we’ve been a part of. We lose good people to other jobs, other sports. ... They leave baseball because they can’t afford to stay in it. ... Why that hasn’t been changed, why that hasn’t been turned over in the last couple of years is really, really sinful. It’s dehumanizing in so many different ways."

UCF’s Lovelady says he’s seen these unpaid “volunteers” work overnight jobs and “sell bodily fluids” just to make ends meet. He’s seen them put off having a family because there are no medical benefits. The only money these “volunteers” get from their college programs comes in the form of a few thousand dollars per year they get for working the head coach’s summer baseball camps. And, sadly, Lovelady says, he’s seen many good coaches and good men simply quit and get out of the business because they couldn’t survive.

UCF’s volunteer assistant, Ted Tom, is 38 with a wife and two kids, but he is reluctant to paint himself as some sort of victim. He admits there are a lot of coaches who have it tougher than he does. After all, he’s been a head coach on the NAIA level and his wife has a good job with benefits. He says he is an outlier and that the third assistant’s position in college baseball should actually be for a young coach breaking into the business, but, then again, those young coaches aren’t so willing to break into a business where they’re working for free.

“I chose to come here and do this,” Tom says. “We’d all like to make more money and provide better for our families, but that’s not the case right now. Hopefully, something will change, but until it does, I’ll follow that dream of coaching baseball at the highest level. That’s what I’ve always wanted to do.”

Tom and many others say it’s the college baseball players themselves who are suffering the most because they aren’t getting the instruction, development and financial aid they deserve. The coach-to-player ratio in college baseball is the worst of any of the major intercollegiate sport, as is the number of scholarships.

In college football and basketball, essentially every contributing athlete is on a full-ride, full-cost scholarship. In college baseball, the 35 players on a typical roster must split 11.7 scholarships.
Most players get about 40% of a scholarship; some players get none. And almost all players leave college tens of thousands of dollars in debt.

And you wonder why baseball is the whitest of all the major “ball” sports in college, with less than 3% of rosters made up by African-Americans? It’s pretty easy to figure out, isn’t it?

Explains Lovelady: “Minorities are getting pushed to other sports because they know they’re not going to get a full ride like they do in football or basketball; or they decide to forego college altogether and immediately sign a minor-league contract because of the financial burden college baseball puts on athletes. It’s difficult to convince kids from one-income families, single-parent families and — especially here in Florida — immigrant families that they should come to college.”

I just hope the suits and decision-makers are very happy counting all the money they made from ESPN TV rights, souvenir sales and the sold-out stadiums at the College World Series in Omaha.

Pathetic.

The NCAA membership should be ashamed of itself.
Alabama Swimming’s Robert Howard Opens World University Games By Winning Relay Gold with Team USA

Staff Report

NAPOLI, Italy – Alabama swimming's Robert Howard raced to gold on day one of the World University Games, being held in Napoli, Italy this week as part of the United States' 400-meter freestyle relay.

Howard, a native of Alexander City, Ala., swam the third leg on Team USA's opening relay, posting a 47.74 in finals as part of a 3:11.08 effort, just off the WUG record. The 2019 Southeastern Conference Swimmer of the Year and an NCAA Champion, Howard made his first swim for Team USA count.

Rising Crimson Tide junior Zane Waddell advanced to the finals of the 100-meter backstroke after posting a 54.72 in prelims followed by a career-best 54.01 in the semifinals. He also led off South Africa's 400m freestyle relay that finished 11th in prelims.

In her WUG debut, rising junior Sezin Eligul was 21st in the prelims of the 50-meter butterfly with a time of 27.52 for her native Turkey.
Alabama basketball player Kira Lewis returns triumphant from World Cup championship

By Cecil Hurt / Sports Editor

For University of Alabama point guard Kira Lewis, who will be a focal point for the 2019-20 men’s basketball team, a gold medal-winning trip with Team USA to Greece was about team accomplishment, not individual statistics.

“I just did whatever I could to help my teammates out,” Lewis said in a press conference at Coleman Coliseum on Wednesday. “We all had the same goal to win a gold medal, so you can’t really complain about it because you’ve got 11 other guys that’s the best in the country. So, my approach was just to play when I got minutes, and when I didn’t get minutes, just cheer on my teammates.”

Team USA took the FIBA Under-19 Men’s World Cup Championship at the tournament in Greece, defeating Mali 93-79 in Sunday’s championship game. Team USA, coached by Kansas State head coach Bruce Weber, went 7-0 in the tournament. Lewis played in all seven games but usually in a limited role. He averaged 4.0 points, 1.6 assists and 1.1 rebounds per game.

“One of the challenges about being on one of those teams is playing time,” said Alabama assistant coach Bryan Hodgson, who traveled to Greece for the tournament. “It wasn’t what he’s used to (in terms of playing time), or what he is going to get at Alabama, but he did a good job of balancing that, keeping his head and accomplishing the goal, which was to win the gold medal.

“I was not only able to see him in Greece. That team had some great players but the NCAA also let us watch two days of tryouts in Colorado Springs. Watching him work, I knew it would be tough to cut this kid. I don’t think he has a selfish bone in his body. In Greece, he passed up open shot opportunities even with limited minutes of it meant his teammates got a better shot. His one goal was to win the gold medal.

“He played well against really good competition. You’d look at some of the players from Lithuania or Latvia and they were under 19 but they have been playing pro ball since they were 16. Kira did well against them. His per-minute stats were amazing.”

See next page
Lewis was so excited about his gold medal that he wore it back to Tuscaloosa and kept it on until gravity had a say in the matter.

“The first day back, I had it on all day. People wanted to take pictures with it and stuff. By the second day, it started getting pretty heavy so I took it off. I put it back on today because Aaron (Jordan, director of basketball media relations) reminded me. I’ll put it away after this, but this is something I will look at with my grandkids one day.”

Hodgson said Lewis was back working with the team in NCAA-approved skills sessions.

“One of the best things I heard from Kira in Greece was when he said he could not wait to get back to Tuscaloosa (and) get to work with his new teammates.

“We compete,” Hodgson added. “Things that we do aren’t easy, but Kira wants to compete and so do his teammates. We are very fortunate that we walked into this situation, and that’s a credit to the previous staff. It’s not always that way.”

While Hodgson was in Greece to watch Lewis, he was also able to observe some of the best international talent. While many U-19 players are “already spoken for,” either with American college programs or European professional leagues, he noted that he made connections with international coaches of the under-16 teams and also spotted prospects in the U-19 field as well although he cannot name prospects due to NCAA rules.

“I saw one or two,” he said. “Maybe one we will see this weekend.”
Alabama will face North Carolina in Battle 4 Atlantis tournament

By Cecil Hurt / Sports Editor

The University of Alabama men’s basketball team will open play in the Battle 4 Atlantis, one of the most prestigious of the early-season tournaments, against North Carolina on Nov. 27 in Nassau, Bahamas.

The game will be televised at 1:30 p.m. CT on ESPN or ESPN2.

The first game of the tournament, also on Alabama’s side of the bracket, will feature Michigan against Iowa State. The evening session will feature Gonzaga against Southern Miss in the day’s third game, followed by Oregon-Seton Hall in the nightcap.

Semifinal games will be played on Thanksgiving Day (Nov. 28)

North Carolina is one of the six teams in the eight-team field that appeared in the 2019 NCAA Tournament last March, posting a 29-7 record.

Alabama begins the 2019-20 season with first-year head coach Nate Oats, who was hired in March. The Crimson Tide finished last year with a 18-16 record and lost in the first round of the National Invitation Tournament to Norfolk State.

The Crimson Tide is expected to announce the complete non-conference schedule at the end of July.
Tennessee’s Jeremy Pruitt commits minor violation by saluting his high school

The Associated Press

KNOXVILLE, Tenn. — Tennessee football coach Jeremy Pruitt committed a minor NCAA violation earlier this year by tweeting out his congratulations when the high school he attended won an Alabama state basketball title.

Pruitt tweeted “Congratulations Robi Coker and Plainview High School on back to back State Championships! #2muchblue #PLV” on March 1. The tweet was deleted 37 minutes later, after a compliance official noted that it constituted an impermissible endorsement of a high school team and its coach. Compliance officials met with Pruitt and the staffer overseeing the football program’s Twitter accounts to discuss that particular rule, but that was the extent of any repercussions for his actions.

That was one of three football-related Level III violations Tennessee self-reported in the first six months of 2019. Tennessee also reported one Level III violation each in swimming, men’s tennis, track, softball, rowing and women’s soccer.

Details were obtained through a public records request.

“Level III violations are a byproduct of a healthy compliance program,” associate athletics director for compliance Andrew Donovan said in a statement. “There are thousands of NCAA rules and interpretations of those rules, so it is expected that inadvertent, minor violations may occur on occasion. We have a strong culture of compliance at the University of Tennessee. Our coaches and staff are fully committed to doing things the right way. They view compliance as a shared responsibility and hold themselves and each other accountable.”

The other football-related violations involved a non-coaching staffer driving family members of a recruit beyond the 30-mile radius of campus where contact is permitted and having three non-coaching staff members conduct an offseason conditioning session.

Tennessee officials said they initially arranged a car service for the recruit’s family before realizing he had eight siblings who couldn’t be left unattended while his mother visited campus. Tennessee instead had a non-coaching staffer drive the mother and siblings to and from their home, which was about 225 miles from Tennessee’s campus. School officials said no recruiting conversations occurred during the December trip.

The NCAA took away four recruiting evaluation days from Tennessee for that violation.
Alabama announces SEC Media Days participants

By Edwin Stanton / Executive Sports Editor

Alabama’s Tua Tagovailoa is among nine quarterbacks who will be in attendance for the annual SEC Media Days, which starts next week in Hoover.

The Crimson Tide will also bring wide receiver Jerry Jeudy and linebacker Dylan Moses. The event kicks off Monday, July 15 at the Wynfrey Hotel and runs through Thursday.

Alabama coach Nick Saban and the three Crimson Tide players will speak to the media on Wednesday, July 17. Also on that day will be Arkansas, Mississippi State and South Carolina.

Quarterbacks highlight the guest list this year. Along with Tagovailoa, last year’s Heisman Trophy runner-up, Feleipe Franks (Florida), Joe Burrow (LSU), Kelly Bryant (Missouri), Jake Fromm (Georgia), Matt Corral (Ole Miss), Jarrett Guarantano (Tennessee), Kellen Mond (Texas A&M) and Jake Bentley (South Carolina) will be the other QBs speaking to the media.

Alabama won the SEC Championship Game against Georgia last season, beat Oklahoma in the Orange Bowl College Football Playoff semifinal game and lost to Clemson in the national title game.

Tagovailoa, a junior, returns as the starting quarterback. As a sophomore he was 14-1 in his first season as a starter, passing for an SEC best 3,966 yards and 43 touchdowns, both single-season school records. He also led the nation with a 199.4 passer efficiency rating.

Tagovailoa won the Walter Camp Player of the Year and the Maxwell awards and was named first-team All-American by Walter Camp, The Sporting News and the AFCA. He was also the SEC Offensive Player of the Year.

Jeudy led the Crimson Tide in 2018 with 1,315 yards on 68 receptions with 14 touchdowns. He averaged 87.7 yards per game. His 1,315 yards is second on UA’s all-time list in a single season (Amari Cooper, 1,727 in 2014) and second in the SEC (5 yards behind Ole Miss’ A.J. Brown).

Jeudy, a junior, was the 2018 Biletnikoff Award winner, given to the country’s best receiver and named first-team All-American by the AP, Walter Camp, Sporting News, The Athletic, Sports Illustrated and AFCA.

Moses, a junior, led the UA defense with 86 tackles, including 10 tackles for a loss and 3.5 sacks. Moses was a second-team Walter Camp All-American and a finalist for the Butkus Award, given to the nation’s top linebacker. He was also second-team All-SEC.
The unreal story of how Amari Cooper picked up Alabama scholarship from Nick Saban
By: Mac Engel

Amari Cooper is an avid reader and can be as quiet as a sleeping owl yet he has far more to say than he would lead anyone to believe, or even think.

Such a tact may be part of his plan. Or he’s just shy.

When he appeared in front of 40 youth football campers at The Hockaday School on June 24 in Dallas, he was in his element on the football field, and painfully out of his element in front of an audience.

He clearly was not completely comfortable in this role, and spoke for about 45 seconds. None of the campers asked him a question, which was a great disappointment as even he expected that.

The role he clearly is comfortable in is as the No. 1 receiver for the Dallas Cowboys. His arrival to the team last October changed the direction of their entire season.

The surprise of the day came about two hours later, when he fulfilled his obligation with Gatorade, which was paying him to appear at the camp, and he met with the handful of local media that attended the camp specifically to talk to him.

If you ask Amari Cooper the right question, or one that he is interested in answering, he’s quite candid and insightful.

Are people educated now about the importance of actually being hydrated?

Yes. For there is an emphasis now on water and Gatorade breaks. Before, when I was in high school, it was like, ‘Water is for cowards.’ But now it’s like you actually need it in your body to perform at the highest level.

Do you have a most memorable experience from a summer football camp?
The memory that most sticks out is when I was 17 and I went to the Alabama camp. It was really hot. We were doing 1 on 1s. I ran a route and made this guy fall. And it was right in front of coach (Nick) Saban. He saw it and came up to me and took off his hat and he shook my hand and I got a (scholarship) offer that day. That’s the memory that sticks out.

You ran one route and got a scholarship offer to Alabama?

Yeah, and that’s really a compliment to Coach Saban and how good of a recruiter he is. I was kinda shocked myself. When he shook my hand and told me he wanted to meet me in my office later. I didn’t know what that was going to be. I didn’t know he was going to offer me. He did and I was taken aback by that; I thought, ‘This guy has seen me run one route.’ He has an eye for talent to see one play and knew. ‘I want this guy on my team.’

Why do you think the transition from Oakland to Dallas went as well as it did?

I don’t know. I think it’s just a perfect fit. It’s like I was a piece of the puzzle that was needed, and everything around me was needed as well for the puzzle to be complete. It’s a great situation. I can only thank God I was brought here to be a Dallas Cowboy, when I could have been on any team, probably some teams I didn’t want to be on.

But when I got the call I was going to be a Dallas Cowboy, I was really excited about that. I think I have a lot of good teammates, we have a group of core guys that really complement my game well. The play-calling. It seems like everything fell in place here. I don’t know how to explain it, and why it went as well as it did, but I know it did.

What do you think the possibilities are for this team this year?

The goal for every team is the same, to be the last team standing and to win that last game in February. That’s what we are building towards. We have a lot of pieces in place to do that. It’s going to be about our approach to doing it. It’s about the work the guys are doing now as professionals that’s not really part of our regiment right now in terms of having to do anything, but it’s important.

When would you want contract issues resolved or does it matter to you?
It really doesn’t matter to me. I’m not really thinking about that. I’m more focused on how I play and how I approach the game. The type of work I put in. I really want to play well. Everything starts with that. If you play good football, you’re going to be around for a long time. I want to be a Dallas Cowboy for a long time.

What about your upbringing created the motivation in you?

Where I grew up, it was all about sports. Football, basketball, sports. That’s all we did. After school, we’d race to finish our homework just so we could play football. When I look back, in retrospect, at my childhood I am so glad I was not able to get the video games that I so desperately wanted. Like the PlayStation, PSP, or XBox and those things because instead of being in the house playing those games, like some of my friends, I was forced to go outside and play sports.

That cultivated my game without me knowing it and helped with the moves that I still use today.

Where did you pick up chess?

I first started playing it in elementary school, my music teacher used to teach us. I didn’t take it seriously at the time. I can remember being interested in it, I think in the second grade, but it was not the thing to do at the time. I had learned how each and every piece moved. Looking back, I didn’t want to seem too interested in it because no one else was interested in it. I was more interested in basketball and football anyways.

When I got to college that’s when I started to get more interested in it.

What is your favorite chess piece?

The knight. It’s my favorite piece because it’s the most deceptive piece and all war is based on deception; that’s a quote from ‘The Art of War.’

What book are you reading these days?

Now I am reading ‘The 48 Laws of Power.’ It’s a book I always wanted to read. I knew some of the laws before but I had just never got around to reading the book. It’s really interesting. It has a lot of rich military history in it.
Would you compare yourself to a knight on a football field?

I would. It’s a sneaky piece. It can move in that ‘L’ position, so it can be on this or that side all in one move. I don’t talk too much trash and let my game do the talking. Some people may see that as someone who may sneak up on you and before it’s too late you already have 200 yards in a game. That’s how I view the knight. It’s that deceptive piece that you don’t expect much from it, but it will sneak up on you and checkmate you.

Have you always been a quiet guy?

Actually I used to be way more quiet. In elementary and middle school, I was really quiet and shy. To be honest, I’m not as shy or quiet any more. I guess you guys would say I am still quiet, but if you ask my teammates they will say initially I was really quiet. I don’t think that will ever change when I come in contact with people I don’t know. I will sit back and be observant at first. And then I’ll start talking more.

But I am definitely not as quiet and shy as I used to be.

What’s the one thing about Amari Cooper would surprise people?

How competitive I am. Since I am an NFL player people would think I am a competitive person, but I don’t think people understand how really competitive I am. I will compete in anyway, it doesn’t matter what it is.

In high school there was this one guy, who was also a competitor, we used to compete and try to see who could name the most name brand shoes. We would compete at stupid stuff like that. If you get me in a competitive situation, you’ll get the most out of my personality because I will start talking trash or whatever I have to do to throw the guy off balance and win at that moment.
Preseason magazines make their picks for top dogs of college football

By; Cecil Hurt

Summer is firecrackers and boating, vacation and heat.

Lots and lots of heat.

It is also the gateway to college football season and, as such, it is the time for football preseason magazine.

The annuals, as they were once called, are packed with information and statistics and while that type of data is available online these days, there is still a certain convenience in holding all those rosters and schedules in your hand rather than clicking through to various websites. If you are looking for a handy preview, they are still effective, and even if you are just looking for nostalgia — with some of the publications dating back 80 years since their inception — the magazines are part of the preseason ritual.

What you won’t find, certainly not in 2019, is variety in the predictions. That isn’t a criticism. All of the five preseason magazines used by The News in this story try to preserve reputations for accuracy, as much as is possible. It’s not good for any publication’s reputation to throw random teams out in picking a Top 10, or a group of four playoff teams. Opinions can differ, and sometimes they do. But as the “haves” in college football continue to go stronger and breakthroughs are gradual but fairly rare.

You want a long shot? Go to the horse races. You want favorites? Go to the magazine rack.

In taking the top 10 teams from each of five publications — Athlon, Lindy’s, Street & Smith’s, Phil Steele and The Sporting News — and awarding points on a 10–through-1 inverted value scale (10 points for first place, nine points for second and so on until awarding one point for 10th place) — the usual suspects lead the way.

Alabama is No. 1 in four of the five top 10s, and Clemson is No. 2 in all four. (Lindy’s inverts that order.) That gives Alabama 49 of 50 possible points, and gives Clemson 46. Georgia is picked at No. 3 by four of the five publications (39 points.) After that, the list goes Oklahoma with 32 points, Ohio State with 27 and Michigan with 23. LSU (20) is No. 7 overall, followed by Florida (15, getting a top 10 mention from all five magazines), Notre Dame (11) and Texas (7). Oregon, Utah and Texas A&M were the only other schools mentioned.

That hardly seems like a good omen for a dark horse.
“It’s been that way since 2009 as far as Alabama,” said Dennis Dodd, the CBS college football editor who wrote the introduction and rankings for Lindy’s. “Now there is no question that Clemson and Alabama have separated themselves.

“You’d have to think both of them can get through those schedules, especially Clemson. In fact, if Clemson loses a game, that could be an issue for them making the playoffs, depending on how some other things play out. But I don’t see any way they lose a game.”

Dodd said the concentration at the very top of the powerful leagues has everyone else chasing the leaders.

“When I started doing this, you’d try to find 10 teams with a chance,” he said. “Now six (teams) seems about right.

“Is that good? I think it’s neutral. Attendance is flat at several places but ratings are up, especially for the SEC. People are still tuning in. It’s not just fans. Players want to see it. Players want to go there. And the playoff has helped. You can say what you want about it but that Tuesday night (rankings) show on ESPN is must-see TV. Maybe the teams you see in November aren’t the ones you will see in January but you still watch. I think that’s one of the biggest developments of the playoff era.”

If there are shake-ups ahead, they are likely to manifest themselves in early September.

“I think those early SEC games against the Power Five teams are going to tell us a lot,” Dodd said. “Auburn against Oregon (in Arlington, Texas) in that first week is going to be interesting. If Auburn loses, they will have a lot of questions. If Oregon loses, you might write off the Pac-12 for another season because they seem to be the team people are looking at from that league. Then the next week you have LSU-Texas, two of the teams in that next tier looking to move up. And the week after that, you’ve got Clemson-Texas A&M although I think Texas A&M is going to have a tough time winning that game on the road.”
Alabama still in mix for top prospects from Tennessee and Mississippi

By Josh Bean

Alabama currently has 20 commitments for its Class of 2020, and the Crimson Tide remains in the mix for a number of highly ranked players from around the country.

Alabama’s top uncommitted targets include defensive end Reggie Grimes II, the top-rated player in Tennessee and the son of a former Alabama defensive lineman, and defensive tackle McKinnley Jackson, the top-ranked player in Mississippi.

At The Opening Finals recruiting showcase last week in Frisco, Texas, neither Grimes nor Jackson voiced a concern that Alabama won’t have room.

“If a school has room for me, great,” Grimes said. “If a school makes room for me, great. If they don’t have room for me, it is what it is.”

Grimes and Jackson performed well in 1-on-1 pass rushing drills at The Opening. The 6-foot-4, 240-pound Grimes showcased speed and power out of a three-point stance, despite playing stand-up linebacker throughout his high school career.

Alabama currently has two players who, like Grimes, are listed as weakside defensive ends by recruiting services – 5-star Chris Braswell and Will Anderson, a 4-star from Dutchtown (Ga.) High. Jackson-Olin’s Quandarrius Robinson is listed as an outside linebacker but could also end up primarily as a pass rusher in college.

Jackson, built like a refrigerator at 6-foot-2 and 327 pounds, showed the kind of power and explosion expected from an elite defensive tackle.

Alabama currently has two committed defensive tackles – Calera’s Jayson Jones and Pickens County’s Jah-Marien Latham, both 4-star prospects.

Grimes and Jackson are rated as 4-star prospects, with Grimes currently ranked No. 31 nationally according to the 247Sports Composite rankings and McKinnley checks in at No. 115. Grimes could definitely end up as a 5-star player before the recruiting cycle ends.

Grimes is also considering LSU, Florida State, Vanderbilt, South Carolina and Tennessee. He said he plans to visit Alabama for the Southern Miss game Sept. 21 and currently plans to make his commitment public in early November.

Jackson, meanwhile, said will likely take an official visit to Alabama but currently plans to wait until the traditional National Signing Day in February to make his final decision.
Alabama also remains in the mix for pass rusher B.J. Olujari, who emerged as one of the best pass rushers at The Opening Finals. His brother, Azeez, plays at Georgia, but he said he plans to visit Alabama for the Ole Miss game on Sept. 28. Olujari said he’s also still considering Auburn, Tennessee, Florida and Georgia.
Is it Bama vs. Clemson again for state’s top-rated receiver?

By: Josh Bean

In 2018, Central-Phenix City receiver Justyn Ross picked Clemson over Alabama on National Signing Day.

Now, two recruiting cycles later, Red Devils’ star E.J. Williams is the state’s No. 1 receiving prospect. While he’s narrowed his choices to Alabama, Auburn, Tennessee, Oklahoma, Florida LSU and Clemson, many recruiting analysts see Williams as an Alabama vs. Clemson battle.

The 6-foot-3 Williams plans to make his public commitment Aug. 24 and said at The Opening Finals in Frisco, Texas, that Alabama is currently his leader.

“This is how I’m feeling right now,” he said. “There’s no telling how I’m going to feel later.”

What does Williams like about Alabama?

“Bama is one of the schools that’s got the best competition,” he said. “You go against the best guys that go in the first or second round. They’re producing great wide receivers.”

Alabama has produced several receivers picked in the first round during the Nick Saban Era – Calvin Ridley in 2018, Amari Cooper in 2015, and Julio Jones in 2011, as well as tight end O.J. Howard in 2017.

Crimson Tide receivers Jerry Jeudy, Henry Ruggs and Devonta Smith, all juniors, could leave for the NFL after this season, which might give Williams a shot at immediate playing time.

Williams said whether Jeudy, Ruggs, Devonta Smith or all three head early to the NFL has no influence on his college choice.

“If they don’t (go to the NFL), it doesn’t matter,” he said. “That’s just another year under my belt of experience and learning from those guys, just listening to what they’re doing and developing at practice if I did go (to Alabama).”

Ross, Williams said, is trying to woo the Central-Phenix City star to Clemson.

“I look up to him, and he tells me to go where I want to go,” Williams said. “Of course, he wants me to go to Clemson.”

Alabama already has three committed receivers – Thaivu Jones-Bell, from south Florida; Javon Baker, from Powder Springs, Georgia; and Traeshon Holden, who transferred to Narbonne High in Harbor City, California, for his senior season. All are 4-star prospects.
Clemson, meanwhile, has no receivers among its 18 committed players.

A wildcard in Williams’ recruitment could be Auburn, which already has four committed receivers – 4-star Kobe Hudson from Troup County (Ga.); 4-star Ze’Vian Capers, from Alpharetta, Georgia; 4-star Montevallo star J.J. Evans; and 3-star Elijah Canion, from Hollywood, Florida. Williams said Hudson is “like a brother to me.”

But the number of committed receivers, Williams insisted, doesn’t matter to him.

“It’s not going to matter who’s (committed) there already,” he said. “I’m just going to go in with the mindset that I’m the best player on the field.”
Pickens County’s Ja-Marien Latham ‘locked in’ as Alabama commitment

By: Edwin Stanton

REFORM — Jah-Marien Latham is getting to know his future teammates pretty well.

The Pickens County High School defensive tackle and University of Alabama commitment makes the 25-mile trip from Reform to Tuscaloosa as often as he can.

“I’ve visited about eight times already,” Latham said. “Sometimes I just go and visit and chill with the players.”

Latham, 6-foot-3, 280 pounds, is a four-star player ranked as the 12th best player in the state, according to 247sports.com. He’s also the 24th-ranked defensive tackle in the country.

“I might take a couple of more visits, but I’m pretty locked in,” he said of his decision to sign with Alabama. “I don’t have anything set up right now. My official visit (to Alabama) will be in December.”

Latham, a Crimson Tide commitment since November of 2018, is scheduled to graduate in December and said he plans to enroll at UA in January to get a jumpstart on learning the Crimson Tide’s system.

If Latham does have questions about football life in Tuscaloosa, he doesn’t have to look far for the answers. His head coach, Michael Williams, is a former Alabama tight end (2009-12) who also spent time in the NFL (2013-17).

“It’s no secret that with (Latham) we follow his lead,” Williams said. “He does whatever it takes to get the job done. I know he will build up the guys around him. They see what he does on a daily basis and try to mimic what he does.”

For now, he is focused on his final year of high school.

“This is my last year playing high school football, so I want to try and enjoy every minute of it,” Latham said. “The main thing I want to do is just get a ring. Practice is going good. We’ve got some high intensity and everybody is ballin’ out.”

Latham was named the Alabama Sports Writers Association Lineman of the Year in 2018, finishing with 75 tackles, including 16 for a loss and five sacks.

“This year I want to get more sacks,” he said. “This year I want to try to get like 10 to 15. I want to set a high standard for myself.”
Easing our way back into football season

By: Cecil Hurt

Skimming through the college football annuals that come out in the summer is one of the better ways to ease into the season, a sort of trial run for the coming onslaught of predictions, sound bytes, analyses and hot takes — so many hot takes — that are about to come as soon as the conference Media Days take center stage next week.

Most indicate the same ending for the 2019 season: Alabama-Clemson V for the championship, Tua vs. Trevor for the Heisman Trophy. (Jalen Hurts winning it for Oklahoma, giving the Sooners three Heismans in three years is probably the sentimental favorite of all the story lines out there, though, and remember that emotion and momentum play as much of a part for many Heisman voters as performance does.)

It doesn’t appear college football is headed for a major overhaul. There will be the usual outcry for an expanded (eight-team) playoff but four teams seems to work well enough, when it’s hard to see more than six or seven legitimate contenders.

Going to eight teams might expand college football’s geographic base — guaranteeing Pac-12 inclusion, for one thing — and it might placate the Group of Five institutions.

But neither of those things really accomplish the mission of including the best eight teams. The two teams who were passed over last year with an actual chance to win were Georgia and Ohio State, and it is hard to argue that Washington or a Group of Five team would be better.

And the year would come (maybe this year, although the point is moot) when three SEC teams would be clearly deserving.

In the long run, the ACC needs to improve to make the season more interesting. Yes, Clemson is outstanding. But they are far less likely to lose a conference game than Alabama (which will have to play LSU, at Texas A&M, at Auburn and then either Georgia or possibly Florida) does.

After Clemson plays Texas A&M in Week 3, what obstacle do the Tigers face? And while it’s not Clemson’s job to make Virginia Tech or Miami or Florida State better, the rest of the league is in a brutal down cycle.

No one in college football is talking officially about the next cycle of realignment yet, but if the ACC is going to want its television future to be as lucrative as the SEC or the Big Ten, it has to have more than one feature team.
Not everyone in the SEC, not every game, is elite, but unless someone resuscitates Miami or Florida State soon, what is the draw of a steady diet of Wake Forest-Boston College or Virginia-Pitt?

The Big Ten can offer Ohio State-Michigan. The Big 12 can feature Oklahoma-Texas (if Tom Herman can put the luster back on the Longhorns.)

Those are games that factor into the playoff picture. The ACC this year can counter with Clemson against ... who exactly? That’s not to say Clemson isn’t great or won’t defend its CFP title. The Tigers appear more than capable.

It’s more of a long-term issue, but it is one that people are watching.