April 18, 2013

ARTICLES OF INTEREST
APRIL 11, 2013 – APRIL 18, 2013

For specific news stories, see the following page numbers:

**NEWS ABOUT**

- **TRUSTEE/SYSTEM INFORMATION** 2
- **STATE ISSUES** 9
- **UA CAMPUS ISSUES** 21
- **UAB CAMPUS ISSUES** 36
- **UAH CAMPUS ISSUES** 42
- **OTHER STATE UNIVERSITIES** 46
- **SPORTS** 53
Black Warrior 7th most at risk

Proposed mine jeopardizes river, annual report says

By Stephanie Taylor
Staff Writer

A proposed mining operation on the banks of the Black Warrior has landed the river a spot on America's Most Endangered Rivers list. American Rivers, a Washington D.C.-based conservation group, ranked the Black Warrior seventh on its annual list, according to a report released today.

"The report highlights 10 rivers whose fates will be decided in the coming year and encourages decision-makers to do the right thing for the rivers and the communities they support," according to a news release that accompanied the report.

"The report is not a list of the nation's 'worst' or most polluted rivers, but rather it highlights rivers confronted by critical decisions."

See River | 7A
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1A

that will determine their future.

Shepherd Bend Mine LLC, owned by Drummond Co., has proposed a 1,773-acre coal mine near Mulberry Fork, a tributary that serves as an intake for Birmingham's drinking water supply. The company has control of just 34 acres, and would require an agreement with the UA System board of trustees for land and mineral rights to move forward. Drummond Co. is owned by former UA trustee Garry Drummond. A UA spokeswoman said Tuesday that the university has no plans to sell or lease the land.

"The university has not been approached about leasing or selling the land, and has no current plans to sell or lease the land," Cathy Andreen said.

Mining the area could contaminate the drinking water source for nearly 200,000 people and negatively impact wildlife and recreation opportunities, said Charles Scribner, executive director of the Black Warrior Riverkeeper organization that applied for the endangered designation.

The Black Warrior Riverkeeper has been joined by several organizations, individuals and governmental bodies that have urged UA to publicly state that no mining will ever occur at the site.

Scribner said the endangered designation could help pressure university officials.

"The University of Alabama understands that they have a major research and educational institution," he said. "They're an increasingly national institution. They've grown a lot in the last few years and they get incredible students, faculty and staff from all over the country. In order to do so, they need a good image. By being under this national spotlight now, I hope there is more pressure on them to continue to protect their good image by not participating in the transfer of land and minerals for a uniquely inappropriate mine proposal right across from a major drinking water supply for Alabama's largest city."

Around 200,000 Birmingham area residents drink water from the Mulberry Fork area. While Tuscaloosa County doesn't use the Black Warrior for drinking water, the area could be impacted by pollution, Scribner said. A mine in such proximity would introduce sediment and toxic pollutants to the drinking water supply, leading to increased customer costs and decreased water quality, according to the American Rivers report.

"We have a thriving river with a lot of biodiversity, great recreation opportunities and great scenery. We want to keep it that way," he said. "There's a lot to lose here."

The Alabama Department of Environmental Management and the Alabama Surface Mining Commission have granted Jasper-based Shepherd Bend permission to mine 286 acres owned by UA near the Mulberry Fork of the Black Warrior River. It's common for mining companies to apply for permits before acquiring land.

The proposed mine has drawn opposition from Birmingham City Council, the NAACP, UA's and the University of Montevallo's student government associations, the UAB graduate student association, the Waterkeeper Alliance, the Southern Environmental Law Center, the task force of the Episcopal Diocese of Alabama, Birmingham-based craft beer breweries and various environmental and recreation groups.

The mine site is part of 1,300 acres UA owns off Mulberry Fork, a Black Warrior tributary in Walker County. It would be 800 feet from the Mulberry Fork intake, which supplies raw water to water filtration plants, according to the Birmingham Water Works board.

The Alabama Department of Environmental Management issued a permit to allow Shepherd Bend LLC to discharge wastewater from its strip mine at more than two dozen points into Mulberry Fork in July 2008. Opponents say the wastewater would contain iron, aluminum, manganese, chlorides, sulfates and other contaminants.

"Even if they never had a sin-

See next page
gle violation, they would still discharge wastewater containing 10 times the level of iron and 40 times the level of manganese recommended by the federal Safe Drinking Water Act,” Scribner said.

In early 2012, the Birmingham City Council passed a resolution asking UA not to lease the land.

Citizens and groups have held several protests, including one outside a UA trustees meeting at UAB in February 2012. Members of the group delivered a petition to the trustees that included more than 6,000 signatures of people who oppose strip mining at the site.

UA Systems spokeswoman Kelce Reinhart said the board of trustees has not discussed the issue.

UA had sought bids on leasing the land in 2007 at the request of the Drummond Co. But the company then didn’t respond to the request for proposals, and neither Drummond nor any of its subsidiaries have requested a lease since.

Scribner said the organization has good relationships with UA students, faculty and staff, and that they often work together on different projects. He was in Tuscaloosa Tuesday night to accept a grant from the Alabama Panhellenic Association. The money will be used to fund lab analysis of water samples used in pollution investigations in the 17-county watershed.

“We don’t look at the University of Alabama as an adversary,” Scribner said. “They haven’t made any bad decisions. We’re just trying to pressure them to make the right decision. It would be wonderful to focus on continuing these partnerships and just say, ‘Let’s end this and move on.’

He encouraged anyone interested in the mining project to visit www.blackwarriorriver.org.

A voice mail left at a number for Drummond’s media relations and an email submitted through the company website were not returned Tuesday.

Some citizens and a group called JobKeeper Alliance have spoken in favor of the mine. The JobKeeper Alliance board includes representatives from United Mine Workers, the American Federation of Labor and the Congress of Industrial Organizations and Manufacturing Alabama. The alliance has stated that mining should be allowed if the company has been granted the proper permits and adheres to regulations. Supporters have said that sediment ponds would allow pollutants to settle before water is released into the river, and that the mine would create new jobs and tax revenue.

The Colorado River was named the nation’s top endangered river. Ongoing drought and increasing demand for water has threatened the waterway that flows through seven U.S. and two Mexican states.

Reach Stephanie Taylor at stephanie.taylor@tuscaloosa news.com or 205-722-0210.
American Rivers, a national nonprofit organization that works to protect and restore U.S. rivers, announced Wednesday that the Black Warrior River is number seven on its list of most endangered rivers in the U.S., saying the river's quality of drinking water is "at risk."

"Drinking water for the greater Birmingham area is threatened by a proposed coal mine on property primarily owned by The University of Alabama," the 2013 report reads. "Drummond Company's Shepherd Bend Mine would discharge wastewater into the Black Warrior River's Mulberry Fork only 800 feet from the Birmingham Water Works Board's intake, which provides drinking water for 200,000 citizens."

American Rivers is a national nonprofit organization that works to protect and restore U.S. rivers and streams. According to their website, American Rivers has helped protect and restore more than 150,000 miles of rivers through programs like their annual release of the America's Most Endangered Rivers list.

The seven-state Colorado River tops the 2013 list because of inadequate water supply to meet basin water demands and is followed by the Flint River in second, which flows through the southeastern part of Alabama, for outdated water management.

The Black Warrior's placement on this national list comes as no surprise for some Alabama residents. For Randy Palmer, childhood memories have been enough to devote six years to fighting to protect the river.

"I went on all my life using the Black Warrior River and all its forks. I hiked up on the Slipsey [a fork watershed of the Black Warrior], camped and canoed up there all my life," Palmer, a member of Citizens Opposed to the Strip Mining on the Black Warrior River, said. "My father took our family up to the Bankhead forest when we were children, and that's where we vacationed."

The possibility of a Shepherd Bend mine has been a point of contention for six years. In 2007, the University submitted a request for proposals "to lease certain surface, mineral rights and fee simple lands to surface mine coal," just 800 feet from the Birmingham Water Works Board's intake, which spurred concern among residents.
UA: No current plans to lease or sell land

BLACK WARRIOR FROM PAGE 1

"After we saw the solicitation to mine Shepherd Bend in the newspaper, we came down to meet with Lynda Gilbert, [UA vice president of financial affairs]," Palmer said. "She told us that while they were sorry and they understood what we were trying to do, this was a done deal."

Palmer said Gilbert cited Garry Drummond, chairman and chief executive officer of Drummond Company, Inc., a privately owned mining and coal product processing company, as the reason it was a "done deal." Drummond is a trustee emeritus on The University of Alabama System Board of Trustees.

"That's what they told us. It was a done deal," Palmer said. "When we asked why, they said, it's because we received pressure from Drummond to do this."

In a fall 2012 interview with then-University president Guy Bailey, Bailey said no one had approached the University with inquiries about mining on the Shepherd Bend land owned by the Capstone.

"Nobody has actually approached us about mining there," Bailey said. "My understanding in talking to my predecessors is that we've never been approached with that. I don't think that's an issue at all."

Debbie Lane, assistant to the president, said in the fall 2012 interview that the 2007 request had no responses.

"We did a [request for proposals] in 2007 and got no takers, and even if a [request for proposal] is issued that doesn't mean the University would take bid. It's a very public process," Lane said. "We haven't been asked; we have no plans to do that."

Although the Drummond company did not bid on the request for proposal, they did pursue permits from the Alabama Department of Environmental Management and in 2010 from the Alabama Surface Mining Commission to mine in the area, according to al.com. Bailey suggested the permits were used to exclude other competitors from pursuing a lease from the University.

"They may have gotten that permit to exclude other people from doing it," Bailey said. "Sometimes you do something because you don't want a competitor to do something."

Charles Scribner, executive director of Black Warrior Riverkeeper, said although Drummond doesn't have a vote on the Board of Trustees anymore, he believes Drummond's pressure on administration has prolonged a definitive statement about Shepherd Bend.

"He can't vote on this issue, but I suspect that one reason why this issue has dragged out so long is because, while there is such widespread pressure on UA to do the right thing from so many different corners, I'm sure they're also getting some pressure from Drummond who has been actively applying for permits for a mine and fighting for his mine proposal in court," Scribner said. "He obviously has a big stake in this."

Scribner also said University administrators continue to be noncommittal about making a definitive statement about the possibility of a mine.

"The UA system keeps emphasizing the word current when they make their statements. They keep saying that over and over again, they have no current plans," Scribner said. "Try to get a quote from someone there, but I guarantee it's just going to be the same comment that they keep making for years now. "We have no current plans."

UA spokeswoman Cathy Andreen said in an emailed statement on Tuesday that the University has not been approached about the land.

"The University has not been approached about leasing or selling the land, and has no current plans to sell or lease the land," Andreen said.

Scribner said he hopes the national attention the University will receive following American Rivers' designation will motivate administrators to speak up more clearly.

"The process has really evolved where UA was actively shopping that property, but now they keep saying, 'we have no current plans to lease or sell our land for mining at Shepherd Bend,'" Scribner said. "I'm glad that they've backed off the initial shopping process, but I think it would put the 200,000 people who rely on that particular Birmingham waterworks facility for drinking water at ease if they said that."
ALABAMA FOOTBALL

Board to address salary, contracts

Staff report

The compensation committee of the University of Alabama's Board of Trustees will meet today to address salary increase proposals and new contracts in the athletic department.

Among those reviews are a contract amendment for head football coach Nick Saban, and the initial contract for new athletic director Bill Battle.

Meanwhile, if UA defensive coordinator Kirby Smart's salary increase is in line with what he's received in the past, Saban's right-hand man for the Alabama defense could be set to become the first coordinator to earn $1 million per year in school history.

Staff veterans Doug Nussmeier, Chris Rumph, Lance Thompson, Bobby Williams and Burton Burns will have their contracts up for renewal. Other initial contracts to be reviewed are those of new offensive line coach Mario Cristobal, new defensive backs coach Greg Brown and new wide receivers coach Billy Napier.

Director of player personnel Kevin Steele's contract is on the agenda as well.
HUNTSVILLE

Tuition hike approved for medical students

The University of Alabama System Board of Trustees finance committee approved tuition increases on Thursday for first professional students in medicine, dentistry and optometry at the University of Alabama at Birmingham and the College of Community Health at the flagship campus in Tuscaloosa.

The full board, meeting at the University of Alabaman in Huntsville, will vote on the tuition increases at today's meeting.

Medical students at UAB and UA community health students will pay 6.5 percent more for tuition in the 2013-14 academic year while dental and optometry students will see a 5.5 percent increase.

During her presentation to the trustees, UAB Provost Linda Lucas said that despite the increase, the tuition remains below the average of peer institutions and ranked in the bottom half in comparison with about 20 peer institutions.
Survey: Alabama 2nd most business-friendly state in the country

Alabama is the second most business-friendly state in the country, according to a new survey.

Only Utah ranked higher, according to the survey produced by thumbtack.com, an online service that connects customers to small businesses, and the Kauffman Foundation, which supports entrepreneurship through grants.

Rhode Island was found to be the least business-friendly state.

Alabama's performance improved significantly compared to last year, when the state ranked 10th overall.

The survey asked more than 7,700 small business owners around the country a series of questions about the business environment.

States were ranked according to 11 aspects of business friendliness, and Alabama ranked at or near the top in all categories.

Robert McClendon, al.com

THE CRITERIA

With Alabama's letter grades for "business friendliness" in each category:

Overall: A+
Ease of starting a small business: A
Ease of hiring: A+
Overall regulatory friendliness: A+
Health and safety regulations: A
Employment, labor and hiring regulations: A+
Tax code: A+
Licensing regulations: A+
Environmental regulations: A+
Zoning regulations: A+
Availability of helpful training or networking programs: A−

Source: thumbtack.com
Area leads state in construction job growth

Kelli Dugan
kdugan@al.com

Mobile's construction employment gains for the 12-month period ending in February far outpaced Alabama's 10 other metropolitan areas and ranked it 24th nationwide.

According to the report by the Associated General Contractors of America, Mobile gained 1,200 construction jobs, representing a 12 percent year-over-year increase and placing it in the top 7 percent nationally.

Pascagoula, Miss., added 1,800 construction jobs during the same period, a 51 percent gain, ranking it first among all 339 metropolitan areas examined in terms of percentage.

The Houston-Sugar Land-Baytown, Texas, area posted the country's largest net gain of 13,200 jobs.

According to the report, construction employment

WINNERS

Mobile: 1,200 construction jobs

Pascagoula, Miss.: 1,800 construction jobs

Houston-Sugar Land-Baytown, Texas: 13,200 jobs

LOSERS

Alabama: 1,600 construction jobs lost

increased in 158 metropolitan areas, declined in 132 and was stagnant in 49.

Statewide, Alabama lost 1,600 construction, mining and logging jobs during the 12-month period.
MERCEDES-BENZ PLANT

Dawn Kent • dkent@al.com

The United Auto Workers union is campaigning to organize at Alabama’s Mercedes-Benz plant, one of several Southern auto factories the group has in its sights.

Union materials are being distributed to employees of the German automaker, which launched Alabama’s auto industry.

The effort is being supported by the German union IG Metall. Its representatives have been in Alabama helping build support for the UAW, and organizers have moved into a bigger office near Mercedes’ Tuscaloosa County plant, according to a newsletter outlining the activities.

It’s not clear how much traction the campaign has gained, but the activity has been building for at least a year, dates on the materials show.

PREVIOUS ATTEMPTS
Previous efforts to unionize workers at Alabama’s Mercedes-Benz plant have been unsuccessful:

1999-2000
United Auto Workers

2006
International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers

2007
United Auto Workers

A website, www.uawvance.org, is called a resource for the plant’s employees as they consider unionization.

On the website, the UAW says its vision for Mercedes is to “create a dynamic and unique local union in Tuscaloosa that becomes a model for labor relations in the 21st Century.”

The UAW also is campaigning at the Volkswagen plant in Chattanooga, Tenn., and the Nissan plant in Canton, Miss.

Mercedes kicked off Alabama’s auto sector when it selected Tuscaloosa County for its first U.S. plant in 1993. A number of foreign automakers followed, including Honda and Hyundai in this state, and others in surrounding states.

Organizing any of the transplants would be a major coup for the UAW, since the South’s auto sector remains...
largely nonunion.

But the group has had success at parts suppliers. For instance, five of Mercedes' suppliers in Alabama are unionized, including two that held votes won by the UAW in the past year.

UAW President Bob King has said the union would have to organize at auto plants in the South if it is to survive. Last month, the UAW reported a slight increase in membership during 2012, growing by about 1,800 members to 382,513, according to the Detroit Free Press.

That's the third consecutive year of modest growth, although the total is only about a quarter of the 1.5 million members the UAW had in 1979.

Mercedes-Benz has always been neutral on the topic of unionization at its Tuscaloosa County factory, and that is continuing in the latest campaign, a company spokeswoman said.

"The decision on the union should be up to our Team Members and through an election process," Felicia Jerald, a spokeswoman for the plant, said. "In our 16 years of operations, MBUSA has created a team-oriented work environment, which fosters open communication, competitive wages and benefits, direct access to management and teamwork."

A successful union drive at one of the transplant factories could affect future attempts to build the South's auto sector, said Jay St. Clair, an attorney at Little Mendelson's Birmingham office and an adjunct professor who teaches law at Samford University's Cumberland School of Law.

"I don't think there's any doubt the reason that a lot of these automakers chose to operate in the South is they thought their chances were high that they could operate union-free," he said. "I suppose if one of the big automakers were to become unionized, that might dissuade companies from bringing more plants to the South."

But if a union does organize one of the automakers, St. Clair doesn't think that alone will create a domino effect at others.

It will depend on the outcome of negotiations between the company and the union as it pertains to salaries, benefits or other issues, he said.

Union attempts to organize at Mercedes are nothing new, and so far have been unsuccessful.

The UAW's activity in Vance comes during a major growth spurt for the plant, which is preparing to add the C-Class sedan to its assembly lines next year and a new SUV in 2015.

The plant's 3,000 workers currently build the M-Class and GL-Class SUVs and the R-Class crossover.

Combined, the new models will bring an additional 1,400 jobs, and advertising for many of those positions has begun.

Greg Canfield, secretary of the Alabama Department of Commerce, said Alabama's status as a right-to-work state is a key selling point in recruiting new business.

Companies in the U.S. and abroad are supportive of that, he said.

"We're confident in Alabama's position as a right-to-work state and in the management and team-building process in place at Mercedes," Canfield said.

ONLINE
Watch the UAW's campaign video for the Mercedes plant at al.com.
State school board adopts new test

Alabama first state in the nation to approve Common Core test system for grades 3-8

The Associated Press

MONTGOMERY | The State Board of Education has approved a resolution making Alabama the first state in the nation to adopt a new standardized testing system aligned with the Common Core school standards.

The board voted 6-2 Thursday to have the ACT Aspire system take effect in August as the annual reading and math assessment for grades three through eight in public schools statewide.

The testing system is by ACT Inc., which makes the ACT college entrance test. Jon Erickson, president of the company's education division, said Friday that Alabama is the first state to commit to using the standardized testing system, which incorporates the Common Core standards and more.

The State Board of Education adopted the Common Core standards in late 2010 and made them part of Alabama's College and Career Ready Standards.

During the 2013 legislative session, some Republicans have tried twice without success to repeal the Common Core standards. The standards have been opposed by the governor and supported by state Superintendent of Education Tommy Bice and the Business Council of Alabama.

The standards were an initiative of the National Governors Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers to set more rigorous goals for reading and math across the United States.

They have been adopted by most states, but they have come under attack from some conservative groups since President Barack Obama's administration announced in 2009 that states seeking federal Race to the Top grants would be scored in part on
TEST
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1B

Whether they adopted the Common Core standards.

On Friday, the Republican National Committee voted to oppose the Common Core standards and criticized the use of a "one-size-fits-all approach to education."

The ACT Aspire is being pilot tested in Alabama and several other states.

Erickson said the final version is not ready, but it should take a student less than half a day to take.

He said it will be given to students in the spring. He said parents are already familiar with ACT's college entrance test, which means Aspire should have relevance and meaning for them.

State school board Vice President Stephanie Bell, R-Montgomery, voted against it because she said she had concerns about adopting the system before the pilot tests are completed. School board member Betty Peters, R-Dothan, also voted no.

State Superintendent of Education Tommy Bice said the new tests align K-12 with the demands of colleges, business and industry and will show a clear line of growth toward having students ready for college or a career when they graduate from high school.

Erickson said the state and ACT must work out a contract for the testing.
House OKs pay raise for teachers

Boost would be first in five years

We have made historic gains this session on our path to improve education in Alabama and this budget is yet another step toward innovation and progress,” said Hubbard. “At a time when we face great economic uncertainty, I’m proud that we were able to not only provide a raise to our teachers but also provide them with the same liability protections all other state employees receive.”

The Alabama House adopted a $5.7 million budget that gives teachers and other education employees their first pay raise since 2008.

The spending plan adopted late Tuesday includes a contentious proposal supported by the Republican majority to spend about $5 million to provide liability insurance for teachers. Many teachers currently get their liability insurance through the Alabama Education Association. Democrats and ABA officials said the liability insurance issue was an attempt by Republicans to bust the teachers’ union.

The budget gives public school employees a 2 percent raise. That’s less than the 5 percent increase supported by Democratic lawmakers.

The budget was adopted late Wednesday after more than six hours of debate on the spending plan and a separate pay raise bill.

House members voted 62-37 against a proposed amendment by Democratic Rep. Richard Lindsey of Centre to increase the raise to 5 percent.

Republican Rep. Jay Love of Montgomery, chairman of the House education budget committee, said the state couldn’t afford a 5 percent raise, partly because of the need to pay back a rainy day saving account. The budget now goes to the Senate.

House Speaker Mike Hubbard, an Auburn Republican, said Love did a good job upholding Republicans’ promise to operate government within its means while still finding the money to reward teachers.

“We have made historic gains this session on our path to improve education in Alabama and this budget is yet another step toward innovation and progress,” said Hubbard. “At a time when we face great economic uncertainty, I’m proud that we were able to not only provide a raise to our teachers but also provide them with the same liability protections all other state employees receive.”

Love said the budget is still feeling effects of the recession.

“Because we’ve made smart, common-sense financial decisions, we are able to provide our teachers with the first pay increase they’ve received in years, putting money back into the pockets of our state’s educators,” Love said.
No pay likely for Bentley this term

Unemployment still far from 5.2% threshold in governor’s promise

paycheck. Alabama’s current unemployment rate is 7.2 percent
See BENTLEY, Page 3E

Alex Walsh
awalsh@al.com

Gov. Robert Bentley has promised not to accept a salary until the state’s unemployment rate falls below 5.2 percent. Given recent trends in the state’s economy, it appears Bentley will need to win re-election should he ever hope to receive a regular paycheck.

BENTLEY

From Page 1E

— down substantially from the start of 2010, when it temporarily crept above 10 percent, but still more than double the 3.2 percent unemployment rate in April 2007, when the economy was booming.

To achieve Bentley’s target rate of 5.2 percent before 2015, the state’s economy will need a sudden jump start — and then some.

To understand how Alabama might reach Bentley’s target, it helps to understand how the unemployment rate is calculated. Mathematically speaking, it’s simple: you divide the number of unemployed persons in Alabama by the size of the state’s labor force.

It’s the definitions behind the math that are complicated.
To be considered a part of the labor force, you must be at least 16 years old and actively seeking work. If an individual becomes discouraged and gives up the job search, that person is no longer considered part of the labor force.

Discouragement increases when times are tough, which

might explain some of the reason why Alabama’s labor force has been shrinking for years, even though its population has grown every year since 1970. (Retirements also reduce the size of the labor force, and Alabama’s workforce is aging.)

As an example of the impact of the labor force on the unemployment rate, consider last year. Between January 2012 and January 2013, the number of employed people in Alabama was essentially unchanged, at just under 2 million.

But the labor force contracted by nearly 9,000 people, bringing the unemployment rate down from 7.3 percent to 6.9 percent.

Because of all this, Alabama could reach 5.2 percent unemployment without increasing employment if tens of thousands of current job seekers were to stop searching. Here’s how that could happen.

As of February, the state’s official count of employed people was 2,062,810 and unemployed was 154,885. That put the size of the labor force at 2,217,695 and the unemployment rate at just under 7.2 percent. Now, suppose all

the employed people stayed employed, and that 45,000 of the unemployed people stopped searching for work.

The labor force would shrink to roughly 2,113,000; unemployment would shrink to 110,000; and the unemployment rate would be 110,000 divided by 2,113,000 — roughly 5.2 percent.

The task becomes much taller if Alabama’s labor force starts consistently growing again like it did in February. The size of the labor force in the spring of 2010 was roughly 2,206,000; suppose we were to return to that point over the next several months.

To reach 5.2 percent unemployment, we would need for roughly 40,000 currently unemployed Alabamians to find jobs, plus 42,000 people not currently seeking work.

For that to happen over the next 22 months — that is, before Bentley’s first term ends — the number of employed people in the state would need to increase by more than 3,700 each month.

But since the spring of 2010, Alabama’s employment total has grown by an average of 146 people per month.
Bentley draws opposition for 2014 primary

By Phillip Rawls
The Associated Press

MONTGOMERY | Gov. Robert Bentley will have opposition in the Republican primary next year.

Stacy Lee George, a groundbreaking Republican from north Alabama, announced Thursday that he will oppose Bentley in the Republican primary on June 4, 2014.

Stacy Lee George will oppose Gov. Robert Bentley in the 2014 Republican primary.

George hadn't planned to announce his candidacy for two more months, but he decided to move up the announcement after Bentley said Tuesday he would...
PRIMARY

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1A

try to run for governor. George, 44, said he helped in the unsuccessful bid for the third term in 1998 and that Hunt encouraged him to pursue public office. In 2000, he defeated a Democratic incumbent to become the first Republican elected to the Morgan County Commission. His election started what became a switch to a GOP commission in what had been a traditionally Democratic county. George served eight years before being defeated.

For the last four years, he's worked as a state correctional officer. One of the things that George said motivated him to return to politics was the Republican-controlled Legislature and the governor enacting a law to provide state tax credits to parents who chose to send their children to private schools rather than public schools rated as failing.

George said that will hurt funding for public education and hurt children in public schools, including his two children.

"I'm going to prove that every Republican in Alabama is not against public education. I'm an advocate of public education," he said.

To achieve that, George said he will propose a state lottery with the proceeds benefiting public education. He said that no matter how voters feel about a lottery, they have to realize that many Alabamians are playing lotteries in Tennessee, Georgia and Florida. He figures that if those people bought lottery tickets in their home state, public education could get at least $200 million annually.

If elected governor, he said he will push legislation to make it a felony to violate Alabama's open meetings law.

"If you can't do it in the light, you don't need to do it," he said.

George said he has a pistol permit and is a trained law enforcement officer, who routinely carries a pistol in a holster on his side when off duty. George said he wants voters to know he's a strong advocate of Second Amendment rights.

"I want to be known as the gun-toting governor," he said.
Council considers $600K more for downtown work

Majority of $8.8M coming from federal funds

By Jason Morton
Staff Writer

TUSCALOOSA | In an attempt to ensure the second phase of the Downtown Urban Renewal Project meets the standards of the first, the Tuscaloosa City Council is poised to shift $600,000 in local dollars to help pay for the $8.8 million project.

The council’s Finance Committee agreed to use $600,000 from the General Fund’s reserves last week. A final decision on committing these funds could come Tuesday.

If approved, that increases the city’s financial commitment to the project to $1.1 million.

The remainder of the money is coming from federal grants and funds left over from the Downtown Urban Renewal Project’s Phase I.

"Eventually, we’ll lose the grant if we don’t use it," said Councilman Lee Garrison, chair of the council’s Finance Committee.

City officials were disappointed last month when, after a second round of bids, the construction price tag for Phase II of the city’s Downtown Urban Renewal Project was still higher than the amount that had previously been budgeted.

The sole bid, submitted by John Ploch Co. of Tuscaloosa, was $8.8 million, while $6.1 million had been budgeted for construction.

Engineering, utility relocation and other costs of more than $2.05 million already have been accounted for.

The project is intended to improve streetscapes as well as storm and sanitary sewer systems in parts of downtown Tuscaloosa and, if completed, will add to the more than $5.00 million in downtown work that has been done in recent years as part of the Downtown Urban Renewal Project’s first phase.

The first round of bids for Phase II were rejected in October after the lowest one came in at $9.57 million, or about $2.06 million over budget.

See work | 6A

See next page
WORK

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1A

In November, a scaled-back version of the project was adopted in an attempt to bring the project under the budgeted amount.

The original plan included sidewalk and street improvements for the south side of Seventh Street and both sides of Eighth Street between 21st and 23rd avenues, as well as an underground storm water drain on 22nd Avenue and an underground sanitary sewer line improvement on 21st Avenue.

The alternative choice that is being pursued now includes a basic option of performing just the streetscape work along the south side of Seventh Street between 21st and 23rd avenues as well as adding streetscape work along Seventh Avenue between 21st and 20th avenues, which was not part of the original design.

This option also retained the sanitary sewer line upgrade under 21st Avenue after the committee decided the utility improvements were needed to handle the continuing residential and commercial growth in downtown.

"This is very beneficial to water and sewer assets," Griffin said on Tuesday.

Reach Jason Morton at jason.morton@tuscaloosanews.com or 205-722-0200.
Club chooses Patterson as Citizen of the Year

UA gymnastics coach to be recognized for community service work

By Ken Roberts
City Editor

TUSCALOOSA | Sarah Patterson, the University of Alabama's gymnastics coach for 35 years, will be honored as Tuscaloosa County Citizen of the Year at an April 24 banquet sponsored by the Tuscaloosa Civitan Club and the Chamber of Commerce of West Alabama.

"While (the award) bears my name, there is no doubt that this award honors the work that (Patterson's husband) David and I, and everyone associated with the Alabama gymnastics program have done in the community over the past 30 years," Patterson said Friday. "I am grateful to the Civitans for this honor and to everyone who has helped make a difference in our community through the years."

Brett Laney, immediate past president of the Civitan Club, said Patterson was chosen for the honor, the 80th time the club has bestowed the award, for her strong record of community service.

"Her accomplishments in athletics speak for themselves," Laney said, "but she was chosen for her body of work in the community."

Laney cited Patterson's volunteer work at local soup kitchens and the Rise program, which focuses on early childhood special education and child development.

Patterson has also been involved in relief efforts in the aftermath of the April 27, 2011, tornado in Tuscaloosa. Under her leadership, the gymnastics team has participated in community outreach projects that include Project Angel Tree, Easter Seals and Read Bama Read, which helps schools that had tornado damage replenish their libraries.

But Laney, a Tuscaloosa financial adviser with Edward Jones, said that Patterson's work in the fight against breast cancer was particularly impressive to the panel of community leaders and past Citizen of the Year recipients that selected her.

Patterson is the primary organizer of the Power of Pink initiative, which has raised breast cancer awareness.

Each year, the Tide holds a Power of Pink meet with Coleman Coliseum bathed in pink lights, the competitors wear pink leotards and fans are encouraged to dress up in pink.

The initiative has raised more than $1.35 million for the DCH Breast Cancer Fund established by Alabama gymnastics and the DCH Foundation in 2004 to help women in need prevent, detect and treat breast cancer. In 2005, Patterson was also named to the DCH Foundation Board.

Patterson became UA's gymnastics coach in 1978 after graduating from Slippery Rock State College. She was the last coach hired by UA's then-athletic director, legendary football coach Paul W. "Bear" Bryant.

She has coached six NCAA championship gymnastics teams, including back-to-back titles in 2011 and 2012.

Patterson and the Tide will compete for the 2013 national championship April 19-21 at Pauley Pavilion in Los Angeles.
UA clinical psychology chairman earns SEC faculty achievement honor

By Ken Roberts
City Editor

A University of Alabama psychology professor was named Wednesday as one of the winners of the 2013 SEC Faculty Achievement Awards.

"I feel very honored and am very appreciative to receive this award," said John E. Lochman, the Doddridge Saxon chairman in UA's clinical psychology department.

The annual award recognizes professors from the 14 SEC member universities who have meritorious records in teaching and scholarship and who serve as role models for other faculty and students, according to a news release from the SEC.

Lochman will receive a $5,000 honorarium from the Southeastern Conference and will be UA's nominee for the SEC Professor of the Year Award. The SEC Professor of the Year receives an additional $15,000 honorarium and will be presented at the annual SEC awards dinner in Destin, Fla.

Lochman said he will be proud to represent UA in the Professor of the Year competition.

"I really have enjoyed my time at UA. The school has played an important role in my life," said Lochman, who is in his 15th year at the Capstone.

"I've been fortunate to work with a great group of colleagues, graduate and undergraduate students in my time here," he said.

See Award | 3B

See next page
AWARD

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1B

The 64-year-old native of Springfield, Ill., earned a bachelor of science degree from Purdue University. He earned a master of arts in psychology and a Ph.D. in clinical psychology from the University of Connecticut.

Lorchman also directs the Center for Prevention of Youth Problem Behavior at UA and now serves as president of the Society for Child and Family Policy and Practice of the American Psychological Association.

The SEC Faculty Achievement Awards provide an opportunity for each SEC university to showcase the strengths of its faculty, who excel in many disciplines with varying areas of expertise," Auburn University President Jay Gogue, who is also president of the Southeastern Conference, said in a news release. "In the SEC, we are fortunate to have professors who understand the value of classroom instruction, research guidance and scholarly contributions to the overall success of student education."

Chosen by a selection committee of SEC Provosts, the SEC Faculty Achievement Awards and the SEC Professor of the Year Award are part of a set of non-athletically related activities the Southeastern Conference has undertaken to encourage academic leadership and collaboration within the SEC membership.
THIRD TERM FOR ALABAMA

Crimson Tide honored by White House for third time in four years

By Elton Hayes
Special to The Tuscaloosa News

WASHINGTON, D.C. | In what has quickly become a rite of passage for University of Alabama football players, members of the Crimson Tide's Bowl Championship Series national title team visited the White House on Monday, marking the school's third visit to the nation's capital in four years.

From behind a podium on the South Lawn, President Barack Obama welcomed more than 150 Alabama players, coaches and support staff members in an afternoon ceremony held nearly an hour before the deadly Boston Marathon bombings.

I want to congratulate them on winning their 15th national championship and their third in four years. They are starting to learn their way around the White House, the president said with a laugh. "I was thinking about just having some cots for them here, they're here so often, except we couldn't find any beds enough."

A four-piece jazz band played "Yea Alabama" as Obama and Crimson Tide head coach Nick Saban walked together to the podium before the start of the ceremony. The two shared a few laughs while the 111 players who made the trip followed closely behind.

Obama, an avid basketball fan, said Alabama's victory over Notre Dame in the BCS National Championship Game left him impressed.

"At halftime it was 28-0. That's when I stopped watching," Obama said. "When the clock ran out it was 42-14, and they left no doubt who was the best team in the country."

Saban even offered a few jokes.

SEE ALABAMA | 4C

INSIDE

UA Recruiting: Big-name recruits expected to attend A-Day | 4C

UA Football: A-Day could be an offensive show | 4C

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS
ALABAMA

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1C

"I will have a meeting later with you to decide how much playing time you get," he said.
Obama quickly responded, "I think we should keep me on the bench."
The president also had a few words for Alabama quarterback AJ McCarron.
"He told me he watched me all last season and he thought I did a great job," McCarron said of his conversation with Obama. "Then he said he's looking forward to (seeing) great things this season and said he'll be watching me and cheering for me."
Saban, no stranger to visits to the White House, thanked the president.
"It's a tremendous honor for our players and our team to be able to have the opportunity to come here," Saban said. "This is something you never get tired of."

For senior linebacker C.J. Mosley, who made his second trip to the White House, the feeling never gets old.
"For me, not at all," Mosley said. "There aren't too many people who are able to come to the White House and meet the president for the second time. While it means a lot to me right now, later on down the road I'm sure I'll appreciate it even more."

The team's original visit, slated for March 6, was postponed because of the threat of inclement weather in the D.C. area. While some players were disappointed,
McCarron said he was completely fine with postponing the trip.

"I was glad," he said. "As long as there were going to be weather issues, I didn't want to fly while it was snowing, storming or whatever. Cancelling the trip then was fine with me."

Operating on an abbreviated schedule, the team landed in Washington late Monday morning and squeezed a visit to the White House and the Smithsonian national history museum into a six-hour window.

After the White House ceremony, players loaded into buses and headed to the museum for lunch and a tour of the 1.5 million-square-foot facility. Museum visitors snapped pictures of the players while congratulating them on their season.
UA football team set for White House visit

President to honor 2012 national champions on April 15, five days before spring game

By Tommy Deas
Executive Sports Editor

TUSCALOOSA | The University of Alabama football team's visit to the White House to be honored for winning the 2012 Bowl Championship Series national title, originally scheduled for early March but postponed, has been rescheduled for April 15.

The national capital visit will mark the start of a busy week for the Crimson Tide. UA is scheduled to have spring practices on Tuesday and Thursday next week before wrapping up spring drills with the A-Day Game on April 20.

The Crimson Tide, which has been recognized with trips to meet with President Barack Obama after the 2009 and 2011 national championship.

SEE FOOTBALL | 9A
FOOTBALL

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1A

seasons, had its originally scheduled visit postponed by a winter storm in the Washington area. In addition to meeting with the president, UA players, coaches and support staff are expected to tour other attractions around the national capital.

After the 2009 national championship victory, UA visited the White House in March 2010 for a congratulatory ceremony in the East Room. UA players and coaches also visited the Pentagon, Lincoln Memorial, Washington Monument, U.S. Capitol Building and National Mall.

Last year, UA was honored on the South Lawn, with a Marine band playing “Yea Alabama” and “Stars Fell on Alabama,” and closing with “Sweet Home Alabama” in the team’s honor. The tour also included visits to the Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial and Tomb of the Unknowns at Arlington National Cemetery.

Alabama defeated Notre Dame 42-14 on Jan. 7 in the BCS National Championship Game in Miami Gardens, Fla., to claim the school’s 15th national football title.

Reach Tommy Deas at tommy@tidesports.com or at 205-722-0224.
Kirby Smart’s pay boosted to $1.15 million

By Chase Goodbread
Sports Writer

TUSCALOOSA | In decades ahead, Kirby Smart will be the answer to the trivia question: Who was the first coordinator to earn a million dollars a year at the University of Alabama?

The UA board of trustees compensation committee approved new initial contracts and amendments for the football coaching staff Tuesday, highlighted by a watershed raise for the Crimson Tide’s defensive coordinator to $1.15 million. In 2014 and 2015, Smart will earn $1.35 million.

UA coach Nick Saban’s contract was amended to include a bonus structure for the new BCS playoff system. The four-team playoff, set to launch with the 2014 season, will feature two semifinal games, with the winners playing for the BCS title.

Saban will receive $200,000 for making a semifinal game, $300,000 for winning a semifinal and $400,000 for winning the national championship.

New athletic director Bill Battle had his initial contract approved at $620,000 per year on a four-year agreement.

Other contracts for the football staff were as follows: Offensive coordinator Doug Nussmeier received a raise from $590,000 to $680,000, with his contract extended through 2015. New offensive line coach Mario Cristobal’s initial salary was approved at $475,000. Linebackers coach Lance Thompson received a raise from $375,000 to $400,000, while special teams coach Bobby Williams’ pay was increased from $350,000 to $400,000. New defensive backs coach Greg Brown will earn $300,000 per year on a two-year contract, while new wide receivers coach Billy Napier will earn $300,000 in the first of two years, with a built-in raise to $325,000 in the second year.

Alabama agreed to pay a $75,000 buyout of Napier’s contract to his former employer, Florida State.

Defensive line coach Chris Rumph’s salary was increased from $310,000 to $360,000, while seventh-year running backs coach Burton Burns received a raise from $290,000 to $315,000.

Strength coach Scott Cochran will earn $350,000, a raise of $25,000. New director of player personnel Kevin Steele received an initial contract of two years at $200,000 per year.

Reach Chase Goodbread at chase@tidesports.com or at 205-722-0196.
Student
to run
for City
Council

By Jason Morton
Staff Writer

TUSCALOOSA | A University of Alabama student is the first candidate to announce that he will seek the Tuscaloosa City Council's District 4 seat being vacated by Lee Garrison.
Matt Calderone, 22, is attempting to follow the example set by Garrison, who also was 22 and a UA student when he was first elected to the City Council in 1997.
Garrison, now 38, announced last week that he will not seek a fifth term on the council. Instead, he is running for Tuscaloosa City Board of Education chairman. The incumbent, Dan Meissner, has said he intends to run to retain his seat.
Calderone, a Trussville native, said that his time here as a college student prepared him for a role as councilman.
"Tuscaloosa, whether you're here for four years, five years, or you choose to live here the rest of your life, this will always be your home," he said.
"Students on this campus care about this community and they want an advocate and they want a voice.
"I hope to continue to enhance the relationship between the University of Alabama, the city of Tuscaloosa and the community as a whole."
Calderone worked as an intern at City Hall before the April 27, 2011, tornado, during which he was hired as an employee. He later returned to his intern role for a while longer, but since leaving his internship he has been a regular visitor to the council's Tuesday meetings.
Calderone is also a former president of the SGA. See next page
COUNCIL

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1B

of UA's Student Government Association.

"My time as SGA president really reaffirmed my calling to do this," Calderone said, noting that his yearlong role as president, which ended earlier this month, required him to work with students, community members and City Hall.

Calderone is a member of the Citizens Advisory Committee, which was formed by the City Council in the wake of the 2011 storm to be a sounding board on recovery ideas and proposals.

In a news release announcing his candidacy, Calderone said he is the founder and co-chair of the Downtown Tuscaloosa and University of Alabama Connection and Improvement Committee, which voices opinions to City Hall on matters pertaining to the area between downtown and the UA campus.

Calderone said his goal — if elected — is to maintain and improve the partnership between the city of Tuscaloosa and the University of Alabama while working with the business community to continue Tuscaloosa's growth.

He also is a parent. Calderone is engaged to 23-year-old Claire Williams of Dothan, with whom he has a 4-month-old daughter, Abigail Rose.

"Service to others and to the community around me is what I have built my life around," Calderone said in a statement.

"After dedicating the past year to the University of Alabama as SGA president, it is my hope to continue to serve this city I love and particularly the residents of District 4."
UA will host personal safety forum for the public Thursday

Event being held in memory of slain former UA professor

Staff report

TUSCALOOSA | The University of Alabama will host a forum on personal safety from 3:30-5 p.m. Thursday at the Bryant Conference Center, 240 Paul W. Bryant Drive.

Forum topics will include emergency preparedness, crime prevention and safety awareness in the community and in the home.

"We are inviting members of the sponsoring groups and the general public to learn more about how to be vigilant at home and in the community in order to reduce the risk of crime," said Sharon Shelton, one of the forum's organizers.

The forum is sponsored by the University of Alabama Retirees Association and the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at the University of Alabama.

"This program was developed in memory of the late Kate Ragsdale, a member of both groups. Her death gave us a sense of loss, and we all felt more vulnerable afterwards. Kate was a person who was always giving and dedicated to those causes that touched her heart," Shelton said.

Ragsdale, a 73-year-old retired UA professor, was found dead Feb. 24 inside her home in The Highlands.

See Safety | 3B

PERSONAL SAFETY FORUM

- **When**: 3:30-5 p.m. Thursday.
- **Where**: Bryant Conference Center, 240 Paul W. Bryant Drive.
- **Admission**: Free and open to the public.
- **More Information**: Call 205-348-6482.
Retired UA art professor dies at age 93

TUSCALOOSA | A funeral for longtime University of Alabama art professor Al Sella will be held at 2 p.m. Saturday at St. Francis Catholic Church.

Sella, 93, died April 3 at Hospice of West Alabama.

The New Jersey native's paintings have been displayed in one-man shows from Mexico to New York City.

He studied at the Yale School of Fine Arts, the Art Students League of New York, the Columbia University School of Arts and the University of New Mexico Department of Art. He was head of the art department at Sullivan College in Bristol, Va., before coming to UA.

He joined the art department faculty at UA in 1960. He retired in 1996, but continued to teach drawing as a professor emeritus until 2010.

Visitation will be one hour before the services Saturday at the church.
Security
firm owner
faces drug
charges

Police find pot,
cash and weapons
in suspects’ residence

By Stephanie Taylor
Staff Writer

Narcotics investigators have
charged the owner of a local security
company with drug violations after a
six-month investigation.

Matthew Martindale Colson, 32,
and Elizabeth Helen Dovey, 23, were
charged Tuesday afternoo after investiga-
tors searched their
residence in the 3200
block of Hargrove
Road East, said Tus-
caloosa Police Sgt.
Brent Blankley.

Agents with the
West Alabama Narc-
cotics Task Force con-
fiscated 164 grams of
marijuana, $26,990 in
cash, four assault ri-
fles, three shotguns
and a handgun.

Colson owns TCB
Security, which pro-
vides security guards
for city-sponsored
events at the Tusca-
loosa Amphitheater,
Tuscaloosa River
Market and the Mil-
dred Warner Trans-
portation Museum.

See Charges | 5A
CHARGES
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1A

The company also provides security at Tuscaloosa bars and parties held by University of Alabama organizations.

The Tuscaloosa City Council voted on March 26 to extend its contract with the company until April 1, 2015.

Dedire Stainaker, media relations coordinator for the city, said that city attorney Tim Nunally and Wendy Rigs, director of the city of Tuscaloosa's arts and entertainment department "are reviewing the matter as it is under investigation."

"No decision has been made at this point regarding the city's business relationship with TCB Security," Stainaker said.

Colson was charged with first-degree possession of marijuana and possession of drug paraphernalia. He was arrested Tuesday and later released on $20,000 bond.

Dovey was charged with distribution of a controlled substance within three miles of a school, first-degree possession of marijuana and possession of drug paraphernalia. She was released Tuesday on $50,000 bond.

A voice mail message left with the company Wednesday afternoon wasn't returned.
Cancer-fighting machine keeps UAB at forefront

$20M instrument also battles heart disease, Alzheimer's

Mike Oliver
moliver@al.com

Racing against incoming severe weather, crews worked feverishly and carefully Thursday morning to unload and install a 61,000-pound cyclotron into the basement of the renovated UAB Comprehensive Cancer Center.

A cyclotron.
That's not an exercise bike.
It's a $20 million particle accelerator.

What it does is speed up protons and accelerate UAB's reputation as a leading medical research university.

Part of 19th Street had to be shut down to get this into the cancer center, which has been newly renovated with this very thing in mind.

So there was a spot waiting for it. There better be after its 2,100-mile, six-day trip on a special flat-bed truck from Vancouver, Canada, where it was manufactured.

Dozens of interested parties — doctors, researchers, cancer center personnel, including director Ed Partridge — watched as the crane lifted the giant blue box, weighing as much as 10 SUVs, from the truck through an open wall onto a platform. From there it will be lowered into a hole in the floor to the basement.

Partridge said the importance of the cyclotron "is to determine presence of very

See UAB, Page 8A

UB moves a new 61,000 pound cyclotron into the UAB Comprehensive Cancer Center on Thursday. (Joe Songer/jsonger@al.com)
small cancers, to determine if drugs, therapeutic antibodies, and/or small molecule therapies are hitting their target, and to determine effectiveness of therapeutic intervention in real time."

The cyclotron creates radiopharmaceuticals, which are injected into a patient.

"Other imaging modalities like a CT scan or an MRI, they can't tell us the things these agents will tell us," said Dr. Janis O'Malley, the director of the UAB Division of Molecular Imaging and Therapeutics. "These agents look at how cells are functioning at a molecular, cellular level. If you do a CT scan you are looking at whole organs or masses. How big is the tumor. Is the tumor getting better because it shrinks in size? Well maybe... These agents can tell us what's really alive in the tumor and the impact that the medicines have."

The agents the cyclotron produces have a very short shelf life, some last just a few minutes. So time—from producing the agent to injection into the patient and getting an image—is of the essence, said Dr. Kurt Zinn, director of the UAB Division of Advanced Medical Imaging Research.

"The reason it's so important to have it located physically on campus next to where the imaging instruments are is because what we produce in the cyclotron primarily is very short lived. It doesn't last very long," Zinn said. "So you can't transport it around. It's not commercially available. You can't just pick up the phone and order it."

"So we need it very close," he said. "And we need to be able to do chemistry on the agents we produce and inject them into patients. Obviously there's a lot of safety reviews and different compliance related parts that the FDA has to approve."

Once up and running, after federal approvals are all in, the cyclotron will be ready to work some time in August and it could be used in a number of scientific disciplines.

"It covers the spectrum, and it's not just cancer, but for cardiac research; for neuroscience-related items, for example interrogating patients for Alzheimer's," Zinn said. "But primarily we are going to focus on cancer initially. Cancer was the driving force in getting the cyclotron funded."

The hefty $20 million cost was funded through state bonds and ultimately will be paid back by the state.

"Bonds are issued by the state and paid back by the state with interest," Partridge said. "The funds from the bonds are provided to the state institutions with some restrictions, but the institution does not have to pay back the state."

Today's arrival was the culmination of two years of planning, said Kevin Bell, the capital projects coordinator for the cyclotron.

"I've installed a lot of complicated imaging equipment—PET, CT, MRI—but this is by far the most complicated one I've ever worked on," Bell said. "UAB is billing this cyclotron as the most powerful one in an academic medical setting."

"This cyclotron allows us to continue to be a leader in the development of new and innovative advanced imaging techniques," Partridge said. "We have already seen an increase in interest in the scientific community regarding opportunities for recruitment to UAB. It is also quite likely that other institutions will contract with us for production of isotopes for use by investigators in their institutions. Every grant and contract that we receive as a result of the cyclotron adds jobs and economic benefit to the region."
UAB brain cancer finding may aid in figuring life span

Mike Oliver
moliver@al.com

The deadliest type of brain cancer eventually kills nearly all of its victims, but UAB researchers may have discovered why some patients live longer than others.

Researchers examined tumors of patients with glioblastoma multiforme (GBM) and found that patients with a higher level of an enzyme live less than half as long as patients with lower levels, according to a study published Wednesday in the journal PLOS ONE.

"We reported for the first time that an enzyme, cytochrome c oxidase, is involved in predicting the survival time of patients that had brain cancer," said the study's lead author Corinne Griguer, associate professor in the Division of Neurosurgery in the School of Medicine at the University of Alabama at Birmingham.

The significance of this finding is that now doctors and patients will have more information about prognosis in order to form a treatment plan based on life expectancy, she said.

While GBM patients have been lumped into one category for treatments, the enzyme finding will help categorize the patients to better target those treatments, she said.

"We can divide the group of patients based on the enzyme," she said.

"Sometimes there are drugs that are not effective, and we wonder why, but maybe we are targeting the wrong group (of patients)," she said.

Perhaps there's a drug that works for one group but has been discounted too early, she said.

The study of 84 patients with GBM found that patients with the overactive production of the enzyme lived an average of six months. Those patients with lower enzyme activity lived for 14 months. About 25 percent to 30 percent of the patients had the more active enzyme.

Glioblastoma is particularly difficult to treat because it is difficult to remove all of the cancer as the tumor spreads its tentacles into the brain.

It is typically treated by surgery followed by radiation and chemotherapy.
A BIG FAT LIE?
A UAB study refutes notion that Southerners are the most obese

Mike Oliver – moliver@al.com

The South often gets tagged with having the most obese population. But it doesn’t appear to be true, a University of Alabama at Birmingham study suggests. The study recently published in the journal Obesity found that there’s a significantly higher percentage of obese people in a region of central and northwest states including Minnesota, Kansas and North and South Dakota.

“What we found is the West North Central region has about 41 percent obesity compared to 31 percent obesity in the southern region that includes Alabama and Mississippi,” said George Howard, professor in the Department of Biostatistics at UAB. “By the way, 31 percent is not a good thing — but it’s not at the bottom.”

How did Southerners get such a fat reputation? Apparently because they are more truthful.

The notion that the South is the fattest comes primarily from a nationwide telephone survey done by the Centers for Disease Control, in which the surveyors ask for height and weight, among other things, Howard said.

That survey, the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS), shows the South as the most obese, with Mississippi and Alabama, the No. 1 and No. 2 fattest states respectively.

But the UAB researchers found that when people were actually weighed, the numbers didn’t add up. Mississippi was fourth and Alabama was in the middle of the pack, Howard said.

The numbers come from UAB’s long-running REGARDS (Reasons for Geographic and Racial Differences in Stroke) study.

“We have this big REGARDS study, and we’ve shown there’s more hypertension, diabetes and stroke in the South so we were thinking the South would have more obesity too,” he said.

When the numbers didn’t reflect that thinking, REGARDS researchers thought they were wrong.

“Everything said we are not the fattest but scientists are trained to think ‘what did we do wrong?’”

But over time, they flipped the thinking realizing maybe they were right, and there’s a significant “differential misreporting” at work here, Howard said.

By comparing the BRFSS self-reported weight data with the REGARDS scale-weight data, researchers found that most everyone fudges, or underreports, their weight when asked on a telephone.

Turns out that Southerners fudge less, he said.
Shell shock

UAB School of Engineering holds 24th annual Egg Drop

By: Joe Songer

The 24th Annual Brent Newman Memorial Egg Drop Contest featured more than 300 local K-12 students watching eggs, protected by their personally designed contraptions, being tossed off the roof of the UAB Business-Engineering Complex.

The goal was for the participant’s contraption to prevent the egg from splattering, scrambling and/or cracking after the three-story drop. The event was designed to promote engineering education and inspire a new generation of engineers.

Students must use approved materials to design their egg drop contraption. The contraption must fit in a container no larger than 2 feet by 2 feet to be acceptable, but there are no design restrictions.

First- through third-place winners were named in elementary, middle and high school categories. An overall winner also was named. Students were judged on their design, contraption weight, ease of use and creativity.

Students cheered each other on as the contraptions, with raw eggs on board, made the three-story drop to the ground.
Safety agency says baby study failed to disclose risks of blindness, death

The federal agency that protects patients in U.S. clinical trials has concluded that leading universities didn't adequately inform parents of the risk of death or blindness in a study of how much oxygen should be given to very premature infants.

The Office for Human Research Protections concluded that the study of 1,300 babies at the University of Alabama at Birmingham and elsewhere between 2004 and 2009 posed risks to the patients that weren't adequately described to parents. The federal patient-safety office, which is part of the Department of Health and Human Services, notified UAB of its conclusions last month and requested that the university respond.

UAB was the lead site for a major portion of the research that tested whether too much oxygen might lead to blindness in the infants and whether too little might result in death. About 20 other universities participated in the study.

In a statement, Richard B. Marchase, UAB's vice president for research and economic development, said, "This was an important clinical trial to help physicians determine exactly how much oxygen to provide extremely low-birth-weight infants. At least partly because of this study, the American Academy of Pediatrics and other professional groups may consider recommending a tighter band of oxygen levels for premature babies."

He said the federal agency's objection was not to the medical care administered, but rather to the adequacy of risk disclosure, and said the university will be sure that future consent disclosures fully lay out any possible danger.

The letter to UAB from the federal agency, dated March 7, said the agency determined that "informed consent documents for this study failed to include or adequately address" the level of risk presented for the babies.

"According to the study design, on average, infants assigned to the upper range received more oxygen than average infants receiving standard care, and infants assigned to the lower range received less," the federal letter said.

About 28,000 infants weighing less than 2.75 pounds are born prematurely in the U.S. each year, and more than half develop a condition called retinopathy of prematurity, which often leads to blindness. The study was designed to see whether oxygen levels could lower the amount of this condition.

However, the federal letter said, "for many of those infants, the level of oxygen they received was different from what they would have received had they not participated in the study."
University President Altenkirch is lauded for a visionary plan

President Robert Altenkirch is putting his stamp on the University of Alabama in Huntsville, unveiling a strategic plan Friday designed for a prosperous future. At the meeting of the University of Alabama System Board of Trustees on the UAH campus, Altenkirch outlined six university goals and a five-point list of priorities.

Robert Witt, chancellor of the UA System, said while addressing the trustees that the UAH plan as "one of the best strategic plans I've ever seen."

Altenkirch, who took office in October 2011 following the departure of David Williams, took a year to analyze the university and consult with faculty and community leaders in composing the new plan for UAH.

"Huntsville was described by Forbes magazine as one of the top 10 smartest cities in the world. This community is a nationally renowned center for brainpower," Altenkirch said. "The University of Alabama in Huntsville has long assumed a critical role in the intellectual development of our com-

See UAH, Page 6A
munity, and this plan will ensure that we continue providing leadership to sustain and expand high levels of achievement in education and research, particularly in those areas crucial to our economy.

University strengths Altenkirch intends to build upon include the recognition of the school as a Tier 1 research university, according to the Carnegie Foundation.

UAH also has four research programs in the top 10 in the nation and 14 in the top 20, according to the National Science Foundation.

In addition, UAH is one of only two public universities in Alabama rated very competitive by Barron’s Profiles of American Colleges.

The school has also developed a new mission statement: "The University of Alabama in Huntsville is a research-intensive, internationally recognized technological university serving Alabama and beyond. Our mission is to explore, discover, create, and communicate knowledge, while educating individuals in leadership, innovation, critical thinking, and civic responsibility and inspiring a passion for learning."

- Recruit and retain an outstanding and diverse student body of broad interests, and of sufficient size to ensure a rewarding campus life experience.
- Engage more fully our stakeholders: Alumni, the community, elected officials and global partners, and
- Be a recognized leader in selected areas of education and research.
- Broaden and expand the research portfolio.
UAH President Robert Altenkirch unveils new strategic plan for school

By: Paul Gattis

President Robert Altenkirch is putting his stamp on the University of Alabama in Huntsville, unveiling today a new strategic plan to propel the school to a prosperous future.

At today's meeting of the University of Alabama System Board of Trustees on the UAH campus, Altenkirch outlined six university goals and five-point list of priorities.

Robert Witt, chancellor of the UA System, said while addressing the trustees that the UAH plan as "one of the best strategic plans I've ever seen."

Altenkirch, who took office in October 2011 following the departure of David Williams, took a year to analyze the university and consult with faculty and community leaders in composing the new plan for UAH.

"Huntsville was described by Forbes magazine as one of the top 10 smartest cities in the world. This community is a nationally renowned center for brainpower," Altenkirch said in a press release. "The University of Alabama in Huntsville has long assumed a critical role in the intellectual development of our community, and this plan will ensure that we continue providing leadership to sustain and expand high levels of achievement in education and research, particularly in those areas crucial to our economy."

University strengths Altenkirch intends to build upon include the recognition of the school as a Tier 1 research university, according to the Carnegie Foundation. UAH also has four research programs in the top 10 in the nation and 14 in the top 20, according to the National Science Foundation.

In addition, UAH is one of only two public universities in Alabama rated very competitive by Barron's Profiles of American Colleges.

The school has also developed a new mission statement: "The University of Alabama in Huntsville is a research-intensive, internationally recognized technological university serving Alabama and beyond. Our mission is to explore, discover, create, and communicate knowledge, while educating individuals in leadership, innovation, critical thinking, and civic responsibility and inspiring a passion for learning."

• Be recognized internationally as an institution to which government, industry, and academic leaders turn for opinions on societal issues, especially those involving technology

• Strengthen and maintain a financial, physical, and personnel infrastructure that supports continuous quality enhancement and the pursuit of excellence in research and education

See next page
• Ensure an environment where curiosity, discovery, innovation, and entrepreneurship are valued

• Produce graduates that are able to address problems through integration of knowledge across disciplines

• Foster an environment of community service and engagement and global experience and understanding

• Be unique in opportunities to explore and experience the relationships among technology, culture, and the arts

The strategic priorities established by UAH

• Recruit and retain an outstanding and diverse student body of broad interests, and of sufficient size to ensure a rewarding campus life experience.

• Recruit, develop, and retain an outstanding and diverse faculty and staff.

• Broaden and expand the research portfolio.

• Engage more fully our stakeholders: Alumni, the community, elected officials and global partners, and

• Be a recognized leader in selected areas of education and research.
Shelton president search narrows

Three finalists were named after interviews Thursday

By Jason Morton
Staff Writer

TUSCALOOSA | After the interviews on Thursday with five candidates for the new Shelton State Community College president, a state-appointed search committee narrowed the list of candidates to three:

- Robert Gunter of Marion, Ark., who now serves as deputy director for career and technical education at the Arkansas Department of Career Education;
- Linda North of Opelika and currently the academic dean for Southern Union State Community College; and
- Stephen Vacik, the president of Colby Community College in Colby, Kan.

Mark Heinrich, the former Shelton State president who was appointed chancellor of the Alabama Community College System in September, will interview the three finalists today, and is expected to announce his selection at the next meeting of the Alabama Board of Education later this month.

See Shelton [SA]
SHELTON

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1A

"I think the pool, overall, was a strong pool," said Vicki Hawsey, president of Wallace State Community College in Hanceville and chair of the 11-member search committee. "I’m confident that this process has yielded three viable candidates for Chancellor Heinrich's consideration."

The two finalists not making the final cut were Valerie Richardson, vice president of the Office of Institutional Advancement and Student Services for Gadsden State Community College, and Thomas Huebner, Shelton State’s dean of students.

Each candidate fielded 15 questions from the committee.

The committee members said they were impressed with Gunter, who they said had a strong interview.

Also impressive to the committee was Vacik's steering of Colby Community College, which he said lacked enough cash to fund a full year of salaries when he took over.

Vacik said that under his leadership, the school will have more than $1 million in the bank by the end of this academic year.

Each candidate expressed confidence in his or her abilities to lead Shelton State, but Vacik said that he hoped the committee would choose the strongest candidate — whether it be him or another finalist — for the good of the school.

"I believe in including everybody in the decision-making process as much as (possible)," Vacik said. "And I believe that you, as a community college, have an obligation to help the community any way you can.

"But you also have to be careful about making promises you can't keep."

Each candidate said the major changes facing community colleges today are maintaining and growing enrollment while battling an ever-dwindling allocation of state and federal dollars.

To overcome the financial shortfalls, the candidates talked about the importance of building relationships throughout the community, with businesses and private donors, while seeking alternative ways to gain approval for programs and initiatives.

North, who spent 16 years as an educator at Reid State Technical College in Evergreen before moving with her husband to Georgia and going into administration, said she once collaborated with two other community colleges to boost enrollment to gain approval for a medical education program.

She also spent years securing the financial support from public and private institutions for a medical simulation center that now educates 900 students a semester, she said.

"I am there for quality," North said, "and I will compromise for the benefit of the good as long as we don't compromise quality."

"But you won't find anyone who will harder and believe harder in (Shelton State's) students."
Students take aim at Auburn University's gun policy

By Donathan Prater
Opelika-Auburn News

AUBURN | Although you would likely find him wearing a camouflage-patterned holster on Auburn University's campus this past week, the only thing David Shamp is armed with is information.

The table Shamp sat at on AU's well-traveled Haley Concourse was covered with empty gun holsters as students walked by, asked questions and picked up information the vice president of the AU Chapter of Students for Concealed Carry shared as part of the organization's Empty Holster Protest.

"The empty holster stands for our defenselessness, and we're defenseless because of Auburn University policy," said Shamp, 24, a U.S. Army veteran who spent a tour in Iraq.

The weeklong protest, which began Monday, was conducted in an effort to raise awareness about policies that the group says restrict the rights of self-defense to law abiding citizens legally licensed to carry concealed firearms.

The SCC, a national, nonpartisan organization with more than 40,000 college students, professors and employees in all 50 states, was founded by Chris Brown, a political science student from North Texas University in 2007 shortly after the deadly shootings at Virginia Tech.

The AU chapter of SCC was founded in 2010 and currently has about 220 members in its ranks, Shamp said.

Shamp said state law does not prohibit the carrying of a firearm on public property if you have a permit.

As students visited the SCC's table on campus Tuesday, they had the option of adding their names to a list to receive up-
dates on future meetings and group emails from the organization on ways they can help facilitate changes to current university policy.

Current AU policies prohibit firearms and other types of weapons on campus, said Melvin Owens, executive director of AU Public Safety and Security.

While Owens said AU policy regarding firearms on campus is not currently being challenged, the idea of arming students is one he is not in favor of.

"I believe that arming students presents challenges to law enforcement officers as they respond to problems on campus," Owens said in a statement. "I do not believe that the campus is actually made safer by arming students."

Shamp said his organization is by no means encouraging everyone on campus to carry a firearm.

"What we want is that if you have the ability and are issued a permit by the state and you can carry legally anywhere else, then you should have that option to carry on campus," said Shamp, who is licensed to carry a concealed weapon. "We're not like, 'Hey this is freshman year, here's your handgun.' We want people who can carry already according to the law to be able to defend themselves here on campus."

Shamp said posted signs designating an area as a gun-free zone have historically done little to deter criminal activity in the past.

"Signs don't stop criminals," Shamp said.

Shamp said the next step for the AU chapter of the SCC is to locate a state sponsor and co-sponsor of a bill that would prohibit state-sponsored schools from restricting firearms on campus.
Trustees approve tuition hike

Evan Belanger
belanger@al.com

Citing "record reductions in state appropriations" and rising mandatory costs, the Auburn University Board of Trustees unanimously approved a host of tuition increases Friday.

The decision increases average tuition at Auburn by 4.5 percent and pushes average tuition at its sister institution, Auburn University Montgomery, up 8 percent.

Undergraduate tuition at the main Auburn campus would increase to $4,925 per semester in 2014 from $4,723 this year.

University officials said the price hikes are projected to bring in an additional $6 million in revenue for Auburn and $2.4 additional for AUM next fiscal year.

They cited record reductions in state financial support for higher education brought on by the last recession.

Since 2008, Auburn's annual state appropriation has fallen nearly 30 percent, from $336 million to $238 million in 2013, Chief Financial Officer Donald Larg said.

Statewide, Alabama ranks fourth in the nation for cuts to higher education since 2008, according to a study by the Grapevine project at Illinois State University.

"We may well be on the bottom next year when I'm showing you this slide," Larg told the board. "I don't see a lot of improvement coming from the state in the next few years as they restore the rainy day fund, the capital fund and address other issues relative to the Education Trust Fund."

Spending also cut

Large said mandatory costs are also impacting the school's budget, including a required 16 percent increase toward teacher retirement contributions projected to cost $4 million and an estimated $2 million to $3 million extra for health insurance contributions related to the Affordable Care Act.

Despite the funding cutbacks and cost increases, University President Jay Gouge said Auburn has not decreased the number of classes it offers in an effort to ensure students can get the hours they need.

He also said tuition increases are matched by similar spending cuts within the university. "If the students will help us with half of the cut, we will internally take of the other half," he said.

The tuition increase drew reluctant support from newly elected Auburn Student Government Association President Harrison Mills, who said he was "compelled to support" it in light of the university's financial situation.

Trustee James Kane cautioned though that in his 13.5 years on the board he has never presided over a tuition reduction. He warned they could make the school unaffordable if they are not careful.
Video game bet results in violence

By Stephanie Taylor
Staff Writer

One Stillman college student was in the hospital and another in jail after a Tuesday night shooting on its campus.

Elgerondo Williams, 21, and the victim, 19, argued about money owed on a bet about a video game, said Tuscaloosa County Metro Homicide Unit Lt. Kip Hart.

Williams shot the victim twice in the torso with a small-caliber handgun, he said. He had left Hay Hall by the time officers arrived, Hart said, but later turned himself in to campus police.

Williams was charged with attempted murder and was being held at the Tuscaloosa County Jail on Wednesday with bail set at $30,000.

He has been expelled from the college.

The victim was in stable condition at DCH Regional Medical Center, Hart said.

Investigators recovered the gun, he said.

Sharon Whittaker-Davis, vice-president for student affairs, issued a statement Wednesday morning:

"This is an isolated incident, which campus police responded to quickly. There have been no violent crimes on the Stillman campus for..."

See next page
SHOOTING
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1A

13 consecutive years. Moreover, students' rooms undergo mandatory room checks bi-weekly. Stillman maintains zero tolerance for weapons of any kind, which is clearly outlined in the college's student handbook. According to the college's policy, Williams has been expelled from the institution.

Reach Stephanie Taylor at stephanie.taylor@tuscaloosa news.com or 205-722-0210.
UAB FOOTBALL Offense makes strides in scrimmage

By: Drew Champlin

Three UAB quarterbacks had solid days and the offense made strides in Saturday’s scrimmage at Legion Field.

It was the first full scrimmage for the Blazers. Last week, the Blazers did some scrimmage work near the end of practice. The scrimmage was closed to the media, but open to the public and statistics were provided.

“Last week, we made a lot of penalties on offense, a lot of alignment penalties, false start, things like that,” UAB head coach Garrick McGee said. “I think there was a couple today but mostly it got cleaned up.”

Sophomore Austin Brown hit 13-of-15 passes for 147 yards and a 13-yard touchdown pass to Darrin Reaves. Senior Jonathan Perry hit 5-of-10 passes for 97 yards and an interception. He threw two touchdown passes, a 43-yarder to Reaves and a 29-yard pass to tight end Kennard Backman.

Backman, a returning junior starter, showed his big play ability with three catches for 78 yards, with a long of 33.

Reaves had five carries for 29 yards. Senior Greg Franklin ran nine times for 70 yards.

UAB has six more practices, including the spring game on April 27 at West Campus Field, set to begin at 11 a.m.
Lineman Watkins and receiver Smith are healing from injuries

Drew Champlin
dchamplin@al.com

Two key UAB football players who missed all or part of last season appear well on their way back from injuries.

Wide receiver Nolen Smith and defensive end Diaheem Watkins are rehabbing from injuries and participating during spring drills.

Watkins, a junior from Bibb County High School, had 32 tackles, four for loss, and 1.5 sacks but suffered a shoulder/rib injury against East Carolina and missed the last five games of the season.

UAB head coach Garrick McGee said Watkins, a starter throughout his career when healthy, is going through non-contact drills.

"He can't tackle anybody," McGee said after Wednesday's practice at Legion Field. "He probably could if we had a game today, but there's no need for that because he has that shoulder that he's rehabbing through. He's running through (skeleton drills), going to the meetings and he's doing a really good job."

Smith injured his knee last offseason and redshirted last year. The junior from Oneonta caught 19 passes for 273 yards and two touchdowns in 2011. The 6-foot-3 Smith can play receiver or tight end, presenting problems for the defense.

"He's another weapon. He's definitely a weapon," McGee said.

UAB's practices this week are at Legion Field. Today's practice starts at 4:30 p.m. and there's a scrimmage during Saturday's practice, which starts at 9:30 a.m. All practices are open to the public.

UAB's spring game will be April 27 at 11 a.m. at the West Campus Field.
Tide men, women at SEC golf championships

TUSCALOOSA | The University of Alabama men's and women's golf teams — both ranked No. 2 — will begin play Friday in the SEC Championship Tournament.

The men's team will compete at the par-70, 6,898-yard Seaside Course at St. Simon's Island, Ga.

The Crimson Tide will play with Florida and Georgia in the first round, teeing off at 7:30 a.m.

Alabama captured the school's third SEC championship in 2012 with a six-shot victory over Auburn.

Coach Jay Seawell, the SEC Coach of the Year, will call on the same lineup that he has used for the past two tournaments — Cory Whitsett, Justin Thomas, Bobby Wyatt, Scott Strohmeyer and Trey Mullinax.

The women's team will compete at the par-72, 6,401-yard Greystone Golf and Country Club in Birmingham.

The Crimson Tide is set to tee off at 9:40 a.m. and will be paired with Arkansas and Florida in the first round.

Coach Mic Potter will start junior Stephanie Meadow, true freshman Emma Talley, senior Jennifer Kirby, junior Hannah Collier and sophomore Daniela Lendi.
UA gymnast earns Goldwater Scholarship

TUSCALOOSA | University of Alabama junior gymnast Ria Domier — a two-time Scholastic All-American and member of the Crimson Tide's 2011 and 2012 NCAA championship teams — was recently announced as one of two Alabama students to win a Goldwater Scholarship.

Domier and fellow chemical engineering major Josh Moon were honored by the Barry M. Goldwater Scholarship and Excellence in Education Foundation with scholarships for the 2013-14 academic year.

The one- and two-year scholarships will cover the cost of tuition, fees, books and room and board up to a maximum of $7,500 per year.

"We are extremely proud of what Ria has accomplished during her career both as a scholar and an athlete and this award is the latest testament to her hard work, drive and dedication," UA coach Sarah Patterson said.

"For the College of Engineering to have two winners this year speaks volumes to the quality of the students in our college, the outstanding commitment of our faculty to education and the wonderful facilities we have on campus," said Dr. Charles L. Karr, dean of engineering.

The Goldwater Scholars were selected on the basis of academic merit from a field of 1,107 mathematics, science and engineering students nominated by the faculties of colleges and universities nationwide.
Get a grip

Whether it’s the uneven bars, floor routine or even the balance beam, chalk plays an essential role in gymnastics

By Marc Torrence
Special to The Tuscaloosa News

TUSCALOOSA | There’s something in the air at University of Alabama gymnastics practice. It’s not excitement, disappointment, anticipation or anything else intangible. Something is literally in the air.

It’s vital for practice or meet and inadvertently becomes part of a gymnast or coach’s everyday life.

“Chalk is essential,” UA coach Sarah Patterson said. “The one thing that we always do when we walk into the arena, you’re rolling the little bag with everything you need in it and, ‘Where’s the extra chalk?’ In case somebody doesn’t have as much as you need. We bring our own so we have it just in case.”

Stephen Buckner, a UA trainer who’s been with the team for three years and handles the team’s equipment, estimated that the team goes through three cases of chalk per year. A case of chalk contains 36 1-pound blocks and can cost up to $300 on some gymnastics supply websites.

The volume of chalk used in gymnastics makes it ubiquitous for coaches and gymnasts. It gets in their equipment bags, on their clothes and in their hair. What many would see as a dirty spot or inconvenience, they see as part of their everyday lives.

“When we walked down the bye the other night (at NCAA regionals), I had a black dress on, and someone said, ‘You have chalk all over you,’ when they go to hug you,” Patterson said. “You just don’t worry about it. It’s chalk.”

Magnesium carbonate is the scientific term for the white, powdery substance used by weightlifters, rock climbers and gymnasts alike. Its main function is to reduce perspiration and enhance grip. It’s harmless unless consumed in very large quantities.

There are rules that govern the uses of chalk. The word chalk appears five times in the NCAA women’s gymnastics rulebook. You can chalk a semicircle on the corners of the floor exercise mats, so gymnasts can see how close to the edge they’ve landed without looking back. But, you can’t chalk a line on the vault runway or balance beam to tell gymnasts when to start their jumps.

It is used so regularly that it permeates the gym or practice facility. Uneven bars is the event many associate with chalk, but it is much more multipurposed than that. Little white footprints dot the floor mats and the balance beam, while the bars are always covered in chalk.

And it has uses beyond the equipment. Gymnasts put chalk on their palms and knees so that when they pull in for a flip, their hands don’t graze off of their legs. On balance beam, gymnasts will chalk the bottoms of their feet to reduce slippage.

“We pretty much use it for all of the events,” sophomore Kaitlyn Clark said. “Obviously, bars is the one where you use it the most, but we definitely go through a ton of chalk.”

Clark also uses chalk to make a fashion statement.

“One thing I do on beam is I chalk my left foot, so it matches my right foot,” Clark said. “Because I tape my right foot and not my left. I have to match on both sides.”

Freshman Lauren Beers said she sweats a lot, and uses more chalk than most. And for Beers, after a day of practice or a meet, there’s only one way to get rid of it all.

“I just need a shower,” she said.
UA men's basketball
signs two players

TUSCALOOSA | University of Alabama men's basketball coach Anthony Grant announced the addition of two veteran players to the Crimson Tide roster Wednesday, the first day of the spring signing period.

Guard Ricky Tarrant, a two-time all-conference performer at Tulane University, and junior college standout Algie Key signed with UA.

"We are very excited to have Ricky and Algie join our program," Grant said. "They both have the character, work ethic and talent that we look for in our student-athletes."

Tarrant (6-foot-2, 190 pounds) spent two seasons with the Green Wave. He earned Conference USA Freshman of the Year in 2012 and all-conference honors in 2012 and 2013. He will have to sit out the 2013-14 season due to NCAA transfer rules and will have two years of eligibility remaining.

As a sophomore at Tulane, Tarrant started all 35 games and averaged 15.7 points, 3.6 assists, 2.8 rebounds and 1.3 steals in 35.3 minutes per game. He led the team in assists, steals and free throw percentage and ranked second on the team in scoring, 3s made (71), field goals made (156) and attempted (419) and total points scored (550).

Key is a 6-4, 175-pound guard who played the past two seasons at Barton (Kan.) Community College. He became the second player in program history to earn back-to-back NJCAA All-America honors. He was Jayhawk Conference West Division Freshman of the Year and a first team All-Jayhawk Conference and All-Region VI performer for two years.

As a sophomore, Key averaged 17.6 points, 6.2 rebounds and 4.4 assists a game, helping the Cougars to a 28-6 record and a spot in the Region VI tournament championship game.
Four-star linebacker commits to Bama

By Andrew Bone
Senior Recruiting Analyst

Shaun Dion Hamilton, a four-star linebacker from Carver High School in Montgomery, has known his decision for a while. He took visits in the past month to make sure he was making the right decision.

Hamilton hinted at his decision a few weeks ago, but the visits continued. He visited Tuscaloosa last Tuesday and traveled to Auburn on Friday, and again on Saturday.

"I am going to the best school for my family and where I can play fast," Hamilton said Wednesday after committing. "With that being said, I am going to be rolling with the Tide. I committed because of the coaches, Coach (Kirby) Smart and Coach (Nick) Saban. I have a real good relationship with them.

"They are winning championships and getting guys to the next level. They are known for having great defenses year-in and year-out. They know how to win. I just got a different vibe from when I was down there. I always felt like that's where I wanted to be.

"Tactually committed last Tuesday, I told Coach Smart about my decision. He told Coach Saban. They were really excited. Coach Smart said how he really wanted me there. They told me to get ready to come in and work hard."
COMMIT

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1C

Auburn was a childhood favorite. It was tough for him to break the news to the coaching staff.

"I talked to Coach (Gus) Malzahn, Coach (Rhett) Lashlee and Coach (Al) Pogue," Hamilton said. "They were telling me I have always been their guy, and how I can be the person who puts the class together. I told them I was going to Alabama. It was tough. It made me feel like a grown man, though. I made a grown-man decision. I know how much they really wanted me. It's just part of growing up."

Hamilton talked Sunday night about taking a few visits in the fall. That has changed a bit. He now wants to become the Crimson Tide's lead recruiter.

"I am 100 percent Bama," Hamilton said. "I am done with everything. My family is very excited. Most of them are Alabama fans. They are really happy. Everyone is really going to enjoy watching me play at Alabama."

"I am definitely going to be going after a lot of guys. I am going to start with the defensive line and work my way back. I am going after Lorenzo Carter and definitely Elisha Shaw. I am going after Marlon Humphrey, Stephen Roberts and Ronnie Clark. I am going to go after some more big defensive tackles."

The 6-foot, 240-pound Hamilton noted the relationship he built with Smart, Alabama's defensive coordinator, several times throughout his recruitment. The best relationship was built with Alabama defensive coordinator, Kirby Smart. He was happy to see the recent pay raise for Saban's right-hand man.

"Coach Smart is definitely worth it," he said. "He is the best linebacker coach and best defensive coordinator in the country. He deserves the extra pay. There is no coach who puts linebackers in the league like him. Nico Johnson is going in the league. C.J. Mosley will. Guys like Don'ta Hightower and Rolando McClain are already there. I saw how he brought C.J. from a small high school linebacker to an All-American."
Flying high

McCarron putting up big spring numbers

By Chase Goodbread
Sports Writer

TUSCALOOSA | If the University of Alabama’s annual A-Day Game plays anything offensively like the statistical results of two prior scrimmages, A-Day fans expecting fireworks from quarterback AJ McCarron and his weapons won’t be disappointed.

And it may look awfully familiar.

The Crimson Tide’s two-year starter has thrown nine touchdown passes and one interception — a nearly identical ratio to his 2012 season (30-3).

He’s completed 67.9 percent of his passes over two scrimmages, awfully close to last year, as well (67.2).

Some of the key figures in the offense around McCarron have yardage and touchdowns stacked in the scrimmage stockpile as well.

Saturday, when sophomore wide receiver Amari Cooper will open play seeking his sixth spring touchdown, several key defensive figures will be out or limited.

Linebacker C.J. Mosley, is expected to be under noncontact status, as he’s been all spring. Cornerback John Fulton is not expected to play, and experienced middle linebacker Trey DePriest will certainly not play.

After two closed scrimmages, UA coach Nick Saban’s higher praise was for the offense, but he noted personnel scrambles limited the defense.

“Defensively, we’ve got quite a few guys banged up, so we’ve got a lot of new guys in a lot of places,” Saban said Saturday.

The team has just two more practices this week, today and Thursday, before closing spring with its 15th and final practice at Bryant-Denny at 2 p.m. Saturday.

With game-sized A-Day crowds a yearly event since Saban took over the program in 2007, the weekend presents some challenges to the UA athletic department in coordinating traffic, traditional events such as the Walk of Fame cement casting for team captains and more.

A-Day is free to the public, a stance late athletic director Mal Moore maintained amid a rising number of schools profiting from spring games.

Reach Chase Goodbread at chase@tidesports.com or at 205-722-0195.
SEC, ESPN to announce launch of network

From wire reports

The long-awaited SEC network appears to be a step closer to reality. The conference and ESPN will formally announce the league’s channel, which will launch in August 2014, at an event in Atlanta on Tuesday, according to SportsBusiness Journal.

The yet-to-be-named SEC network is slated to be a national channel, much like the Big Ten and Pac-12 networks before it. Over the next 15 months, the conference will work with ESPN to build out its operation, possibly in Charlotte at ESPN Regional Television, and hire a staff, all while beginning talks with distributors.

The conference channel cleared its biggest obstacle in recent weeks when it reacquired the third-tier TV rights from IMG College, Learfield Sports and CBS Collegiate Sports Properties, the three rights holders that work with the conference’s 14 schools. Those third-tier TV rights represent one football game, eight men’s basketball games, baseball, women’s basketball and all other nonrevenue sports that are not picked up by ESPN or a syndicated partner.

Those live games will move to ESPN for the conference channel, which is an important development because it means that ESPN will control the entire inventory of SEC football games.

See SEC, Page 3B

New channel, which will hit the air in August 2014, will be national like the Big Ten and Pac-12 networks

See next page
SEC

From Page 1B

The exception to that rule would be CBS's single game each week. That gives ESPN flexibility to use specific games in markets where it's having trouble gaining distribution. If, for example, one of Louisiana's biggest distributors, Cox, is holding out and not agreeing to carry the channel, it will be easier for ESPN to place more LSU games on it to help it gain more leverage in those negotiations.

Such leverage is important, as negotiations with distributors have been the most difficult part in the launch of college conference networks. The Big Ten Network went through bruising carriage battles, particularly with Comcast and Time Warner Cable. The Pac-12 Networks still has yet to cut a deal with the nation's biggest satellite distributor, DirecTV.

The value of the third-party rights the conference bought back is significant and comes after nine months of off-and-on negotiations. The rights holders agreed to give up TV rights valued at roughly $1.5 million a year. In return, those rights holders will lessen the guarantees to their schools by the same amount — a little more than $1 million a year for each school — for the next several years, industry sources said.

When Forbes released in January its rankings of the most valuable conferences in college sports, as measured by annual revenue from TV deals, bowl games and the NCAA basketball tournament, many were surprised to see the SEC ranked fourth behind the Big Ten, Pac-12 and ACC.

The reason that the conference fell behind, according to Forbes, was that it still relied on revenue from 2008 TV deals with CBS and ESPN that pay a combined $205 million annually.

By comparison, consider that the Big Ten and Pac-12 each take home somewhere in the neighborhood of $250 million per year from television revenue alone.

Now the SEC is poised to likely have the most valuable TV deal in college sports.

Financial details are not yet available, but there is little doubt that the new network agreement will be the richest conference TV deal in college sports.

No collegiate sport moves the TV ratings needle like football, and the SEC has won the last seven BCS titles.
Melvin Ray puts baseball on hold to chase football

Brandon Marcello
brmarcello@al.com

Melvin Ray loves playing baseball, but he knows he's made to play football.

It's a big reason why the 23-year-old sophomore is at Auburn today. Ray left the Los Angeles Dodgers organization after three years to chase his dream of playing football. Originally an Alabama signee in 2008, he left the Dodgers' minor league system in 2011 in an effort to enroll at Alabama in the fall.

Ray says he started missing football "from day one" when he signed with the Dodgers out of North Florida Christian High in Tallahassee.

"(Baseball) was an opportunity, I loved it, I played it my whole life," Ray said. "It was the first sport I ever played, following my dad and my brother. And it was something that I loved. Once I started football around 10th grade, I realized that was a sport that physically was probably better for me overall. It was something that I enjoyed doing."

Ray was picked in the 33rd round by the Dodgers in the first-year player draft in 2008. He didn't quite experience the success he was accustomed to on the high school level. His batting average did not top .162 in 2008 or 2009. He hit .269 in 20 games in the Arizona League in 2010 but called it quits in late July.

Ray left the minor leagues with the intention of enrolling at Alabama in 2011 but he never saw the practice field in Tuscaloosa. He ultimately landed at Auburn, where he used a year in the strength and conditioning program in 2012 to get into playing shape. He played in all 12 games as a contributor on special teams.

He's now fighting for a starting job in Gus Malzahn's hurry-up, no-huddle offense while also shaking off some rust and rookie mistakes. He's an elder by age but not experience. He also has to watch his weight. That means no more fast food.

"It's a little bit different now, not having as much energy as I did when I was 18," he said.

How and why did Ray land at Auburn? It's simple, really. He matriculated as an adult and started looking "deeper" into his academics and Auburn's facilities.

"Everything that I didn't look into as much when I was 18 years old. It was just, 'I want to play college football,'" he said. "I fell in love with Auburn and it became a second home to me," he said.

The 6-foot-3, 218-pound wide receiver is lining up in the slot and on the outside, where he's competing against Ricardo Louis and Trovon Reid for playing time. He will continue to move from position to position until coaches find the perfect spot for the Tallahassee native. He's also trying to get back to his roots as a highly-rated star out of North Florida Christian.

Ray was heavily involved in screen drills earlier this spring, catching as many as five passes during one session open to reporters.

"He's a big, athletic guy," Malzahn said earlier this spring. "I think if you ask him he's thinking a lot about where to line up and his assignment instead of just playing football."

Ray says he understands the offense, and his big goal is to impress Malzahn enough to earn a scholarship next fall -- and play three more seasons at Auburn.

He also wants to earn his bachelor's degree in communications.

"You never know," he said. "Hopefully I get an opportunity to play Sundays (in the NFL), but thinking realistically I have to worry about making sure I put myself in a position to get a job first."