ARTICLES OF INTEREST
MARCH 27, 2014 – APRIL 4, 2014

FOR SPECIFIC NEWS STORIES, SEE THE FOLLOWING PAGE NUMBERS:

NEWS ABOUT

TRUSTEE/SYSTEM INFO  2
STATE ISSUES  8
UA CAMPUS ISSUES  19
UAB CAMPUS ISSUES  27
UAH CAMPUS ISSUES  34
OTHER STATE UNIVERSITIES  37
SPORTS  40
NATIONAL NEWS  44
Gov. Bentley attends UA System trustee meeting in Huntsville, interested in progress at UAH

By: Paul Gattis

Huntsville, Alabama - Even though he is president of the University of Alabama System Board of Trustees by virtue of his office, Gov. Robert Bentley on Friday made a rare appearance to preside over a meeting.

Bentley attended the meeting at the University of Alabama in Huntsville as part of a visit to the Rocket City.

"He stays in touch and is really interested in what we've got going on, in particular coming to this meeting and getting briefed on things happening at UAH," said Paul Bryant Jr., who typically presides over meetings as the board's president pro tem. "He has a standing invitation to any of our meetings."

As part of the annual trustee meeting at UAH, Bentley saw the school's institutional presentation to the board - which highlights past accomplishments and ambitions for the future.

Among Bentley's other scheduled stops in Huntsville is at the Blue Plate Café on Governors Drive for lunch and Holy Family Catholic School, which is celebrating its 50th anniversary of integration.
UA System committees approve 2 building projects on former Bryce campus in Tuscaloosa

By: Paul Gattis

Huntsville, Alabama- The physical properties committee of the University of Alabama System Board of Trustees approved two new building projects on the former campus of Bryce Hospital in Tuscaloosa.

And the board's finance committee approved $80 million to cover the projects during committee meetings Thursday on the campus of the University of Alabama in Huntsville.

The two projects receiving initial approval from the trustee committees were a $60 million performance arts center and the Bryce Admissions Building renovation and addition budgeted for $20 million.

The full board will vote on the projects Friday at UAH. Gov. Robert Bentley, who is president ex officio of the board by virtue of his office, will preside over the meeting during a visit to Huntsville Friday.

Both facilities are located on the former campus of historical Bryce Hospital, which raises historical preservation issues for the projects. The performance art center is also planned for a new loop road on the campus that will require input from the state Department of Transportation.

The two projects call for $50 million to be secured through the bond market.

Britt Sexton, chair of the finance committee, expressed concern about the loans before the projects are fully defined. But he said after the meeting that the UA System has financial flexibility that minimizes the downside of the uncertainty surrounding the projects.

"We as a committee just need to continue to vet these projects and remember funding projects that have not come to a full conclusion to me are a little dicey i.e. we borrow the money and we start paying interest," Sexton told the board.

He also raised the point that the UA System is "inchng closer and closer toward $1 billion in debt. Our fiduciary responsibility is to oversee that amount of debt."

Sexton also jokingly referred to himself as a "worry wart" and lauded the leadership of UA President Judy Bonner and Lynda Gilbert, vice president of financial affairs at the Tuscaloosa campus.

An "outstanding" credit rating in December from Standard & Poor is also a credit to the system's financial bottom line, Sexton said.

Other ongoing capital projects approved by the finance committee included raising the budget from $30 million to $35 million for a new baseball stadium on the Tuscaloosa campus. The
budget calls for $20 million in private gifts to help finance the stadium and Gilbert told the board that $5 million has been raised so far.

Another ongoing project, the Student Center at Presidential Village, got finance committee approval to increase its budget by about $1.6 million to $32.5 million. About $25 million has been secured for the project through the bond market.
Board to consider $236M in bonds

By Ed Enoch
Staff Writer

HUNTSVILLE | Committees for the University of Alabama System board of trustees on Thursday approved resolutions that would increase tuition for medical school students by 4 percent, issue $236 million in bonds for debt refinancing and capital projects and begin preliminary planning for a $60 million performing arts center on the Bryce Hospital grounds.

The resolutions approved by the Finance and Physical Properties committees are scheduled to go before the full board today at its regular meeting on the University of Alabama in Huntsville campus.

The resolution approved by the Finance Committee would increase tuition by 4 percent in 2014-15 for students of the system’s schools of medicine, dentistry and optometry.

The increases would be used to cover increases

See BONDS | 7A
BONDS

Continued From Page 1A

of operational costs and maintain current levels of support for the programs, according to memos from the presidents of UA and the University of Alabama at Birmingham.

Medical students will see tuition increase from $24,510 per academic year to $25,490 at UAB and UA's College of Community Health Sciences. Tuition for non-resident students would increase to $60,933 per academic year.

Tuition for in-state dentistry students would increase from $11,861 per term to $12,336 for first- and second-year students, from $12,452 to $12,950 third-year students and from $13,630 to $14,175 for fourth-year students. Non-resident tuition would increase from $27,380 to $28,475 per term for first- and second-year students, from $28,842 to $29,996 for year three, and from $31,770 to $33,041 for year four.

Optometry students would see tuition increase from $8,045 to $8,367 per term in state. Non-resident students would see tuition increase to $17,825.

The resolution approved by the Finance Committee to issue $236 million in revenue bonds prompted a brief discussion of UA's debt.

Roughly $145 million of the proposed $236 million in bonds would be for capital projects, with the rest going to refinance existing bond debt to take advantage of interest rates. The university estimated the refinancing would save about $3.77 million.

Finance Committee Chairman William Sexton expressed confidence in the university and system's financial leadership, though he said the financial committee needs to continue to carefully vet major projects and be mindful of the debt load.

"We are inching closer and closer to $1 billion in debt for a public university," Sexton said.

At the end of the past fiscal year, the university's long-term debt was about $798 million, according to its financial report.

Sexton asked Lynda Gilbert, UA's vice president of Financial Affairs, for a shock scenario — a simulation of unexpected or unfavorable conditions meant to test an institution's ability to weather financial turmoil — for the university by the June meeting.

"We are going to shock the numbers and see how they look," Sexton said.

Board President Pro Tem Paul Bryant Jr. said he was appreciative of Sexton's concerns, but he expressed confidence in the university and system's financial planning.

"I think the university has a good plan, a well thought-out plan," Bryant said.

Sexton began his comments during a discussion by the Physical Properties Committee of resolutions to begin preliminary planning for about $80 million in

See next page
The proposed arts center's construction would be paid for with $30 million from future revenue bonds and the rest from UA funds and gifts.

The $30 million renovation of the Bryce admissions building east of the main hospital would be funded with revenue from the bond proposal being considered by the board of trustees.

The committee also approved a resolution to revise the scope and budget of the student center being constructed at the Presidential Village from about $31 million to $32.5 million to accommodate construction of space within the center for an additional food service location including a Fuel Smoothie Bar, grab-and-go convenience vending, a deli and a Starbucks. The new store would come online in fall 2014.

The committee also approved architectural designs for a $1.7 million severe weather shelter on the east side of campus and the $15 million renovation of Houzer Hall. The trustees also approved a resolution to authorize UA to negotiate an agreement for architectural services for the planned $31 million new academic building with Turner-Batson Architects of Birmingham.
Bills that didn't come up for vote
- State employees pay, HB 367. Would give state employees a $400 bonus.
- Alabama Accountability Act, HB 558. Would remove $7,500 cap on income tax credits for individuals donating to scholarship organizations and allow students from non-failing schools earlier access to scholarships each year.
- Lethal injection secrecy, HB 379. Would make the names of manufacturers and suppliers of drugs used in lethal injections confidential.
- Payday loans, HB 145. Would create database to enforce limit on borrowers' debt.
- Spay-neuter clinics, HB 141. Would allow nonprofit clinics to continue to operate. Probably dead because it was stripped from Senate calendar early Thursday.
- Open Meetings Act, SB 191. Would close loopholes in the law.

Passed Thursday, going to governor
- Abortion, HB 494. Would tighten restrictions on minors receiving consent for an abortion.
- Education budget, SB 184. Would spend $5.9 billion from Education Trust Fund in fiscal year 2015.
- Fair Ballot Commission, HB 9. Would create commission to approve statements in plain language that summarize ballot initiatives for voters.
- Lobbyists, SB 36. Would prohibit former legislators from lobbying either chamber of Legislature within two years after they leave office.
- Welfare fraud, SB 114. Would make certain fraudulent conduct to obtain public assistance a crime.
- Welfare applicants, SB 115. Would require applicants for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families to apply for three jobs to become eligible.
- Welfare applicants, SB 63. Would require applicants for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families with a drug conviction in the last five years to be drug tested.

Notable Wednesday action
- Abortion, HB 489: Women would have to wait 48 hours, instead of 24 hours, to have an abortion after receiving certain information mandated by the state. Bill going to governor.
Study: State parks fuel Alabama’s economy

Kelli Dugan  kdugan@al.com

With an estimated economic impact of $375 million, Alabama’s 22 state parks fuel far more than family vacations and outdoor excursions.

A recent study concluded the picturesque statewide network supported 5,340 jobs in 2011, the most recent year for which data was available.

Economists Samuel Addy and Ahmad Ijaz with the Center for Business and Economic Research at the University of Alabama’s Culverhouse College of Commerce conducted the analysis.

Alabama State Parks Director Greg Lein said the study confirms that “state parks are valuable tools to promote the state’s economy.”

“But the study gave us real numbers for state parks’ overall economic impact and the many public and private jobs that depend on them,” Lein said.

According to the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, which commissioned the study, the state parks division recorded more than 4.6 million visits in 2012 and marks its 75th anniversary this year. The Alabama Tourism Department has named 2014 “Year of the Parks,” during which celebratory hikes, nature walks and programs, dining and camping specials, and other special events will be offered.

Oak Mountain and the state’s 21 other state parks have a $375 million annual economic impact, a new study shows. (File)

Lein noted the majority of the state parks’ operational money is generated through direct user fees. “Our slogan is ‘Partners Pay the Way.’ But it’s more than a slogan. We really do rely heavily on our customers... to pay the bills. We want them to know their dollars count in the parks and in the state’s economy,” he said.

ALABAMA STATE PARKS: BY THE NUMBERS

[2011 figures]

- 22 parks
- $375 million in economic impact
- 5,340 jobs supported
- $140 million in earnings
- $152.4 million in visitor spending
- $10.9 million in state and local taxes generated
State unemployment rate rises as more people look for work

By Patrick Rupinski
Business Editor

The unemployment rate rose in February across West Alabama and most of the rest of Alabama, in part because more people began looking for jobs.

The state's official unemployment rate increased from 6.1 to 6.4 percent, according to figures released Friday by the Alabama Department of Labor.

Tuscaloosa County's jobless rate rose from 6.4 to 6.7 percent. County unemployment rates are not seasonally adjusted like state rates. Had Alabama's rate not been seasonally adjusted, it would have risen even more to 7.5 percent, up from 6.8 percent in January.

Imad Ijaz, director of economic forecasting at the University of Alabama Center for Business and Economic Research, said he believes two factors caused unemployment to rise last month. “One was an increase in the labor force,” he said. “As always in a gradually recovering economy, more people enter the labor force in anticipation of finding a job, therefore the unemployment rate continues to move up as more discouraged workers enter the labor force since unemployment rate is a lagging indicator.”

“The second reason for an increase in unemployment rate was job losses seen in the federal government and local education. In my opinion this could be weather related depending on when the survey was conducted. “But overall the job growth looked encouraging as the state added 16,300 jobs over the past 12 months, and almost all sectors of the economy added jobs.”

Ijaz said he believes the same two factors affected Tuscaloosa’s unemployment.

JOBLESS
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1B

employment rate.

“Since this is not seasonally adjusted, I suspect this may be weather related, as the metro area gained 300 jobs over January and 1,700 jobs over the past 12 months. Most of the job losses were in construction which could be weather related.”

The wintry weather is believed to have delayed and hurt construction activity.

Alabama's February unemployment rate represents 137,256 unemployed persons, compared to 130,456 in January, and 142,855 in February 2013.

“Although we saw an uptick in the state's unemployment rate, we also saw an increase in the number of people working, as well as the number of people in the labor force,” said a statement from Tom Surtees. “These indicators, combined with an increase in the number of jobs reported by employers, tell me that more people are out in the workforce — either looking for jobs or working, and that is certainly good news.”

In February, the seasonally adjusted number of people working in Alabama increased to 1,996,720 from 1,990,938 in January, and the state's civilian labor force, which counts people who are either working or actively seeking work, increased by more than 12,000 in February to 2,133,976.

Wage and salary employment, which is the measure of how many jobs Alabama’s economy supports and is reported by employers, increased 8,700 over the month.
ALABAMA'S DIVERGENT POPULATION:  
MORE THAN HALF OF THE STATE'S  
COUNTIES SHOW A LOSS.

Brendan Kirby  bkirby@al.com

Alabama's decadeslong trend of population haves and have-nots continued unabated. More than half of the state's 67 counties lost population from 2012 to 2013, according to data released Thursday by the U.S. Census Bureau. A handful of counties clustered in large urban areas accounted for virtually all growth.

Overall, Alabama's population inched up by 0.3 percent during that time. The greater Huntsville metro continued to boom and added the most people, counting about 16,300 new residents since 2010 to grow to 435,737 people. The Daphne metro was second.

SO WHICH ALABAMA METRO SAW THE LARGEST POPULATION BOOM?

The Auburn-Opelika metropolitan area grew the eighth fastest in the nation since 2010.
Gainers

At 3.2 percent, Russell County had the fastest growth rate. Since 2010, the Columbus, Ga.-area county, has grown at a blistering 12.5-percent clip. Alabama's other fast-growing counties include Baldwin, Lee, Limestone, Shelby, St. Clair, Madison and Tuscaloosa. All grew by more than 1 percent in the last year. Larry Childers, a spokesman for the Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs, said he believes military base closures across the country, which resulted in transfers to Fort Benning, have fueled growth in Russell and Lee counties. He said Limestone benefits from its proximity to Madison County and a relatively strong economic engine in Huntsville.

Fastest Growing Metro

The Auburn-Opelika metropolitan area grew the eighth fastest in the nation since 2010. The rate of growth in a relatively small area is noteworthy. The area jumped 7.2 percent, from about 141,000 residents in 2010 to 151,000 by 2013. The ninth-fastest growing metro, too, reaches into Alabama: The Columbus, Ga., metro holds more than 300,000 residents across four Georgia counties and Russell County in east Alabama. That metro borders Auburn, creating one of the nation's fastest growing regions since 2010.

In fact, eight of the 10 fastest growing U.S. metros in the United States are south of the Mason-Dixon Line. The others in the South: The Villages, Fla.; Midland, Texas; Austin-Round Rock, Texas; Odessa, Texas; Crestview-Fort Walton Beach-Destin, Fla.; Myrtle Beach-Conway-North Myrtle Beach, S.C. and N.C.

AL.com reporter Challen Stephens contributed to this report.

Population Changes by MSA

Metropolitan statistical areas ranked in order of population growth, by percent, since 2012.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Metropolitan Statistical Area</th>
<th>Percent Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Auburn-Opelika</td>
<td>7.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daphne-Fairhope-Foley</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Huntsville</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuscaloosa</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dothan</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Birmingham-Hoover</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobile</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Florence-Muscle Shoals</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decatur</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Montgomery</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gadsden</td>
<td>-0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anniston-Oxford</td>
<td>-0.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Education budget raises funding for insurance

By Phillip Rawls
The Associated Press

MONTGOMERY | The Alabama Senate approved an education budget Tuesday that would increase funding for public education employees' health insurance but would not provide a pay raise.

The budget for the 2014-2015 school year was worked out by a conference committee of House and Senate members. The Senate passed it 18-16 Tuesday night. It still must be considered by the House.

The state’s other budget, the $1.8 billion General Fund budget for non-education agencies, won final approval Tuesday night. The House of Representatives approved the budget on a 76-25 vote. The General Fund budget now goes to Gov. Robert Bentley for his signature.

The $5.9 billion education budget is about $97 million less than this year’s education budget. The budget raises funding for public education employees’ health insurance from $714 per employee per month to $780 to keep them from paying higher premiums.

The $5.9 billion education budget is about $97 million less than this year’s education budget. The budget raises funding for public education employees’ health insurance from $714 per employee per month to $780 to keep them from paying higher premiums. Gov. Robert Bentley had sought the increase along with a 2 percent cost-of-living raise. Committee members said only one item was affordable.

"People deserve a pay raise, but we have to be able to not only pay it but sustain it," Senate budget committee Chairman Trip Pittman, R-Daphne, said.

Public school teachers received a 2 percent raise this school year, and Bentley sought another raise for next year because he said teachers helped the state through the recession by paying more toward their retirement and health insurance benefits.

Henry Mabry, executive secretary of the Alabama Education Association, said the 2 percent raise didn’t make up for the extra amounts the Legislature required education employees to pay toward their pension benefits in 2011.

"This is the first Legislature in decades that has given educators a pay cut and that’s inexcurcible," he said.

Democratic Sen. Rodger Smitherman of Birmingham said education employees expected the Republican-dominated Legislature to approve a raise after the Republican governor pushed for it and that not providing it will hurt the Legislature as it heads into the June election.

"He set the tone for the expectation of a pay increase," Smitherman said.

The proposed budget includes 1 percent increases in funding for two-year and four-year colleges and a 2 percent hike for K-12 schools. It spends less than this year to repay money that state officials borrowed from a state trust fund to support public schools during the recession.

The budget provides a $10 million increase, or 35 percent hike, to expand Alabama's voluntary pre-kindergarten program for 4-year-olds. It would add about 80 middle school teachers, far short of the more than 400 that the state school superintendent sought to try to reduce the school dropout rate.

Wednesday, April 2, 2014
Ala. governor still pushes for 2 percent pay raise

MONTGOMERY | Gov. Robert Bentley says he still hopes to get a 2 percent pay raise approved for public school employees.

Bentley said Monday that he's glad that he and legislative leaders agreed to increase funding for the education employees' health insurance program, and he says that should keep them from having to pay higher costs. But Bentley says he wants the Legislature to do more with three meeting days left in the legislative session.

Bentley says he would like to see a teacher raise added to one of two pending bills that would give a one-time bonus to active state employees and retired state employees.

The raise would be for the 2014-15 school year. It would mark the state's second consecutive 2 percent raise for school employees.
State senators approve two, block two ASU trustees

One of those rejected was local businessman Fitzgerald Washington

By Phillip Rawls
The Associated Press

MONTGOMERY | State senators approved two of Gov. Robert Bentley’s selections for the board of Alabama State University on Wednesday and rejected two others, prompting him to resume his search for trustees at the Montgomery university that has been a focus of his administration for more than a year.

The Senate Confirmations Committee voted to block Bentley’s selection of Macon County school superintendent Jacqueline Brooks and Tuscaloosa businessman Fitzgerald Washington.

The committee unanimously approved Bentley’s selection of Montgomery attorney Robert Gilpin and Bessemer businessman Larry Thornton. The Senate then confirmed them without a dissenting vote, which made their selections official.

Gilpin, Thornton and Brooks have been trustees and were nominated by the governor for new terms. Washington would have replaced Thomas Figures of Mobile. The trustees set policies for the university and select the university president.

The committee’s rejection of Brooks and Washington means they can’t serve on the board of the Montgomery university. Committee Chairman Jabo Waggoner voted against both, along with Senate President Pro Tem Del Marsh, R-Anniston; Senate Judiciary Committee Chairman Cam Ward, R-Abbeville, and Senate budget committee Chairman Arthur Orr, R-Decatur.

Waggoner said Gilpin and Thornton had lots of support, while Brooks and Washington had opposition that See ASU | 5A
Gov. Robert Bentley issued a statement Wednesday saying that Tuscaloosa businessman Fitzgerald Washington and nominee Jacqueline Brooks have excellent records and that he was disappointed they weren't approved.

The governor issued a statement Wednesday saying that Washington and Brooks have excellent records and that he was disappointed they weren't approved.

"It is unfortunate that committee members chose to put politics over the best interests of Alabama State," he said.

Bentley did not elaborate. He said he would move ahead with finding two new candidates who will support Boyd.

Another Alabama State alumus in the Senate, Bobby Singleton, D-Greensboro, said Washington has a good professional record but that he and other alumni were concerned that Washington did not have a four-year college degree.

University trustees traditionally have four-year college degrees, and it would be a bad precedent to approve a trustee without one, he said.

"We need to protect the sanctity of our university," he said.

Waggoner said there were enough senators concerned about Washington and Brooks that the opponents would have shut down the Senate if the Confimations Committee had sent the two names to the Senate for approval.

Alabama State has been going through changes since former President Joseph Silver and the trustees parted ways in December 2012 after he alleged inappropriate dealings by some officials at the university. The governor has hired a forensic accounting firm to do a review of the university, but it is not complete. The firm has issued preliminary findings, which the governor turned over to state and federal prosecutors for review.
Ala. legislator resigns, pleads to misdemeanor

Rep. Greg Wren said he unintentionally committed an ethics violation last year.

By Kim Chandler
The Associated Press

MONTGOMERY | Rep. Greg Wren, one of Alabama's veteran Republican legislators, pleaded guilty Tuesday to a misdemeanor ethics violation and agreed to assist prosecutors with an ongoing investigation of state government.

Wren, 59, of Montgomery, resigned from the Alabama Legislature effective immediately as a condition of the plea deal, according to a copy of the agreement.

Wren acknowledged taking action in the Alabama Legislature that could have steered Medicaid pharmacy business to a Bessemer pharmacy cooperative that had ties to another company that hired Wren as an $8,000-a-month consultant, according to the plea agreement.

"Public servants who violate their oath of office in order to achieve personal gain should expect to be held accountable," acting Attorney General Van Davis said in a statement.

Davis was appointed as acting attorney general in the case after Attorney General Luther Strange recused himself.

Davis said the guilty plea marked "a significant point in the ongoing investigation."

Wren's attorney, James Anderson, said Wren did not know about the relationship between the two companies. He said it was a misdemeanor.

See Ethics | 4A

INSIDE
More about today's session of the State Legislature | 3B
ETHICS

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1A.

because it was an unintentional violation of state ethics law.

Speaking outside the courtroom, Wren said, "I'm kind of glad to have this behind me. It's been a difficult process. I look forward to the future and just a change in scenery."

Wren, a four-term veteran of the Legislature, was first elected to the Alabama Legislature in 1994. He announced earlier this year that he would not seek re-election in November. Anderson said Wren has testified once before. a special grand jury empaneled by the state attorney general's office in Lee County.

According to the plea agreement, Wren was paid by a company called RxAll, a national company that was owned in part by a pharmacy cooperative located in Bessemer, according to the agreement. The president of the cooperative also served on the board of directors for RxAll.

Wren, according to the plea deal, helped put language in the state General Fund budget last year that set requirements for any pharmacy benefit manager that might eventually be hired by the Alabama Medicaid Agency.

The Bessemer-based pharmacy cooperative was the only company that met the requirements, according to the plea deal.

State Health Officer Don Williamson said the Medicaid agency did not ask for that language and that only one company would qualify under the language, and that was the Bessemer company.

The language was later stripped by the Alabama Senate.

Wren also gave RxAll confidential state documents that showed proposals submitted to the state Medicaid agency by competing companies and Medicaid's analysis of those proposals, according to the plea agreement.

District Judge Jimmy Pool gave Wren a 12-month suspended sentence and ordered him to pay $24,000, the amount he was paid by RxAll, in restitution to the state.

The Bessemer pharmacy cooperative also had ties to House Speaker Mike Hubbard, R-Auburn, according to the plea agreement.

Hubbard and staff members attended a meeting about pharmacy language, according to the plea agreement.

"After meeting with Wren and others, and reviewing the co-op exclusive language, the speaker of the house endorsed the co-op exclusive language and directed staff to add it to Medicaid's section of the General Fund budget," the plea agreement said.

The plea agreement also said Wren did not know until later that Hubbard had a financial relationship with the cooperative.

Hubbard told AL.com this summer that his company, the Auburn Network, did business development work for the Bessemer-based American Pharmacy Cooperative Inc. Hubbard said he only worked on out-of-state matters for the group.

Hubbard also told AL.com that he had nothing to do with putting that language in the budget.

A lawyer for Hubbard said that he would not discuss Wren's plea agreement but that Hubbard's work for the pharmacy cooperative had been public for some time.

"The matters related to Rep. Wren's actions today do not involve or affect Speaker Hubbard. Mr. Wren's actions will not stop or affect the work that is left to be done during this legislative session," Mark White said in a statement.

White said Hubbard's company no longer does work for the pharmacy cooperative.

"I'm saddened by it. He served a long time. He served honorably," said Pike Road Sen. Dick Brewbaker, who served with Wren for many years in the House of representatives.

"The measure of integrity is not that you never make a mistake. It's that you own up and take responsibility for the mistakes you make, and Greg's done that," Brewbaker said.

House Rules Chairman Mac McCutcheon said in a statement that he was disappointed that "these illegal actions took place in the Alabama State House."
Outstanding alumni, teachers include Ben Shurett, Everett Holle

Staff report

The publisher of the Sand Mountain Reporter in Albertville and a longtime Birmingham television executive are among the University of Alabama’s College of Communication and Information Sciences’ honorees as outstanding alumni and teachers for 2013-14.

Ben Shurett earned the Betsy Plank Outstanding Leadership Award, given to a UA communications school graduate with a distinguished career.

After coaching basketball for four years in Alabama high schools, Shurett entered the newspaper business in 1978 as a management trainee for Tuscaloosa-based Boone Newspapers Inc. He has been publisher at three Boone-owned newspapers, in Oska-loosa, Iowa, Demopolis and Troy, and for two newspapers owned by Southern Newspapers Inc., one in Fort Payne and, since 2005, at the Sand Mountain Reporter.

He has served as the president of UA’s National Alumni Association, chair of the UA Board of Visitors of the College of Communication & Information Sciences and president of the Alabama Press Association. He has received numerous statewide awards for writing, photography and advertising.

Anniston native Everett Holle earned the Bert Bank Distinguished Service Award, given to an Alabama native who has shown extraordinary service to the school.

Holle is a Birmingham investor and businessman best known for his 40-year career at WAPI/WVTM. He is a board member of the Salvation Army, where he was honored with a lifetime membership. A long-term Scouting enthusiast, he has been awarded the Silver Beaver and the Heart of the Eagle recognition, and also was the Eagle Scout Class of 2010 honoree. He served as president of the United Way Food Bank and spearheaded that organization’s acquisition of its new warehouse and office complex. As chairman of the Better Business Bureau, he oversaw its move into the computer era. He has been elected into the Better Business Bureau’s Hall of Fame and, in 2012, was inducted into the Alabama Broadcasters Hall of Fame. Holle also served in the Army Reserve for 35 years, retiring as a brigadier general.
Other honorees include:

- Michele Elrod, executive vice president and head of marketing at Regions Bank, who was named outstanding advertising alumna.

- Christi Burnum, director of media at LMO Advertising in Washington, D.C., who was named outstanding public relations alumna.

- R. Pierre Rodgers, associate professor of sport management at George Mason University, who was named outstanding communication studies alumnus.

- Stephen E. “Steve” Stewart, assistant professor in Troy University’s Hall School of Journalism and Communication, who was named outstanding journalism alumnus.

- Allen C. Benson, library director and professor at the U.S. Naval War College in Newport, R.I., who was named distinguished alumnus from the School of Library and Information Studies.

- Jeffrey L. Weaver, a producer, writer, director, cinematographer, editor and musician, who was named outstanding alumnus in telecommunication and film.

- Chris Roberts, assistant professor of journalism at UA, and Carol Bishop Mills, an associate professor in communication studies and the college’s associate dean for undergraduate studies, who were given the board of visitors teaching excellence award.
Former CIA operative speaks at UA

Ex-spy Valerie Plame Wilson discusses nuclear threats at documentary screening

By Ed Enoch
Staff Writer

Valerie Plame Wilson was introduced Monday at the University of Alabama as the spy whose cover was blown by a Bush administration official in 2003, but her talk wasn’t about the end of her career with the CIA.

Instead, the former covert CIA operations officer who specialized in preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction focused on the story of her work after her career as a spy ended and her ongoing advocacy for the elimination of nuclear weapons.

“This resonates with me in a very real way,” she said.

Plame Wilson spoke Monday at Farrah Hall ahead of a free public screening of the documentary “Countdown to Zero,” a 2010 film in which she was featured. The film

See Plame | 5A
PLAME

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1A

 traces the history of the atomic bomb.

Plame Wilson was invited to UA to screen the film and talk with students. Her invitation came from Stephen Schwab, an adjunct associate professor of history who worked for the CIA for 32 years. Schwab introduced Plame Wilson, the wife of former U.S. Ambassador Joe Wilson, as a non-official covert operations officer who was outed in “spectacular” fashion in 2003.

If not for the leak, Plame Wilson predicted she would likely still be working abroad for the CIA.

“I loved my job, I was proud to serve my country,” she said.

The revelation of her identity meant the end of her career with the CIA, but also marked the beginning of a shift in her thoughts on how best to deal with the threat posed by nuclear weapons. Plame Wilson said her career in the CIA was characterized by a focus on deterring or delaying proliferation and keeping weapons out of the hands of terrorists. Outside of the CIA, Plame Wilson said she was able to take a broader view of the nuclear threat worldwide.

“You really need to drain the swamp,” she said. “We need to get rid of nuclear weapons worldwide.”

As her family was rebuilding their professional and private lives in New Mexico following the revelation of her identity and the subsequent scandal, Plame Wilson said she received a timely phone call from producer Lawrence Bender about participating in the documentary about nuclear weapons.

“What you are going to see tells a story of why we are not safer today because of nuclear weapons,” Plame Wilson told the audience ahead of the film.

The documentary’s message, instead, is what has kept the world safe in the face of 17,000 nuclear weapons worldwide is luck, according to Plame Wilson.

Plame Wilson prefaced the film with the observation that many of the students in the audience weren’t born when the Soviet Union collapsed, ending the Cold War and its safeguard of mutual assured destruction. The following decades saw trends of spreading knowledge about nuclear technology and an increase in terrorism worldwide.

“What those two trends meant were we are in a far more dangerous world now than we were under the Cold War paradigm,” she said.

Plame Wilson said she hoped the film would be thought-provoking. She characterized the contemporary challenge of eliminating weapons as one of will, not hardware.

“It’s not a technical challenge, it’s political will,” she said.

Plame Wilson said she is optimistic about recent efforts by nuclear powers to discuss the issue, and is hopeful there is growing consensus that nuclear weapons are a liability rather than a safeguard.

Plame Wilson used the screening to highlight work by Global Zero, an international group of world leaders and citizens, including college students, advocating for the elimination of all nuclear weapons. Plame Wilson, who is a member of Global Zero, said the group had developed a clear plan to eliminate nuclear weapons.

“You can’t continue on the path you are on,” she said of efforts to merely secure weapons or deter their proliferation.

Reach Ed Enoch at ed.enoch@tuscaloosanews.com or 205-722-0209.
Our Crazy College Crossroads

BY: Frank Bruni

Over recent days the notices have gone out, an annual ritual of dashed hopes.

Brown University offered admission to the lowest fraction ever of the applicants it received: fewer than one in 10. The arithmetic was even more brutal at Stanford, Columbia, Yale. The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill had a record number of students vying for its next freshman class — 31,321 — and accepted about one in six who applied from outside the state. Notre Dame took about one in five of all comers.

And right now many young men and women who didn’t get in where they fervently longed to are worrying that it’s some grim harbinger of their future, some sweeping judgment of their worth.

This is for them. And it’s intended less as a balm for the rejected than as a reality check for a society gone nuts over the whole overheated process.

If you were shut out of an elite school, that doesn’t mean you’re less gifted than all of the students who were welcomed there. It may mean only that you lacked the patronage that some of them had, or that you played the game less single-mindedly, taking fewer SAT courses and failing to massage your biography with the same zeal.

A friend of mine in Africa told me recently about a center for orphans there that a rich American couple financed in part to give their own teenage children an exotic charity to visit occasionally and mine for college-application essays: admissions bait. That’s the degree of cunning that comes into this frenzy.

Maybe the school that turned you down ranks high in the excessively publicized “College Salary Report” by PayScale.com, which looks at whose graduates go on to make the most money.

What a ludicrous list. It’s at least as imperfectly assembled as the honor roll that U.S. News & World Report puts together every year. And even if you trust it, what does it tell you? That the colleges at the top have the most clout and impart the best skills? Or that these colleges admit the most young people whose parents and previously established networks guarantee them a leg up?

Maybe it tells you merely that these colleges attract the budding plutocrats with the greatest concern for the heft of their paychecks. Is that the milieu you sought?

About money and professional advancement: Shiny diplomas from shiny schools help. It’s a lie to say otherwise. But it’s as foolish to accord their luster more consequence than the effort you put into your studies, the earnestness with which you hone your skills, what you actually learn. These are the sturdier building blocks of a career.

In “David and Goliath,” Malcolm Gladwell makes the case that a less exclusive university may enable a student to stand out and flourish in a way that a more exclusive one doesn’t. The selectiveness of Gladwell’s science doesn’t nullify the plausibility of his argument.

See next page
Corner offices in this country teem with C.E.O.s who didn’t do their undergraduate work in the Ivy League. Marillyn Hewson of Lockheed Martin went to the University of Alabama. John Mackey of Whole Foods studied at the University of Texas, never finishing.

Your diploma is, or should be, the least of what defines you. Show me someone whose identity is rooted in where he or she went to college. I’ll show you someone you really, really don’t want at your Super Bowl party.

And your diploma will have infinitely less relevance to your fulfillment than so much else: the wisdom with which you choose your romantic partners; your interactions with the community you inhabit; your generosity toward the family that you inherited or the family that you’ve made.

If you’re not bound for the school of your dreams, you’re probably bound for a school that doesn’t conform as tidily to your fantasies or promise to be as instantly snug a fit.

Good. College should be a crucible. It’s about departure, not continuity: about turning a page and becoming a new person, not letting the ink dry on who, at 17 or 18, you already are. The disruption of your best-laid plans serves that. It’s less a setback than a springboard.

A high school senior I know didn’t get into several of the colleges she coveted most. She got into a few that are plenty excellent. And I’ve never been more impressed with her, because she quickly realized that her regrets pale beside her blessings and she pivoted from letdown to excitement.

That resiliency and talent for optimism will matter more down the line than the name of the school lucky enough to have her. Like those of her peers who are gracefully getting past this ordeal that our status-mad society has foisted on them, she’ll do just fine.
The resolution, which will be considered by the full board of trustees today, would authorize a revised budget of $35 million and awarding construction contracts to the eventual low bidder for the work.

The preliminary budget of $30 million for the renovation and expansion of the baseball stadium on Paul W. Bryant Drive. Construction is scheduled to begin this year and be completed by November 2015.

The budget increase is based on current market conditions for the construction package and costs associated with structural steel for the indoor batting facility, according to information presented to the board.

Leopard said the work to upgrade 

See next page
STADIUM

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1A

electrical systems and installation of infrastructure, such as stormwater systems is projected to be more expensive than originally estimated.

The project will be funded by $15 million in revenue bonds and $20 million from the Crimson Tide Foundation and gifts, according to the board packet. The Crimson Tide Foundation has received roughly $5 million in gifts for the stadium, said Lynda Gilbert, vice president for Financial Affairs.

The expansion will increase the size of the facility — currently 32,801 square feet — by 96,199 square feet. The renovations call for the demolition of existing food service areas, restrooms, locker rooms, the press box and other concourse functions.

Renovations will include a new outfield walk that connects with the concourse, a playground and mini infield for families, a pre-game picnic area, team store, commissary, new seats and an expanded canopy overhang over the primary seating area, according to the university's plans.

New player amenities include a home team locker room and lounge, showers and restrooms, meeting room, weight room, bullpen and a four-lane indoor batting facility.

New fan amenities include a concourse with easy access to restrooms, improvements to concessions, additional seating, three club lounges, a home run berm and a student section.
UAB tuition for medical, optometry and dentistry students increases 4 percent

By: Paul Gattis

Huntsville, Alabama – Tuition is on the verge of going up 4 percent for medical, optometry and dentistry students at the University of Alabama at Birmingham.

The finance committee of the UA System Board of Trustees on Thursday approved the 4 percent increase for both in-state and out-of-state students.

Tuition for those students is typically addressed at the board’s April meeting before classes begin in the summer.

Linda Lucas, provost at UAB, told the trustees that even with the increase, the schools’ tuition ranked below the average mean of peer institutions.

Pending full board approval on Friday, tuition for the School of Medicine at UAB for in-state students rises to $25,490 for the 2014-15 academic year, an increase in raw dollars of $1,390. For out-of-state students, tuition will rise from $58,590 to $60,933.

For dentistry students, in-state tuition will now range from $12,336 for first- and second-year students for the upcoming academic year to $14,175 for fourth-year students. Out-of-state tuition will range from $28,475 to $33,041.

In optometry, in-state students will pay $8,367 while out-of-state students will pay $17,825 in tuition.
GETTING TO WORK

CARLY'S LAW:
UAB RESEARCH TEAM GEARS UP, BUT HUMAN STUDIES LIKELY SIX MONTHS OUT.

What fraction out of that total, I don’t know, but would guess hundreds, perhaps thousands would have an interest,” he said.

Currently, there are 15 to 20 anti-convulsive medications that are used typically in combinations to treat epilepsy, Szafiarski said.

The treatments don’t work in about 30 percent of patients, he said.

Seizures can also be treated and stopped in some cases with brain surgery.

“UAB and Children’s did 50 such surgeries each last year to treat seizures,” Standaert said.

“The law directs us to both provide and to study this treatment,” he said. “It’s not an established therapy. It is a therapy for which there is some evidence in the medical literature that it may be helpful in seizures. There is experience in other centers that it may be helpful. And we are interested in bringing this treatment to the people in Alabama and studying its effects and learning more about the usefulness of this: How it may be used in controlling seizures; which patients it may be effective in; and what the side effects there may be in this population.”

Mike Oliver ★ moliver@al.com

A program to research and treat people with severe seizures using a marijuana-derived oil is getting underway immediately at UAB.

But it faces several regulatory hurdles before human studies can begin, Dr. David Standaert, professor and chair of the UAB Department of Neurology, said Thursday.

Approvals from the Drug Enforcement Administration and the Food and Drug Administration, among other governmental agencies, will likely take six months, Standaert said.

In signing the bill Tuesday, Gov. Robert Bentley cleared the path at the state level.

“The governor signed Carly’s Law, which allows us to establish a program for cannabidiol treatment for seizures,” Standaert said. “We have to work with the DEA and the FDA. It will take at least six months to cross all these regulatory hurdles.”

The bill named in honor of 3-year-old Carly Chandler of Birmingham, who suffers from a rare genetic disorder that causes frequent, severe seizures. Her story and her parents’ and supporters’ lobbying helped push through the bill which earlier had been seen as having no chance.

Standaert announced a trio of co-directors of the UAB Cannabidiol Program:

- Jerzy Szafiarski, director of the UAB Division of Epilepsy
- Martina Bebin, professor in the Division of Epilepsy
- Leon Dure, director of the Division of Pediatric Neurology at Children’s of Alabama hospital.

Interested?

People interested in participating in the program can call 205-975-8883 or email cbdh@uabmc.edu.

Standaert said he didn’t know how many might be interested.

There are 40,000 people in Alabama with epilepsy, he said. But many already have successful treatments for their seizures.
Blaze snuffed for ‘knowledge’

Jesse Chambers  jchambers@al.com

Sorry, Blaze. It’s the boot for you.

The UAB National Alumni Society this week has been promoting a newly designed car tag that drops mascot Blaze the Dragon in favor of the “UAB: Knowledge that will change your world” tagline used by the school since its new branding campaign began last April.

State regulations require universities to periodically redesign tags in a significant way, meaning Blaze had to be removed from the plate, according to the school.

TAG BAGGED: ALUMNI ARE PROMOTING NEW DESIGN FOR COLLEGIATE LICENSE PLATE.

Proceeds from the sale of UAB license plates support License to Learn Scholarships given each year by the UAB National Alumni Society. An annual average of more than 40 $3,000 scholarships are awarded through the program.

To learn how to order a UAB license plate, visit the National Alumni Society website at www.uab.edu/alumni.
Prestigious honor given to professor

RYAN HONORED

Cynthia Ryan, an associate professor of English at UAB, has been named the winner of the 2014 Odessa Woolfolk Community Service Award for her work in breast cancer awareness, outreach and advocacy.

Ryan will receive the award during the UAB Faculty Awards Convocation at the National Alumni Society House at 4 p.m. Wednesday.

Ryan, a breast cancer survivor, has long worked to raise awareness of the disease.

She has shared her own story of survival in her blog, Cancer Hits the Streets, and writes stories about the courage of other female survivors from around the world.

Ryan also founded Street Smart, a breast cancer awareness program that targets area homeless women in partnership with Susan G. Komen North Central Alabama.

Jesse Chambers

Jesse Chambers
jchambers@al.com

In the early 1980s, HIV/AIDS was an almost sure death sentence.

Today, it has slowly become a manageable chronic disease — thanks to the work of a noted UAB AIDS researcher.

Michael Saag, a professor of medicine and director of the UAB Center for AIDS Research, was one of three doctors from the United States to receive the Clinical Excellence Award at the National Physician of the Year Awards this week in New York.

The awards are given annually by Castle Connolly Medical Ltd. and recognize doctors and researchers who demonstrate excellence in clinical medical practice. Castle Connolly annually solicits special nominations from thousands of physicians across the country and the leadership of more than 1,000 hospitals.

Saag, who came to UAB in 1981, and his team made important discoveries in the genetic evolution of HIV. He directed the first inpatient studies of seven of the first 25 antiretroviral drugs for HIV.

He also helped start the 1917 Clinic at UAB, an HIV outpatient clinic that combines patient care with clinical trials and other research.

Saag is now publishing his first book, "Positive," which traces his life studying HIV and treating patients with AIDS.

Prominent AIDS Researcher:
Professor Bestowed National Clinical Excellence Award.
Mike Warren: UAB the biggest and best hope for Birmingham (ComebackTown)

By: David Sher

My name is Mike Warren.

I grew up in Auburn, attended schools there, and graduated from Auburn University. I received my law degree from Duke and I've joyfully lived in Birmingham ever since.

My first Birmingham job was with a major law firm and then I joined one of its largest clients, Alabama Gas. I eventually became Chairman and CEO of Energen, Alabama Gas' parent company.

When I retired from Energen at the end of 2007, I became the CEO of Children's of Alabama.

I tell you this to give you a sense of how long I've worked in our business community. I've witnessed first-hand Birmingham's wins and some of our biggest disappointments. And though I love Birmingham, I join many others who feel Birmingham has never reached its full potential.

When I first worked at Alabama Gas a little over 30 years ago, one of the real expectations of Birmingham headquartered companies—and particularly public companies and utilities—was that senior people would be significantly involved in community and civic activities. At that time Alabama Gas, Alabama Power, Bell South, Protective, Vulcan and our large regional banks were among the public companies headquartered here which formed the cadre of large businesses that were interested in and involved in most civic things.

Since then, we have watched painfully as many big companies moved away. Sonat relocated from Birmingham to the energy world in Texas. Torchmark understood that they didn't have many business ties to Birmingham and also moved to Texas. Bank mergers had a dramatic impact. Today, even Alabama Gas may be for sale. Fifteen years ago there were 30 public companies headquartered here—now there are just 13. Fifteen years ago we had six Fortune 500 companies—now there's just one—Regions.

At that time our larger businesses not only undergirded the financial support for a broad range of civic and community activities, but they also provided leadership at the top and at the mid and lower levels as well. So the volunteer and civic leaders often came from those same companies that were providing financial support.

With the loss of many of our largest companies, something of a vacuum has been created. That vacuum must be filled and I think greater involvement by our privately owned companies and by UAB is the answer.

In many ways, UAB is our 'sleeping giant.' UAB's the largest employer, not only in Birmingham, but in our State. The human capital at UAB is amazing and we need to put much more of it to work in leadership roles throughout the community and State. Historically, most of the UAB-provided leadership for community efforts has come from the President of UAB. I

See next page
think that needs to change. Now we clearly need the President to be a big player, and fortunately for us, Ray Watts can and will fill that role with relish. But the community needs more from UAB; we need to take advantage of other strong leaders in positions of influence at UAB.

UAB can be more ‘intentional’ about placing other strong UAB leaders in positions of leadership in the community; it would make us much stronger. There are many additional leaders in the UAB pipeline and Birmingham needs to use those leaders more broadly.

Just think about the brainpower at UAB—doctors, scientists, statisticians, and researchers. What would happen if we took that intellect and energy and channeled some of it to Birmingham?

UAB is the best hope for Birmingham; and, UAB stands to benefit the most from Birmingham being a great city.

I’m pleased that President Watts has added what he calls the “Fifth Pillar”—economic development to the UAB Capital Campaign. And I think he’s serious about it. Ray Watts believes it can lead to many new innovative, creative and entrepreneurial companies; I believe it can also provide Birmingham with many new leaders.

As much as I hate to say nice things about Alabama Power and its past President and CEO, Charles McCrary, (can you visualize my tongue being in my cheek?) Charles and Alabama Power know how to be intentional about economic development; they know how to get things done.

Alabama Power has strategically placed key employees in leadership roles and funded every significant economic development effort in Alabama. I think a lot of good might come from Ray sitting down with Charles to create a plan for having UAB’s brightest and best work intentionally and strategically to ignite Birmingham.

Good things are happening in Birmingham. We are feeling better about ourselves—momentum is building. Now it’s time for UAB to be purposeful in helping to transform Birmingham into a world class city.
The Tuscaloosa News
Wednesday, April 2, 2014

Tuscaloosa businessman one of two Alabama State trustee appointees rejected by senators

Montgomery, Ala. (AP) — A state Senate committee has rejected two of Gov. Robert Bentley's four appointees to the board of Alabama State University.

The Senate Confirmations Committee voted Tuesday to block Bentley's selection of Macon County school Superintendent Jacqueline Brooks and Tuscaloosa businessman Fitzgerald Washington. The committee approved Bentley's selection of Montgomery attorney Robert Gilpin and Birmingham businessman Larry Thornton. Gilpin and Thornton now go to the Senate for a final vote to approve their appointments.

The committee's rejection of Brooks and Washington means they can't serve on the board of the Montgomery university. Committee Chairman Jabo Waggoner voted against both and said they had opposition from the senator who represents ASU, Democrat Quinton Ross of Montgomery.
UAH climb 'astounding' in rankings for research and development expenditures

By: Paul Gattis

Huntsville, Alabama - The University of Alabama in Huntsville jumped in multiple national rankings for research and development expenditures, the school announced Thursday.

The rankings came from the National Science Foundation fiscal 2012 data.

"We were very pleased with the latest research expenditure rankings received from NSF. UAH has a long history of science and engineering research and working with our federal government partners," said Dr. Ray Vaughn, UAH vice president for research. "This year's rankings also recognize our strong performance in the College of Business and within our Dept. of Political Science.

"When considering the size of UAH as compared to larger universities, our performance record is quite astounding."

UAH moved up five spots to 130th nationally in federally finance higher education R&D expenditures in fiscal 2012. UAH was 91st in federally finance R&D expenditures among public institutions of higher education.

Other rankings, according to the school:

UAH rose to eighth from 13th in federally financed business and management research expenditures and advanced two positions to 17th in federally financed atmospheric sciences research.

In federally financed computer sciences research expenditures, UAH moved up one position to 13th. UAH peers include Arizona State (12th), Columbia (13th), the University of Michigan (15th) and the University of Alaska-Fairbanks (16th).

UAH retained its No. 5 ranking in federally financed aeronautical and astronautical engineering research. Johns Hopkins University, Utah State, Georgia Institute of Technology and the University of Colorado-Boulder were listed ahead of UAH. Following UAH in rank are MIT and Penn State University.

UAH ranks at No. 25 in federally financed political science research expenditures.

UAH ranked 16th nationally in research and development expenditures from the Department of Defense. UAH ranked 14th in R&D expenditures from NASA, matching its fiscal 2011 rank.

In Alabama, UAH ranked first among state universities in expenditures in the environmental sciences (including atmospheric sciences), and in math and computer sciences. In engineering research expenditures, UAH ranked second among Alabama universities with $40 million. It was third in the state in physical sciences.

See next page
UAH's $78 million total among state universities in federally-financed R&D expenditures is second only to the University of Alabama in Birmingham.

The rankings were obtained using the NSF FY12 HERD Survey Data.
GOOD TEACHER, A ‘LITTLE SCARY’

Kay Campbell
kcampbell@al.com

Sue Kirkpatrick, now retired as dean of the College of Liberal Arts at the University of Alabama in Huntsville, remembers when she was put on notice of the standards expected by Allan Spitz, then dean of students at UAH. She returned a memo to him with red marks noting some irregular use of English.

“Spitz was a stickler for correctly written English,” said Kirkpatrick as she described the formidable and brilliant professor of political science who died at 85 on Jan. 13. “He was a man who lived by his principles — he really did.”

“Dr. Spitz is a really good teacher,” one student wrote on an end-of-term evaluation. “But he can be a little scary.”

“Old school”

A retired Marine, Spitz, until his last few weeks, moved through life with the charging, vigilant energy of a Marine leader. He was focused on so much: an academic achievement as with nudging anyone he knew toward the goal of intellectually muscular, deeply researched, historically contextualized thinking.

“He subjected me to weekly meetings to review his assigned readings — all while I was obviously not his student,” remembers former UAH professor Shannon Bridgmon, who shared an office with Spitz when she came to UAH. “Still, he assigned them, and I read. He was constantly making me a better scholar and a wiser citizen and friend. He was an old school.”

Spitz respected women and men equally, but never bothered to diversify himself from some antiquated terms.

“He thought I was a ‘good brood’,” Bridgmon remembers, “and took interest in my work at the end of his illustrious career. Now we have one less great mind, and it’s a loss for student and a friend.”

“So witty”

Spitz was an exacting professor, but also witty and playful, keeping dinner parties lively with his quick remarks. He also anchored the stage of the Whole Backstage Theater in Huntsville where he took roles in both dramas and comedies. He laced his friendships together with the lines of his pen — he would often mail friend notes, clippings, musings.

He corresponded frequently, usually on some nice piece of stationery that had some meaning for him — he abhorred email,” Kirkpatrick said. “He was so witty that his notes were such fun.”

“Crazy about his students”

Because of his own broad interests, Spitz could talk to anyone — including in Japanese or Chinese if he had learned them, which he did speak those languages, which he had learned as a Fulbright Scholar in Japan and Hong Kong, said his wife, Janet Sage.

“He loved to go to travel — he was fascinated in everything,” Sage said. “And whenever we went, he would pick something to take to his students. If he knew a student was interested in a topic and he saw a book at a flea market, he would get it to take to them. In the summer he would take them fresh vegetables out of his garden. He was crazy about his students.”

Unending education is crucial

It’s a sharp loss for the department because Spitz, who retired in 2000, continued to teach one class a semester. This spring, he was scheduled to teach literature and politics, a class he developed as a Capstone seminar for graduating political science majors.

John Portenger, director of UAH’s Office of International Programs and a political science professor, is covering the class, which he said is revered by students as a way to explore the theoretical and practical elements of political science.

Spitz was the featured speaker for last year’s Honors Day Convocation at UAH. This year’s Honors Convocation on Tuesday, April 1, at 9 a.m. in Chan Auditorium, will include a tribute to him.

But his own address from 2013 might be his most fitting tribute.

Last year Spitz warned students to guard against the fallacy that acquiring an education is merely a means to acquiring money.

“Thinking seriously endangers those who do it,” Spitz said during his address. “They may, unexpectedly, learn something truly important, and they will be compelled to live with it. Liberal education does not make for comfort; it does not promote success in public life; it may not even make one happy.”

You have to read some terrible, tragic stories,” Spitz once told former student Paula Colburn Martin as she gave her a small bag filled with several books by Alexander Solzhenitsyn.

Spitz was convinced to his marrow that unending education is a safeguard to democracy.

“Liberal education enables the kind of discrimination acceptable within the democratic order,” Spitz said during his 2013 address. “It enables us to separate vanity from nobility, character from appearance, and good taste from recklessness.”

Kay Campbell welcomes your suggestions for Life Stories about people from north Alabama. Do you know someone recently deceased, who lived an extraordinary life? Please contact her at kcampbell@al.com or 256-502-4320.
USA launches campaign to fund scholarships

Sally Pearsall Ericson
sereicson@al.com

The University of South Alabama's campaign to fund the Mitchell-Moulton Scholarships has already raised $2.76 million in gifts and pledges, which will be matched, dollar-for-dollar, by donor Abraham Mitchell.

Joseph F. Busta Jr., the university's vice president for development and alumni relations, gave the USA Board of Trustees an update at its March meeting. There are 591 gifts and pledges from 532 donors, he said, and of those, 119 are first-time givers to the university.

The scholarship initiative has a strong appeal, Busta said Friday. "This program is attracting and motivating people to give to us who haven't done so in the past... People like helping students; they realize the value of a college education, and they realize that there are many students who have financial problems that hinder their ability to get a degree."

Donors also want to reward students who excel, he said.

The Mitchell-Moulton Scholarships were created from Abraham Mitchell's commitment of $50 million to the university, announced at USA's 50th anniversary celebration in May. The scholarships are named in honor of Mitchell and of the late USA President Emeritus Gordon Moulton.

Of the $50 million gift, half will go to the Mitchell College of Business; the remaining $25 million is a matching gift challenge. So far, the initiative has created 55 new scholarships and enhanced 123 existing scholarships.

The academic scholarships of up to $12,000 a year for tuition are available for incoming freshmen at USA. Each high school student who meets ACT and GPA requirements will receive an annual renewable scholarship of between $2,500 and $11,000.

For more information, or to donate online, visit the Mitchell-Moulton Scholarship website at www.southalabama.edu/development/mmsl.htm.
Judge dismisses Alabama A&M official's lawsuit alleging conspiracy

Paul Gattis
pgattis@al.com

A federal lawsuit filed by Kevin Rolle, chief operating officer at Alabama A&M University, against five people he said spread false information about him, has been dismissed.

The case, which named two university trustees and a former university administrator as defendants, was thrown out last week by U.S. District Judge Lynwood Smith.

Rolle filed the six-count lawsuit against trustees James Montgomery and Tom Bell, former Alabama A&M Vice President Dorothy Houston, former Alabama A&M Research Institute compliance officer Kevin Matthews and Alabama A&M alum Tony Smith.

Montgomery was dismissed as a defendant last year by the judge. Bell, Houston, Matthews and Smith have now been dismissed as defendants.

Rolle filed the suit in 2012, claiming the five defendants acted in a conspiracy to spread malicious information about his 2006 guilty plea on a U.S. military base.

According to the lawsuit, Rolle was charged with and pleaded guilty to "less than safe driving — alcohol use" on a military base in Georgia on Dec. 12, 2008. But a clerical error reflected that Rolle was convicted of driving under the influence of marijuana.

Rolle maintained the defendants attempted to spread the information in an effort to have him fired at Alabama A&M.
TEARING DOWN JETER?

Martin J. Reed  mreed@al.com

The University of Montevallo's historic Jeter Hall, built in 1915, might soon be facing the wrecking ball.
The school is considering decommissioning the building and then possibly using the site for a new hotel.

UNIVERSITY OF MONTEVALLO: HISTORIC HALL SITE CONSIDERED FOR POSSIBLE HOTEL.

DeAnna Smith, the university's vice president of business affairs, said recent discussions include possible removal of the structure near the corner of Boundary and Highland streets in the city's downtown area.

One proposal is to "take down the building this summer so we have an empty, clean site" that could serve as a location for a hotel, Smith said at the Montevallo Development Cooperative District meeting this week.

In an email after the meeting, Smith said "informal feedback from multiple architects have indicated that it is likely cost-prohibitive to repurpose the building, particularly given the poor condition of the building."

Push for a hotel

The proposal to tear down Jeter Hall is to make the site more appealing to potential hotel operators. The district is planning to distribute a request for proposal concerning a hotel development in the coming weeks following a major lodging conference in Atlanta this month.

The closest commercial hotels to Montevallo are along Interstate 65, upward of 15 minutes or more from the city.

A hotel feasibility study received by the city and district indicated the Montevallo area could support a 70-room hotel thanks to a thriving university and nearby amenities including the Alabama National Cemetery and American Village.

"The Jeter site remains the primary site under consideration for the potential hotel," said district Chairwoman Dee Woodham, a Montevallo City Council member.

Smith said the Jeter building was vacated following the opening of the University of Montevallo on Main building last August.

Built in 1915

The Jeter building, which has 1915 engraved in large letters in its foundation, first served as an elementary school. The university obtained the building in 1965, when the structure was in danger of being removed, according to the university's website.

"The building is named for its designer, Maurice P. Jeter Sr., who had served as chairman of the Montevallo School Board and who had drawn up the plans for the structure because there was no money for an architect's fee," according to the website.

The university's board of trustees could consider the proposal at its May meeting. If the board approves the action, the building's history and significance would be memorialized in the new development, Smith said.

The district's request for proposal could be available by the end of April with responses arriving in May or June.
Tackling concussions: Former UAB football player and his family try to wise up Alabama

By: Jon Solomon

BIRMINGHAM, Alabama -- Kevin Drake and his wife Kimberly notice changes to his short-term memory. They're little things right now, such as forgetting why he walks into a room and regularly not remembering conversations.

To combat memory issues that increased in the past two years, Kevin constantly jots down notes in a notebook to stay on task. That's on top of daily headaches and sleep issues that might result in only two hours of sleep a day.

Kevin Drake is 39 years old. He's a former UAB quarterback/wide receiver who went to NFL Europe and had a cup of coffee in the NFL as a special teams player. Now he's on the brink of that range of 40- to 49-year-old former football players who are more susceptible to showing symptoms of longterm health issues due to football.

"Yes, I'm worried about the longterm. After watching (the documentary) 'Head Games' I'm like, great, I'm married to this," Kimberly says with some nervous laughter. "I tell (Sports Legacy Institute co-founder) Chris Nowinski, 'If this ever gets to a very bad point, I'm sending him to Boston and I'll come visit.'"

The Drakes are just one story in a football world littered with these stories. What's unique about them is their family story has turned into a push for better concussion education and research in Alabama through Wise Up!, an initiative started through a foundation created by Kimbery's parents, Al and Sharyne Wallace.

Created within the past year, Wise Up! has teamed with the Alabama Sports Concussion Task Force and UAB Sports Medicine. The organization plans to hold a June 13 seminar with the hope youth coaches can attend and be certified in concussion education. Panelists will include former college football and women's soccer players, current high school coaches and medical officials as they discuss recognizing and treating concussions better.

"Because football is a religion down here, especially in the state of Alabama, you turn your back to a lot of things because football is so important," says Kevin, who played the game for 22 years since the age of 5. "It becomes down here, 'I don't want there to be an issue with football.' You're fighting old-school methods, old-school techniques. Up in the Northeast and out in the West and Northwest, there's a lot more being done."

Kevin, who owns Drake Fitness in Birmingham, could have joined lawsuits against the NFL over concussions. He estimates he suffered at least 10 concussions, not all in football, including three he can't remember. He elected not to sue because he believes other players have it worse and he knew football was dangerous.

See next page
"I was one of those guys who went to the trainer and asked for smelling salts and went to the other end of the sideline until I came to a little bit and avoided those guys so nobody put me out of the game," Kevin says. "The old saying: You can't make the club in the tub."

Kevin doesn't see much hope in current football players changing that mentality. So Wise Up! is focusing on youth players and changing the culture moving forward.

The Drake and Wallace families spent almost a year studying information from the Sports Legacy Institute, which is considered one of the leaders in the growing concussion industry. They have attended conferences across the country and taken continuing education accredited courses related to concussions.

Tucked away next to Drake Fitness on Cahaba River Road is a small suite that houses the Al and Sharyne Wallace Family Foundation. It was created after Al suffered a head injury upon falling down. Sharyne and Al put retirement money into the foundation, which had $500,000 in revenue at the end of 2012, according to the organization's nonprofit tax form.

"We want to take what (the Sports Legacy Institute) is doing because they don't have the man force and go out and speak," Kevin says.

Adds Sharyne: "We’re boots on the ground. We don't want to attack. We just want to inform and enlist people and engage and educate."

But there's frustration in their voices. When Sharyne first started doing research, she found that typing "concussion" on Google would immediately list pages with the NFL's positions on the issue. The NFL has been accused of ignoring concussion research through the years.

"That's scary that they rule Google on concussion," Sharyne says. "It's changed over the last year and a half."

Kevin supports the NFL's Heads Up Initiative to improve tackling techniques, but believes it's not a cure. The NFL is "trying to appease society in the football world," he says. "They're scared to death youth football has taken the big hit (in participation) that it's taken because that's their future. Having seminars with moms is a PR stunt. Go out and educate the people who need to be educated."

Kevin recently participated in a brain study in Boston that includes about 100 former players. According to Kevin, the yet-to-be-completed study is trying to find tau protein in living people. Repetitive head trauma can cause the build-up of tau into what doctors call chronic traumatic encephalopathy (CTE), which is a degenerative brain disease.

"One hundred players is not enough," Kevin says of the study. "That's not enough data to make definitive, factual statements."
Sharyne wants studies for women's athletes, too. She's frustrated that none of the 100 former football players in Kevin's study played football in the SEC.

"I think they could participate and offer to be part of these studies with these former players," Sharyne says. "I don't know if it's fear, I don't know if it's ignorance. We have great med schools in the Southeast. Let's get the research going at those schools. We're about 30 years behind the research, but we could catch up quickly. That 40- to 49-year-old bracket is where a lot of former players have problems. But in five years we might have something."

Kevin's clock into that age bracket is ticking. He says he doesn't worry about his longterm health, but senses some changes. No one knows how far and how quickly the changes will or will not go. Medication helps him manage the symptoms now.

"Obviously you can't reverse it," he says. "It's a sign. There are a lot of guys who had the same issues, but to a much more dramatic extent."

In the meantime, one family plans to educate, prod and attempt to wise up Alabama about concussions.

"The Southeast is so underdeveloped in all of this," Kimberly says. "We're one small family organization trying to attack big things, but we have big goals and ambitions."
College athlete union raises questions

The Associated Press

CHICAGO | Vince Dooley is relieved he's not running an athletic program these days.
Not after a decision allowing Northwestern football players to unionize, and what that might mean for all college sports.

"If this ever happens," said Dooley, now retired after four decades as Georgia's football coach and athletic director, "the issues would be unlimited. What might happen from school to school, from day to day, from year to year, I don't know. I'm just glad I've served my time."

Around the country Thursday, coaches and administrators pondered the potential ramifications of the stunning decision by the National Labor Relations Board, which ruled the Northwestern football team — up to now, referred to by the NCAA as student-athletes — are actually university employees in everything but name. Therefore, they should be able to bargain collectively for their fair share of an industry worth billions.

That set off speculation over what might happen if the ruling holds up on appeal:

■ Would the big-revenue sports have unions, but others be left to fend for themselves?

■ Would private school athletes get to negotiate over issues such as compensation and health insurance, while their public school counterparts are denied a spot at the bargaining table?

■ Would high-profile programs such as Notre Dame and Alabama be better positioned financially to share a piece of the pie with athletes, leading to an even wider gap between the haves and have-nots?

"I just don't think you can come up with any kind of formula that's going to be equitable and fair to all," said John Chaney, who coached men's basketball at Temple for a quarter-century and was never shy about expressing his views on the ills plaguing college athletics.

The NCAA and its conferences came out in unison against the ruling — not surprising, given their enterprise has contracts worth nearly $18 billion just for the television rights to the NCAA men's basketball tournament and football bowl games.

"We've got something very special in this country that's unique in the world that combines athletic competition with higher education," Atlantic Coast Conference commissioner John Sw�fford said. "When it's done right, it's a beautiful thing."

But some wondered if the NCAA brought this all on itself by dragging its feet on concerns that have been lurking for years, everything from stipends to at least close the gap between what a scholar- ship pays and the actual cost of going to school, to covering the cost of health insurance for athletes who may still be feeling the aches and pains of the playing field long after they leave campus.

In a sense, it's what happened to baseball in the late 1960s and early '70s, when owners desperately clung to the arcane reserve clause, which prevented players from changing teams when their contracts expired. When the reserve clause was overturned in 1975, it led to free agency, exploding salaries and years of strike between players and owners.

"Maybe the leadership at the NCAA has not been as aggressive in trying to come up with solutions as it should have been," said Pete Boone, the former athletic director at Ole Miss.

The decision — which covers only private schools — sets up a potentially tangled web of legal conundrums and inequities across college athletics. For instance, some states have laws that would make it next to impossible or even illegal for athletes at public universities to unionize. Legal observers can foresee a day when the NCAA is split between schools that are unionized and those that are not.

Federal law can only apply to private schools, which means Northwestern stands alone in the Big Ten. State law would apply to public schools, and those laws can vary dramatically. In Wisconsin, for instance, public-sector unions are prohibited from collective bargaining over multiple issues, including health coverage. In states that encompass most of the Southeastern Conference schools, union rules are even more restrictive.

Schools without unions could have a financial advantage. But recruiters might prefer to go to unionized schools where they would benefit financially.

"Athletes at union schools might have better conditions, working fewer hours," said Joseph Parrish, a New York labor lawyer. "They might have negotiated a $5,000 stipend, Is that going to be more attractive to a recruit? Of course it is."

That would run counter to the NCAA's core philosophy: universal rules for all schools. Which is why, Boone and others said, the governing body must take steps to deal with a movement that, for now, is primarily focused on coverage of sports-related medical expenses for current and former players, reducing head injuries and potentially letting players pursue commercial sponsorships.

"I don't think the NCAA could allow some schools to have one set of rules that might hurt them in recruiting," Boone said. "It's got to be the same for every school, regardless of whether they have a union or not."

But even within Division I, the NCAA's top level, enormous inequities exist between member institutions. Schools in the so-called power conferences, such as the SEC and Big Ten, generate far more revenue. Those leagues wield huge influence over governance and many have set up their own television networks.
Rural states try to cut Mass. lead in research funding

By Tracy Jan THE BOSTON GLOBE

WASHINGTON — Two dozen rural states stretching from Maine to Mississippi and Montana are clamoring to increase their share of federal research dollars now disproportionately awarded to Boston-area institutions and scientists.

The effort, coupled with other National Institutes of Health initiatives, could mean less federal money would go to research powerhouses like Massachusetts, New York, and California. Some Bay State researchers fear it threatens Boston's dominance and could diminish chances for national scientific breakthroughs.

In a long-established trend, the Boston region's hospitals, universities, and research institutions received more than $1.77 billion in NIH grants in 2013, or 8 percent of the agency's total awards — more money than any other metropolitan area in the country. It pays for research into everything from potential cancer cures to creating advanced prosthetic limbs.

"It's hard to compete against MIT or Harvard. ... They've had their share. A lot of state colleges and universities all over the country, from Idaho to Maine, have some ideas too, and I think we should give these people from smaller schools in other states an opportunity," said Senator Richard Shelby of Alabama, the top Republican on the powerful Senate Appropriations Committee. "It's time to fix that."

Shelby is among many members of Congress advocating for the federal government to increase the amount of money set aside in a special program for researchers in 23 largely rural states that traditionally have had a difficult time competing for NIH grants. Backers of increasing the money in that program want to expand the number of states that benefit from it, as well as boost the amount of money by up to 14 percent.

"There's a battle between merit and egalitarianism," said Dr. David Page, director of the Whitehead Institute, a prestigious research institution in Cambridge affiliated with MIT. "If the table is tilted, we know the table is going to be tilted away from us. It's straight out of Robin Hood."

The battle is spilling from the halls of academia into the Capitol, where the lobbying fight is heating up.

The coalition of states that benefits from the NIH special program for rural states doubled the amount of money it spent on lobbying in the last decade, to $590,000 in 2013 from $300,000 in 2003. That number does not include direct lobbying by universities in those states.

During a March meeting, university professors and administrators in the coalition fanned out on Capitol Hill to seek support from their respective congressional delegations.

See next page
"Is it the right thing to leave half the nation behind in the biomedical research enterprise?" asked Carolyn Hovde Bohach, a microbiologist at the University of Idaho and president of a national association representing researchers in the rural states.

In one of the efforts, Sen. Susan Collins, a Maine Republican on the Appropriations Committee, is proposing that funding for the special program to benefit rural states, formally called the NIH's Institutional Development Award, be raised to $310 million, up from the current $273 million. The current amount equals just 1 percent of the institute's research grants — a drop in the bucket compared with what Boston researchers win each year.

"I certainly understand that research centers like Boston are going to naturally attract a great deal of investment from the NIH," Collins said. "Nevertheless, we need to remember that innovation can spring forth from the smaller research labs that traditionally have not had a lot of support from the federal government."

Collins acknowledged that the coalition faces an uphill battle as lawmakers confront pressures from colleagues representing large states to scale back the special program in order to preserve the core NIH awards.

The regional fights are layered atop another effort to help the little guys. In a new threat to big labs, such as those in Boston, the NIH is increasing scrutiny of researchers who have won more than $1 million in grants. That move could eventually lead the federal government to strip money away from the big winners and send it to upstarts.

Under the new guidelines, well-funded researchers will undergo a special review to determine whether they qualify for additional support. An estimated 559 researchers in Massachusetts would be subject to the additional scrutiny, accounting for about 12 percent of researchers nationwide who receive grants of more than $1 million, according to a Globe analysis of NIH data.

U.S. Rep. Michael Capuano, whose district encompassing the Boston-area research hospitals wins more NIH money than any other congressional district, said the Massachusetts delegation is playing defense right now.

"The system works reasonably well, but it's under attack in a serious way," Capuano said.

Massachusets is mobilizing. Hospital executives, university presidents, and Washington lobbyists make routine trips to the Capitol. Their not-so-subtle message: Boston is on top because its elite institutions offer the best chances of big scientific breakthroughs.

"There are people in Boston who deserve more than a million dollars in NIH money because that is the best use of those dollars," said Dr. Barrett Rollins, chief scientific officer at Dana-Farber Cancer Institute, a top recipient of federal research funds. "Congress has a responsibility to spend taxpayer money in the best possible way, and to me, the most straightforward way to do that is to

See next page
make sure the dollars are invested in the most meritorious work without regard to geographic
distribution."

Because the quality of science is not evenly distributed across the country, researchers should not
expect federal dollars to be either, said Harry Orf, senior vice president for research at
Massachusetts General Hospital, another top recipient of NIH grants.

"You have congressmen who can't evaluate science sending money to places not rated for
innovation," Orf said. "As funds get more and more scarce, you want to make sure you're betting
on the best science."

Sally Rockey, deputy director for extramural research at the NIH, said the idea of putting a
"chicken in every pot" is one of the most fundamental issues facing the agency at a time of
budget constraints. The NIH has floated several scenarios to more broadly distribute the pot of
award money, such as limiting the number of applications an institution or individual researcher
can submit, but thus far has only decided to impose extra scrutiny on those receiving more than
$1 million in grants.

"You can't distribute it evenly if you're a meritocracy," said Rockey, adding that she sees the
special funding targeting the 23 states as a compromise to boost those that are not as successful.

Massachusetts Sen. Elizabeth Warren, a Democrat who is exploring options for additional
legislation to increase federal research funding, said the battle between the haves and have nots is
a consequence of "squeezing the NIH too hard."

"It shouldn't be a part of the conversation, this idea of pitting two groups against each other,"
Warren said. "Our focus should be on increasing the investment in scientific research, not on
how best to divide up a shrinking pot."

But Warren's wish is a tough sell in the current partisan environment, when a gridlocked
Congress — particularly a spending-averse House — is not on track to boost NIH funding in any
significant way.

Lawmakers who support spreading the wealth argue that they are just trying to level the playing
field, and that the research dollars going to the 23 states are awarded on a peer-reviewed, merit
basis similar to the way traditional NIH grants are awarded — but with less competition.

"The program stipulates that not everything goes to Harvard, Yale, and Stanford," said Sen. Jay
Rockefeller, a West Virginia Democrat.

Rep. Tom Cole, a Republican from Oklahoma who serves on the House Appropriations
Committee, said he's simply interested in supporting research that occurs "outside the normal
corridors of power."

See next page
"There is a network where you tend to reward peers and people you know, and I think the distribution of funds, not intentionally, is skewed a bit toward places like Boston," Cole said. "We just want to make sure that the playing field is fair."
Student loan debt widens wealth gap

Youths with $1 trillion in debt may never catch up with peers

By Carolyn Thompson
The Associated Press

Every month that Gregory Zbylut pays $1,300 toward his law school loans is another month of not qualifying for a decent mortgage.

Every payment toward their student loans is $900 Dr. Nida Degeorgis and her husband aren't putting into their retirement savings account.

They believe they'll eventually climb from debt and begin using their earnings to build assets rather than fill holes. But, like the roughly 37 million others in the U.S. saddled with $1 trillion in student debt, they may never catch up with wealthy peers who began life after college free from the burden.

The disparity, experts say, is contributing to the widening of the gap between the rich and everyone else in the country.

"If you graduate with a B.A. or doctorate and you get the same job at the same place, you make the same amount of money," said William Elliott III, director of the Assets and Education Initiative at the University of Kansas. "But that money will actually mean less to you in the sense of accumulating assets in the long term."

Graduates who can immediately

See next page
DEBT

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1A

begin building equity in housing or stocks and bonds get more time to see their investments grow, while indebted graduates spend years paying principal and interest on loans. The standard student loan repayment schedule is 10 years but can be much longer.

The median 2009 net worth for a household without outstanding student debt was $117,700, nearly three times the $42,800 worth in a household with outstanding student debt, according to a report co-written by Elliott last November.

About 40 percent of households led by someone 35 or younger have student loan debt, a 2012 Pew Research Center analysis of government data found.

Allen Aston is one of the lucky ones, having landed a full academic and financial-need scholarship at Ohio State University. The 22-year-old software engineer from Columbus estimates it let him avoid about $100,000 in debt.

Without loans to repay, Aston is already contributing 6 percent of his salary to a retirement fund that is matched in part by his employer and doesn't have the same financial concerns his friends do.

At the other end of the spectrum is Zbylut, an accountants-turned-attorney in Glendale, Calif. He's been chipping away at nearly $160,000 in student debt since graduating in 2005 from law school at Loyola University in Chicago. Now 48, the tax attorney estimates he could have $150,000 to $200,000 in a 401(k) had the money he's paid toward loans gone there.

"I'm sitting here in traffic. I've got a Mercedes behind me and an Audi in front of me and I'm thinking, 'What did they do that I didn't do?"" Zbylut said by cellphone from his Chevrolet. He's been turned down twice for the type of mortgage he needs to buy a home big enough for himself, the fiancee he would have married already if not for his debts and her 10-year-old son.

"I have more education and more degrees than my father; as does she than her parents, and yet our parents are better off than we are. What's wrong with this picture?" he said.

Student debt is the only kind of household debt that rose through the Great Recession and now totals more than either credit card or auto loan debt, according to the Federal Reserve Bank of New York. Both the number of borrowers and amount borrowed ballooned by 70 percent from 2004 to 2012.

"Of the nearly 20 million Americans who attend college each year, about 12 million borrow, according to the Almanac of Higher Education. Estimates show that the average four-year graduate accumulates $26,000 to $39,000 in loans, and some leave college with six figures worth of debt.

The increases have been driven in part by rising tuition, resulting from reduced state funding and costlier campus facilities and amenities. Compounding the problem has been a trend toward merit-based, rather than need-based, grants as institutions seek to attract the higher-achieving students who will boost their standings.

"Because there's a strong correlation in this country between things like SAT scores or ACT scores and wealth or income, the (grant) money ends up going disproportionately to students from wealthier families" who tend to perform better on those tests, said Donald Heller, dean of the Michigan State University College of Education.

Those factors, along with stagnating family incomes and declining savings, have made student loans a much bigger part of funding higher education, Elliott said.

Harvard Business School's Michael Norton wonders whether greater public awareness of the widening wealth gap in the United States would hasten policy change. Norton conducted a 2011 survey that found that people tend to think wealth is more equally distributed than it is.

But with elected officials from President Barack Obama on down now talking about the wealth gap as an urgent public problem, a more complete picture seems to be emerging, he said.

"Both parties are now saying, perhaps inequality has gotten to the point where it's not fair when people don't have a chance to rise, and we need to do something about it," Norton said.

Targeting the soaring cost of higher education, Obama in August proposed the most sweeping changes to the federal student aid program in decades. His plan would link federal money to new college ratings and reward schools if they help low-income students, keep costs low and have large numbers of students earn degrees.

Nida Degesys, AMSA's president, graduated in May 2013 from Northeast Ohio Medical University with about $180,000 in loans. The amount has already swelled with interest to about $220,000.

Yet, as costly as medical school was, Degesys sees it as an investment in herself and her career, one she thinks will pay off with a higher earning potential.

College degrees can pay off. College graduates ages 25 to 32 working full time earn $45,500, about $17,500 more than their peers with just a high school diploma, according to a Pew Research Center analysis of census data.