ARTICLES OF INTEREST
APRIL 4, 2014 – APRIL 10, 2014

FOR SPECIFIC NEWS STORIES, SEE THE FOLLOWING PAGE NUMBERS:

NEWS ABOUT

TRUSTEE/SYSTEM INFO 2
STATE ISSUES 4
UA CAMPUS ISSUES 14
UAB CAMPUS ISSUES 21
UAH CAMPUS ISSUES 22
OTHER STATE UNIVERSITIES 33
SPORTS 35
UA trustees OK major bond issue

Money to be used for capital projects, debt refinancing

By Ed Enoch
Staff Writer

HUNTSVILLE | The board of trustees for the University of Alabama on Friday approved issuing $236 million in bonds for debt refinancing and capital projects as well as resolutions to begin $80 million in new construction and renovations on the Bryce Hospital campus.

The resolutions were approved during the board's regular meeting at the University of Alabama in Huntsville.

About $145 million of the revenue bonds would be for capital projects, including the renovation and expansion of Sewell-Thomas Baseball Stadium, the Houser Hall renovation, construction of a new classroom building on the Bryce Hospital grounds, and the modernization of the campus' information technology infrastructure, according to the trustees' meeting packet.

About $88 million would be used to refinance existing bond debt to take advantage of interest rates. The university estimated the refinancing would save approximately $3.77 million.

The board approved resolutions to set preliminary budgets and begin planning for a $60 million, 109,017-square-foot performing arts center on the Bryce Hospital grounds and a $20 million renovation of the hospital's admissions building for use by the department of theater and dance.

See next page
UA

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1A

The proposed arts center, which will include theaters and support spaces and would be connected to the historic main hospital building, would be paid for with $30 million from future revenue bonds and the rest from UA funds and gifts. The renovation of the admissions building, including a 26,286-square-foot addition to the structure, would be funded with revenue from the bonds approved Friday.

The board also approved a resolution increasing the budget of the student center being constructed at the Presidential Village on the north side of campus from about $31 million to $32.5 million to accommodate construction of an additional food service location inside.

The trustees also authorized UA to negotiate an agreement for architectural services for the planned $31 million new academic building on the Bryce grounds with Turner Batson Architects of Birmingham.

The trustees approved increasing the budget for the renovation of Sewell-Thomas Baseball Stadium by $5 million to $35 million to reflect revised construction cost estimates and awarding contracts with the eventual low bidder for the work.

Trustees also approved a tuition increase of 4 percent in 2014-15 for students of the system’s schools of medicine, dentistry and optometry. The increase will help cover operating cost increases, according to memos in the board packet.

The board approved plans to establish the University of Alabama Cyber Institute, a research center that will focus on ongoing efforts at UA on cyber security-related issues and will serve as an umbrella organization for other efforts. The center will work with other institutions in the UA system and other academic, government and private institutions.

Interim Provost Joe Benson said cyber crime and cyber security are growing concerns for society, noting challenges including releases of personal information, credit card theft and cyberbullying.

"These threats are enduring, and as long as our society is dependent on cyber technology, these threats are going to evolve," Benson said.
Governor has until April 13 to sign budget

Bentley could call special session to readdress teacher raises

By Kim Chandler
The Associated Press

MONTGOMERY | Gov. Robert Bentley hasn't decided if he will sign the state's Education Trust Fund budget without the teacher raise he sought or if he will veto it and force lawmakers into a special session.

"The governor is reviewing the ETF, and there is no time frame on when he will make a decision," Bentley communications director Jennifer Ardis said Friday.

Bentley has until the end of the day on April 13 to sign the budget into law or it will die through a pocket veto.

A top legislative Democrat said a special session would show Bentley was serious about the raise, while some veteran Republicans said they doubted Bentley would call them back to Montgomery.

"I hope he's not going to call a special session. I would certainly not think that would be the case," Speaker of the House Mike Hubbard, R-Auburn, said Thursday night.

Republicans approved a budget that puts more money into health insurance after saying the state did not have money to pay for both a raise and insurance costs.

The Republican governor urged legislators Thursday to approve the education budget and state employee bonuses in time for him to attach executive amendments seeking a 2 percent raise for K-12 education employees.

The GOP-controlled Legislature did the opposite: Lawmakers gave final approval to the budget and then left town for the year, leaving Bentley no time to offer an amendment.

SEE BUDGET | 6A
BUDGET
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1A

Republican Sen. Cam Ward, who also sought the 2 percent teacher raise, said he doubted Bentley would call them into special session.

"I wanted the 2 percent pay raise. I pushed for it. I advocated for it, but I lost," said Ward, R-Brantley.

Ward said he wasn't sure a special session would yield a different result.

House Minority Leader Craig Ford, D-Gadsden, said Bentley's push for a raise was only "election-year politics" if he doesn't call a special session.

"I want him to step up and be the governor and back up what he said. The ball is in his court. All he has to do is veto the budget and we can be in next Monday," Ford said.

A five-day special session would cost about $100,000, according to an estimate from the clerk of the House of Representatives.

The Republican legislative leaders accused Bentley of breaking an agreement reached more than a week ago to fund insurance over a raise. Bentley disputed there was an agreement.

It would have taken 53 votes in the House of Representatives to override a gubernatorial veto. The House on Thursday approved a conference committee report on the budget by a 54-45 vote. However, an override, which could be viewed as a vote on a raise, could be seen as a politically riskier vote.

Bentley and GOP legislative leaders disagreed all session long over how much the state could spend in the Education Trust Fund. Bentley's proposed budget rerouted $92 million to get around an Education Trust Fund spending cap that he signed into law in 2011. The governor said the cap was artificially low and that his proposed budget was still responsible.

"We have the money. Our budget showed that. We believe that's what we should do to reward our teachers and support personnel," Bentley said of the raise.

Legislators' spending plan also skirted the cap, but by a lesser amount.

Senate President Pro Tem Del Marsh, R-Anniston, said that a 2 percent raise would have cost $80 million the state doesn't have. "It would have been fiscally irresponsible to pass it with a 2 percent raise," Marsh said.
Pro-union workers air complaints

Mercedes-Benz employees say company curbed their right to promote UAW

By Patrick Rupinski
Business Editor

BIRMINGHAM | Three workers at Mercedes-Benz U.S. International testified Monday before a National Labor Relations Board judge that the company violated their rights by preventing them from freely talking to co-workers about forming a union.

But lawyers for Mercedes elicited testimony, which they said shows the company voluntarily gave pro-union employees unprecedented opportunities to talk to workers on company property about joining the United Auto Workers. They say the only restrictions placed on the employees' conversations were done to assure safety and maintain timely and quality production on the assembly line.

At issue is whether the company can restrict discussions about unions in assembly production areas — or more precisely the assembly plant's team centers. The team centers are partially closed-off areas with tables, microwaves, refrigerators, desks and computers. Production employees gather at them before starting their shifts so team leaders can brief them about production issues and other company information. It also is a place where workers can take breaks and eat lunch.

This week's case is playing out in a tiny windowless courtroom at the NLRB office on Birmingham's Southside, where the unfair labor practices complaint is being tried before an NLRB administrative law judge.

Two lawyers from the NLRB and a co-counsel from the UAW are trying to convince the judge that the workers' rights to unionize were violated. Mercedes attorneys are

See Union | 6B
ARGUING OTHERWISE.

The Mercedes case has gained added attention because it involves the UAW’s avowed push to unionize the auto industry in the Southeast. The UAW suffered a major defeat earlier this year when workers at the Volkswagen plant in Chattanooga, Tenn., voted against joining the union. Volkswagen had given the union unprecedented access to the plant, including an office at the plant for union organizers. Volkswagen workers who opposed the UAW said they were denied equal access. The UAW is appealing the results of that election.

Meanwhile, the UAW spotlight has moved to Mercedes in Vance, where two previous campaigns to unionize failed. The first was from 1999-2002, and the second was in 2007. This time, however, the UAW is making an even bigger push with help from IG Metall, the giant industrial union in Mercedes’ home country of Germany.

The latest organizing effort at Mercedes started almost two years ago. During the campaign, the UAW got Daimler AG, Mercedes’ parent company, to sign a neutrality agreement.

In August, officials at the MBUSI plant agreed to let both employees who favor a union and those who are opposed to distribute literature and talk to co-workers at the gates workers used to enter the plant, the central atrium inside the plant, the employee cafeteria and at assembly plant’s team centers when the assembly line production is not operating.

Michael Kurt Garner of Duncanville, the lead plaintiff in the case, testified the company’s restrictions at the team centers violated his free speech.

Pro-union employees filed an unfair labor practices suit with the NLRB last year. The federal agency dismissed most of the allegations but found merit in those involving restrictions on unionizing in the team centers, which is why NLRB attorneys are presenting the case before the administrative law judge.

Garner, a 14-year Mercedes employee, testified that Mercedes allows employees to talk about other topics while they are working on the assembly line. He said the company also allows employees to solicit coworkers in the team centers before
they start their shift.

On the assembly line, "we talk
about football, sports, current
events, any general topic," he said,
but he said they cannot talk about a
union during production.

In the team centers, similar conver-
sations occur as
workers gather be-
fore their shifts
start, he said. Em-
ployees also post
thank-you cards on
the bulletin board
and solicit co-work-
ers. That, he said,
occurring while the as-
sembly line is run-
ning nearby.

"One girl sold
cookie dough. One
girl sold raffle tick-
ets for a shotgun,
and another sold raf-
tles for tires," he said. "Another girl
was selling candy for her son."

But pro-union employees cannot
distribute literature in the team cen-
ters except when the assembly line
is down.

Pro-union worker Jeremy Wade
Kimbell of Northport said his team
leader wouldn't let him talk about the
union during one of the periods
when the assembly line was down
— right before the start of the 9:39
p.m. Sunday shift.

On cross-examination by Mer-
cedes attorney Marcel DeBurge, it
came out that the team leader told
Kimbell to sit down after he got up and
called a Mercedes
executive a liar.

Kimbell was upset about a letter he
and other workers
received from
Archie Craft, MBU-
SI's vice president
for human resources.
The letter said
MBUSI was neutral
on the union issue
but that it encour-
egaged employees to
get all the facts and
told them if they
signed a card to join
the UAW, that card was valid for a
year and they could not revoke it.

Kimbell said he disagreed with
the revocation claim and other is-
suess. But on cross-examination, it
came out that he stood up in a team
center, waved Craft's letter and a
union authorization card and re-
ferred to Craft as "Uncle Archie," an
action that DeBurge characterized
as disrespectful toward a boss.

DeBurge said it was that outburst
that prompted the team leader to tell
Kimbell to sit down so he could
start the daily update, which is when
the workers' payday begins.

Kimbell and the others who testi-
fied admitted that no workers to
their knowledge were fired, de-
mented, transferred, had their pay cut
or were reprimanded because of pro-
union activity.

- And Monday evening after the
first day of testimony, Mercedes at-
torney Matthew Everitt told report-
ers:

"MBUSI is committed to being
neutral on the union topic. In fact,
we've worked with our team mem-
bers to adjust policies at the plant to
ensure we stick to neutrality.

"For example, last year, at the re-
quest of some team members, MBUSI
changed a long-standing
policy on distributing non-work re-
lated materials."

The NLRB hearing continues to-
day. The administrative law judge is
not expected to release his decision
until later. Typically, such decisions
come out about a month after the
hearing. Once the decision is re-
leased, either side can appeal to the
full National Labor Relations Board
in Washington, D.C.
UAW case ends second day

Testimony reveals activity in effort to unionize Mercedes

By Patrick Rupinski
Business Editor

BIRMINGHAM | A union organizer for the United Auto Workers testified under oath Tuesday that she instructed Mercedes-Benz workers interested in forming a union not to make promises to co-workers to get them to sign union authorization cards.

Susan Reed, who is leading the UAW's organizing effort at Mercedes-Benz U.S. International in Vance, was asked by a Mercedes attorney why the cards being given to workers do not call for a secret ballot vote on forming a union.

Reed said the cards are typical of the ones the UAW uses in seeking worker support when organizing a union. Her testimony came on the second day of the National Labor Relations Board hearing.

That hearing before an administrative law judge is in a case the NLRB brought against MBUSI on charges that the company illegally interfered with workers trying to form a union by not allowing them

See Mercedes | 2A
MERCEDES
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1A

...to pass out the union cards and union literature in areas near the operating assembly line. Since August, the company allowed workers favoring and opposed to a union to pass out information at the turnstiles at the plant's entrance, in the central atrium, cafeteria and in team meeting centers in the production plant when the assembly line is not operating.

That's the gist of the case before the administrative law judge.

But the testimony also revealed some behind-the-scenes activity during the almost two-year campaign to unionize the MBUSI, one of the state's largest manufacturers. Mercedes officials previously refused to comment on the union organizing effort, saying the issue was up to its workers and the company officially was neutral.

On the union authorization cards, Reed noted that federal law allows several ways for a union to be formed. A secret ballot election is the most common and she said she could not imagine MBUSI recognizing without an election. Companies, however, can recognize a union voluntarily if a majority of employees sign the cards.

The solicitation of union authorization cards was tied to other events in the union drive.

Among them was the disappearance of a company disk with employees' names and addresses from Mercedes offices in Vance and whether the disk was used to learn employees' addresses and phone numbers.

Mercedes attorneys questioned Reed and other prominent union employees about how UAW officials and members of IG Metall, a German industrial union helping in the organizing effort, got the home addresses and phone numbers of employees. Reed said the information came from previous organizing efforts at Mercedes and from team members. Specific names were not given.

The home visits and calls became an issue last year, when some workers complained to Mercedes officials that union organizers were showing up at their homes unannounced.

Those complaints resulted in a group meeting with employees by Archie Craft, MBUSI vice president for human resources. Later, Craft sent a letter on May 16, 2013, to employees regarding the union effort.

The letter said the union authorization cards are a legally binding document, are valid for one year and that signing the card means the union is speaking for you. It also said a member who signed the card likely could not get it back.

Craft's letter irritated some MBUSI workers and resulted in at least one worker accusing Craft of lying and interfering with workers rights. The action occurred before the start of a Sunday shift and ended when the team leader announced the work shift was starting.

Complaints to the NLRB were filed soon after.

In other testimony Tuesday, Alfonzo Archibald of Tuscaloosa, a Mercedes employee since 2001, said Craft's letter was not sent out in good faith but was an attempt to thwart the union drive.

"The letter is a form of intimidation," he said. "This is not neutrality by the company.

He said he trusts the UAW would not try to form a union at MBUSI without an NLRB-conducted secret-ballot election. Archibald also said no workers have asked for the return of their signed union authorization cards but that be believes they would be given them.

That became an issue when an earlier witness indicated not all the signed cards that were turned in were dated. The dates are important because the cards remain valid for one year after they are signed and dated.

The Tuscaloosa News
Wednesday, April 9, 2014
ALAGASCO TO SELL FOR $1.6B

“The people we have hired to come to Birmingham, they love it here. When we are able to get them to visit, Birmingham becomes a recruitment tool.”

James McManus, Energen’s CEO

Michael Tomberlin > mtomberlin@al.com

Energen Corp. will keep its corporate headquarters in Birmingham after selling its Alagasco subsidiary for $1.6 billion, its CEO said.

Energen this week announced the deal to sell Alabama Gas Co. to St. Louis-based The Laclede Group Inc.

The definitive stock purchase agreement consists of $1.28 billion in cash and approximately $320 million of debt. Energen’s after-tax proceeds are estimated to be $1.1 billion.

“This transaction allows Energen to clarify its corporate structure by becoming a pure exploration and production company, a trend being rewarded by the financial markets,” James McManus, Energen’s CEO, said in a release.

The deal requires approval from the Alabama Public Service Commission and federal regulators. The companies expect the deal to close this year.

McManus said that, “with more than 422,000 residential, commercial and industrial customers, Alagasco will be a significant and important part of Laclede’s expanding utility footprint.”

Customers’ rates shouldn’t be affected by the change in ownership, at least not anytime soon. Alagasco has a rate structure agreement with the Alabama Public Service Commission that will set rates through 2018, and it’s expected to remain in effect after the acquisition.

Suzanne Sitherwood, Laclede CEO, said the cultures and operations of the two companies will be a natural fit. She said Laclede will continue Alagasco’s efforts in its core business and in support of economic growth and charity in the state.

Steve Lindsey, Laclede’s chief operating officer of distribution, said Alagasco is “a very well-run company,” but he sees opportunities to grow at a faster rate than the company has grown under Energen.

Lindsey said Alagasco has averaged running just over 40 miles of new gas lines a year in the last few years, and Laclede believes it can do more than that.

CEO: Birmingham ties strong

Energen plans to use proceeds from the transaction to immediately reduce short-term debt and enhance its ability to accelerate the pace of drilling and development of its Permian Basin assets in Texas and New Mexico. That has prompted speculation in recent months that Energen might prefer Houston to Birmingham for its headquarters in order to be closer to its main investments.

But McManus said the company isn’t moving.

“Is our corporate headquarters is here and will remain here,” McManus said.

He said Energen has a strong physical presence with its corporate headquarters and a strong emotional presence because he, Energen’s management team and its employees like living in Birmingham.

McManus said operating in Houston would be more expensive than Birmingham and would create more competition for employees. “The people we have hired to come to Birmingham, they love it here,” he said.

Brian Hilson, chief executive of the Birmingham Business Alliance, said keeping Energen in Birmingham is important not only because of the jobs, but also because the company’s leadership is active in economic development. “Energen is one of Birmingham’s finest corporate partners,” he said.
Based on Huntsville/Madison County's track record in 2013, Alabama Department of Commerce Secretary Greg Canfield said 2014 may be a "banner year" for economic development.

Canfield, who was one of several speakers to address the Chamber of Commerce of Huntsville/Madison County during its annual Montgomery trip last week, congratulated the group for landing Remington Outdoor, which plans to open a $110 million manufacturing plant that will employ 2,000 in Huntsville.

The state's leading economic developer said his department is in the process of completing its new and expanded industry report for 2013, but it looks like approximately 40 projects and more than 1,500 new jobs were created in Madison County last year.

"That does not count what we announced in 2014," he said. "With Remington, you've already exceeded that number. While 2013 was a great year for Huntsville/Madison County, I think 2014 is going to be an even better year, perhaps a banner year for you as a region."

"Can't really afford to separate education from economic development."

Canfield said the biggest challenge facing companies in Alabama and across the global is lack of skilled labor.

"Technology is far outpacing the human system for educating and preparing children for that technology," he said. "We've got to find a way to link the children to an education that can be centered around this change in technology and the fast pace it brings along with it."

See next page
'A win for everyone'

The annual Montgomery outing brought together 75 Huntsville-area business and community leaders last week. Gov. Robert Bentley was among officials to meet with the Chamber group.

Canfield, who noted the Mobile, Montgomery, Auburn/Opelika and Tuscaloosa areas are also doing well, said Jefferson County is beginning to shake off the vestiges of bankruptcy.

Canfield said his agency uses the Huntsville region as a guidepost when talking with other Alabama counties "who may not be pulling in that same direction."

"At times, I think that has been a challenge for most regions across the state," Canfield said. "But Huntsville/Madison County and even your surrounding counties, including Limestone County, are to be applauded because a win for a region is a win for everyone in the area."

Economic development used to be "about cocktail parties, dinners, shaking hands and then signing the deal," but Canfield said the process has become much more involved in recent years.

Education is still key

In order to compete as a state and for Huntsville to stay on top regionally, Canfield said Alabama

High-tech industry

He talked in detail about the state's Accelerate Alabama, a 2-year-old strategic economic development plan that targets 11 sectors to recruit new jobs and improve existing resources.

Of the 11 sectors the state is aggressively pursuing, six are in advanced manufacturing. Canfield said the Huntsville area has a footprint in almost all six of those fields, which include aerospace, automotive, chemical, steel, forest production and food processing.

Canfield said the state is becoming more engaged in the recruitment and expansion of the biotechnology and biomedical fields through partnerships with the HudsonAlpha Institute for Biotechnology and UAH.

"Enabling technologies is a new area for us to focus in for economic development opportunities in the state of Alabama," he said. "That includes everything from nanotechnology to robotics and now additive manufacturing processes or 3-D printing. There's lots of new technology that is evolving at a very rapid pace."

Canfield said the state will continue to expand its footprint in the automotive and aerospace sectors, but will look for more opportunities in the chemical and advanced steel industries.
We are certainly on our way

UA President Judy Bonner recounts an eventful year at the Capstone

By Ed Enoch
Staff Writer

University of Alabama President Judy Bonner echoed previous comments as she recapped the academic year for the Capstone Tuesday during a faculty and staff meeting on campus.

Bonner’s comments during the spring faculty and staff meeting at the Bryant Conference Center were similar to her speech in November 2013 on the state of UA, with praise for the university’s programs surrounding the 50th anniversary of its successful integration, student leadership during efforts to increase diversity in Greek-letter organizations in the fall, capital projects including the new engineering and sciences quad, growth of the campus community and faculty achievements.

“As we bring this academic year to a close, we celebrate many successes,” Bonner said.

The university’s first female president used the occasion to highlight ongoing efforts to increase diversity in campus’ Greek-letter organizations. The topic was also the subject of comments by the presidents of the Faculty Senate and the UA Student Government Association, who offered observations ahead of Bonner Tuesday.

Bonner said 15 of the 18 Panhellenic See UA | 4B
Council sororities on campus had black members following her mandate for continuous open bidding in September 2013. Bonner noted UA's historically white fraternities had also pledged similar efforts to increase diversity.

"While we may not be where we need to be, we are certainly on our way," Bonner said.

Bonner reiterated a pledge that the campus would be a welcoming and open community for all.

UA Faculty Senate President Steve Miller noted the efforts to diversify the groups as among the challenges faced by the campus community during the academic year.

Miller characterized the challenges and achievements as "all good things for the university."

"This has been a really exciting and challenging year for the faculty senate," Miller said.

Miller highlighted the senate's creation of an ad hoc task force of students, faculty and administrators last fall to suggest ways to increase diversity on campus and make changes to the governance of student organizations following allegations that Greek-letter organizations offered free drinks and other inducements to turn out members to vote in an August Tuscaloosa City Board of Education election and separate allegations of discrimination during the 2013 fall sorority rush.

Among the achievements this academic year, Miller also noted a letter from UA System Chancellor Robert Witt in the fall to the faculty senates and student governments at the system's campuses assuring them they would be advised if the system decided to lease or sell its property at Shepard Bend, a site whose potential use as a mine and its proximity to the water source for the Birmingham area have sparked concern. Miller said he also hoped to see the campus go smoke free in the future.

Recently elected SGA President Hamilton Bloom highlighted his administration's proposals to increase diversity and inclusiveness on campus and make the student government more relevant.

Among the proposals touted by Bloom were efforts to form a diversity caucus among registered student organizations to discuss and address concerns on campus, efforts to provide transportation during off hours and use of a database to provide more information about scholarship opportunities available to students.

The meeting Tuesday also recognized staff members Rhonda Dillard and Sea Talantis, recipients of Vergil Parks McKinley Sr. Employee awards; Communicative Disorders Department chair Marcia Hay-McCutcheon, recipient of the E. Roger Sayers Endowed Distinguished Service Award; and College of Arts and Sciences registrar Tim Dillard, recipient of the Dr. Minnie C. Miles Endowed Excellence Award.

Reach Ed Enoch at ed.enoch@tuscaloosanews.com or 205-722-0209.
City seeking grant for street-bridge project

Plans call for widening Hillard, adding bridge over tracks

By Jason Morton
Staff Writer

City Hall is once again seeking a federal grant to fund the widening of Dr. Edward Hillard Drive while adding a pedestrian and vehicular bridge over the two railroad tracks near DCH Regional Medical Center.

City officials acknowledged that it was difficult to secure a portion of the U.S. Department of Transportation's TIGER (Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery) grant program, which has about $600 million available for this round of funding.

The city's three previous attempts at securing a TIGER grant have been rejected. But to improve its chances for this round, city officials are reaching out to other governmental agencies to garner support for the project before the April 28 grant application deadline.

If the $23.27 million TIGER grant is awarded, 20 percent of the total project — about $5.2 million — will have to come from local sources. To help cover these costs, Mayor Walt Maddox and other city leaders met with University of Alabama President Judy Bonner and other UA representatives last week.

Maddox told the City Council's Public Projects Committee on Tuesday that UA appeared supportive of joining financial forces with the city to obtain the grant.

"The university expressed a sincere interest (in the project), along with making a financial commitment, as well," Maddox said.

Deborah M. Lane, associate vice president for university relations at UA, said Tuesday, "UA is supportive of the grant and looking forward to partnering with the city on a project that will benefit the entire community."

Any university funds to go toward the project will have to be approved by UA's board of trustees.

The mayor said the city also will approach the Tuscaloosa County Commission, the DCH board of directors and others to request assistance on offsetting the $5.2 million match as he believes a See Council | 7A

See next page
COUNCIL
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1A

multi-jurisdictional application will look better and improve the city's results.

With this, the council's Public Projects Committee voted unanimously to move forward with the grant application, despite the potential local costs.

If awarded, the project will convert Hillard Drive to five lanes from University Boulevard to 15th Street while adding a bridge over the Kansas City Southern and Norfolk Southern railroad tracks.

The bridge will include lanes for both motor vehicles and a joint pedestrian-bicycle shared path on one side with a sidewalk on the other to allow safe bicycle travel for students and residents from the University of Alabama campus to 15th Street, according to the Office of the City Engineer.

In addition to a widened Hillard Drive, the work also would include sidewalks and connections to the City Walk recreational trail, which is expected to run alongside the Lofts at City Center development and the proposed Shoppes at Legacy Park retail development planned for the former Cedar Crest neighborhood.

It also could help the city attain "quiet zone" status, which would allow trains to pass through the city without blowing their whistles during certain times of the night.

The idea for the bridge over the railroad tracks came from community input gathered during the Tuscaloosa Forward storm recovery planning process.

It also would prevent ambulances and other emergency medical vehicles from having to steer around the tracks when a train is present.

The TIGER grant program was created to allow the federal DOT to invest in road, rail, transit and port projects "that promise to achieve critical national objectives," according to the federal agency's website.

Reach Jason Morton at jason.morton@tuscaloosanews.com or 205-722-0200.
UA history professor gets SEC faculty award

A University of Alabama professor is among the recipients of the 2014 SEC Faculty Achievement Awards named Wednesday.

The annual awards honor a faculty member from each university in the Southeastern Conference. A news release states that each recipient demonstrates an outstanding record of teaching, research and scholarship.

George Rable, the Charles Summersell Chair of Southern History at the University of Alabama, is UA's recipient.

SEC Faculty Achievement Award winners receive a $5,000 honorarium from the Southeastern Conference and become the university's nominee for the SEC Professor of the Year Award.

The SEC Professor of the Year, to be named later this month, receives an additional $15,000 honorarium and will be recognized at the SEC spring meetings in May and the SEC symposium in September.
Alabama planning new arts center

Theater department's venue will be on former Bryce campus

By Ed Enoch
Staff writer

The new $60 million performing arts center to be constructed by the University of Alabama on the Bryce Hospital grounds is planned as a state-of-the-art venue for the Department of Theatre and Dance.

The UAB board of trustees approved the scope and preliminary budget for the project Friday.

The 109,017-square-foot center will connect to the historic main Bryce Hospital building via a new lobby.

The project will require the demolition of the north wing of the main hospital building.

The center will feature a 350-seat drama theater, a 450-seat dance theater, a 250-seat studio theater and associated support spaces, such as a scenery shop and rehearsal hall, according to the preliminary plan.

The center is part of the UAB's campus master plan for the historic hospital grounds, which includes new academic and residential buildings and recreational facilities.

UA purchased the Bryce property from the state in 2010, paying nearly $77 million for the 168 acres on the northeast side of campus.

See ARTS 11A
ARTS
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1A

and agreeing to pay another $10 million for environmental cleanup and historic preservation.

Officials with UA and the Alabama Department of Mental Health said plans for the state to finish turning over the historic grounds to the university by mid-to early summer remain on track. David Jackson, chief operating officer for the mental health department, said the state anticipated completing a phased move to the new Bryce Hospital on the W.D. Partlow Developmental Center campus in Tuscaloosa by early June.

Work on the arts center will likely not begin for years, according to Tim Leopard, assistant vice president for construction.

Leopard described the arts center as a complex project, which would probably take two years in the design phase, noting acoustic concerns and other aspects that are not usually factors in other building projects.

The projects on the grounds including historic buildings such as the main hospital and plans for new roads that would connect Fifth Avenue and Jack Warner Parkway are also still working their way through a series of approvals from the Alabama Historic Commission and the U.S. Department of Transportation, according to Leopard.

The new roads are being funded in part from a $16 million grant from the Alabama Transportation Rehabilitation and Improvement Program. UA will have to provide a $9 million match for the road project.

The board also approved a related project to renovate and expand the admissions building east of the main hospital Friday. The $20 million project includes renovation of about 50 percent of the 123,153-square-foot building and constructing a 26,286-square-foot addition.

The building is being proposed as a way to consolidate studios, offices, classrooms and seminar space for the theater department and provide extra space, according to the proposal. The department's size has more than doubled since 2004, according to the presentation to the board. Student enrollment in the program was 299 in the fall of 2013.

The existing department space in Rowand-Johnson Hall would be vacated and used for instruction in core curriculum courses.

UA would also demolish the dance studio on Bryant Drive near Tutwiler residence hall, according to the board packet. The university is still evaluating uses for the land after the demolition, Leopard said.
Birmingham Mayor William Bell said he would not want to imagine Birmingham today without Susan Matlock's work during the last two decades.

"Having Susan leading Innovation Depot and the work she has done to help encourage entrepreneurship has just been fantastic," Bell said. "Birmingham is now recognized around the world as having one of the best business incubators, and Susan deserves credit for that."

Matlock, 67, spent the last days of March going through her old files and cleaning out her office, officially ending her time as president and chief executive of Innovation Depot. She decided nearly a year ago she would retire and made her plans public in August. Devon Laney, the former chief operating officer at Innovation Depot, replaces her at the helm.

"It's certainly been a long goodbye," Matlock said. "I know some people are probably saying, 'Can't she just be gone already?'

It just felt like the right time, she said. "I'm very excited about the organization's future, and it could not have a more stable financial situation."

Among the world's best?

As Bell suggested, it's hard to imagine 2014 Birmingham without Innovation Depot and the role it has played in nurturing new businesses. Its 2007 move into the renovated Sears building added to the momentum of downtown revitalization and brought young entrepreneurs downtown.

At the time, Matlock was pulling double duty, serving as the president of the Entrepreneurial Center downtown and UAB's business incubator, the Office for the Advancement of Developing Industries, in the Oxmoor Valley. Innovation Depot was created when the two were combined.

It was Matlock who led fundraising for the $16 million investment and communicated the vision for a combined incubator being greater than its two parts.

"That has proven true. In 2011, the National Business Incubation Association recognized Innovation Depot as its "Technology Incubator of the Year" out of all of the incubators in the 68 countries it represents."

Matlock said while the former Sears building is an attractive home with comfortable offices and useful lab space, it's the work of Innovation Depot staff and its client companies that won the recognition.

"We got that for what we do, not how we look," she said.

A real retirement

Matlock said she enjoys seeing the interaction and even the collaboration that takes place between the companies that operate in Innovation Depot. Having them together under one roof has created synergies that couldn't have been imagined seven years ago.

Looking back, Matlock said she couldn't have envisioned exactly how things would take shape, but she always felt there was a potential that needed to be unlocked between UAB and the Birmingham region. She takes pride in playing a central role in building Innovation Depot.

Now it's time for the next generation to take it further.

"We are putting in place a very fine entrepreneurial ecosystem," Matlock said. "Everyone is working together instead of in silos."

Retirement will give Matlock more time with her husband, Michael Calvert, who retired as the head of Operation New Birmingham (now REV Birmingham) three years ago. The two love to travel, but Matlock's commitments have limited trips to a couple of days at a time.

First up is a trip to New York for 10 days. "I've never been there longer than three days," she said. Time with grandchildren is on the agenda, as is more time in the garden growing roses.

Unlike her husband, who has continued to dabble in downtown redevelopment projects after retirement, Matlock said she will not haunt the halls of Innovation Depot.

"It's going to be a real retirement for me," she said.
NEED A HEART? WE'LL PRINT YOU ONE

Talk about a potentially nasty printer jam. Researchers at the University of Alabama in Huntsville are working toward, perhaps in a decade, being able to use a patient's own cells to print a new liver or heart.

While that's the lofty goal, a UAH sophomore and his collaborator took a step closer to it recently by developing a specialized 3-D printing extruder that could lower the costs of printing cellular structures for use in drug testing.

The CarmAl extruder — shorthand for Carbohydrate Anhydrous Rapid Manufacturing Aluminum extruder — its controlling software and the manufacturing processes being developed by second-year biological sciences student Tanner Carden and collaborator Devon Bane are able to produce a sugar grid that mimics blood vessels.

Normally a UAH mechanical and aerospace engineering undergraduate student, Bane is taking the semester off to catch up with the numerous inventions and commercial projects with which he's involved.

The CarmAl extruder's name is a play on words, since the inspiration for the technology came from 3-D printers developed to make specialty candies.

"We're using the sugar molecules in a form of reverse 3-D printing," says Carden. "In this process, we first make the structures we want and then we embed them into a cellular matrix. After cells held in suspension in an agarose solution are grown around the vascular structure, a solvent can be used to wash the sugar away.

The result is a cell mass that contains vessels like a human organ would. That's an advantage for drug tests over flat-dish cell cultures currently used, because it more accurately represents living tissue and more of the test cells can be kept alive by vessel-supplied nutrients. "It helps to prevent necrosis in your samples," says Carden. For example, if the process were used to create liver cells for a drug test, the resulting product would actually have vascularization in it that is modeled on how a liver works."

Further advances to their system could include the addition of 5-D printing capabilities, which would allow the current grid-like vascular structures to flow and branch in a more natural fashion and truly be created in three dimensions.

Devon Bane, left, and Tanner Carden with their CarmAl extruder in a lab at UAH's Shelby Center for Technology. Photo by Michael Mercier/UAH
New course, new name, new rules as NASA's Human Exploration Rover Challenge draws near
By: Lee Roop

NASA has changed the competition's name, changed the rules and changed the course, but it's still April and that means it's still time for the annual race of student body-powered rovers at the U.S. Space & Rocket Center.

Four area high schools - Arab, East Limestone, Florence and the Huntsville Center for Technology - plus J.F. Drake State Technical College and the University of Alabama in Huntsville will join more than 80 other teams in the first NASA Human Exploration Rover Challenge Friday and Saturday at the space center.

For two decades, this race was called the Great Moonbuggy Race in honor of the lunar rover designed and built in Huntsville. But NASA wants students in the new century thinking beyond the moon to challenges of getting around on planets like Mars.

For that reason, this year's buggies can't have inflatable wheels, and they will face a tougher course with five new obstacles. The teams will still have to collapse their buggies inside the kind of containers they would ride in aboard a rocket, but NASA has given them a little extra room. Dimensions are now 5x5x5 feet, not 4x4x4.

Rick Smith of NASA's Marshall Space Flight Center said Tuesday that the competition is intentionally "a little more complex" this year. And the challenges will change each year, Smith said, as NASA gets students thinking about the kinds of obstacles engineers will face designing rovers for other planets.

"This amazing event is the best definition of STEM -- science, technology, engineering and mathematics - for every student who participates," Dr. Deborah Barnhart, CEO and Executive Director of the U.S. Space & Rocket Center, said in a statement. "Rover Challenge is an opportunity for these high school and college students to put their best skills to the test."

Familiar teams from Puerto Rico and Germany will be here joining first-time contenders and local perennial powers like UAH. The event will be streamed live on NASA-TV, and visitors can watch with their paid admission to the space center.

Crews were moving gravel, sand and large rocks into place on the course Tuesday. Teams will register Thursday.
Want to walk on water or battle space aliens? Try it Saturday at Lowe Mill's STEAM Fest

By: Amethyst Holmes

Lowe Mill Arts and Entertainment's inaugural STE(A)M Fest will bring Huntsville's education, engineering and art communities together Saturday afternoon.

In partnership with the University of Alabama in Huntsville and Huntsville City Schools, Lowe Mill artisans will show kids how to put the "A" in STE(A)M education.

Lowe Mill artists will lead demonstrations, lessons and hands-on activities for children of all ages with an emphasis on the role of art in science, technology, engineering and math education curriculum.

Students will have the opportunity to decorate canvases using a robotic paintball gun, battle space aliens using catapults, walk across a pool of non-Newtonian fluid (or Oobleck), create their own instruments, see the physics of slow-motion videography and learn how artists use STEM subjects in their different mediums including glass, ceramics, puppetry and more.

Students will also get the chance to see the ongoing process of how a life-size replica of the Millennium Falcon is being created using a CNC machine. See how progress is going.

Appleton Learning, Huntsville-Madison Public Library, MindGear Labs, Sci-Quest, Space Camp and TEDxHuntsville are some of the professional organizations that will be involved in Saturday's festivities.

STE(A)M Fest

Where: Lowe Mill ARTS & Entertainment

When: Saturday, April 12, Noon-4 p.m.

Cost: Free
Tornado drought? UAH research says U.S. set record for latest 'severe' tornado in 2014

By: Paul Gattis

Researchers at the University of Alabama in Huntsville have come with some intriguing information about tornadoes that has even drawn praise from The Weather Channel.

A word of caution, though: You may want to find a piece of wood to knock on as you read this.

According to the UAH Severe Weather Institute Radar and Lightning Laboratories (SWIRLL), the U.S. has set a record this year with the lack of a severe tornado.

Specifically, an EF-3 or greater tornado on the Enhanced Fujita scale has not touched down anywhere in the country. As meteorologists from the National Weather Service survey tornado damage from Monday's storms in North Carolina, the U.S. is one week past the latest date an EF-3 tornado or stronger touched down.

Previously, the latest date for an EF-3 or stronger was March 31, 2002, in Texas. Other late arriving severe storms were March 27, 2004, in Kansas and the same date in 1994 in Alabama. In 2003, there wasn't an EF-3 tornado until March 20 in Georgia and on March 19, 1981 in Florida.

While the drought provides an element of encouragement, April and May are typically prime time for tornadoes in the U.S. And it's not an opportunity to cross tornadoes off the list of concerns for 2014.

In fact, Tony Lyza, a UAH graduate student and graduate research assistant student in the SWIRLL program, offered this word of advice on a post discussing the EF-3 drought on the website U.S. Tornadoes:

"So does this mean the rest of the tornado season will be quiet? Absolutely not!"

"Of the previous 5 years with the latest formation of the first F/EF3+, both 2003 and 2004 became extremely active in May and June, with May 2003 being the most prolific tornado month (543 tornadoes) on record until April 2011 and with 2004 overall still holding the record for the most tornadoes recorded in a calendar year.

"Therefore, don't let your guard down as we continue through what-barely-has-been-spring 2014."

Still, a tornado drought have been evident in Alabama this year regardless of the storm's strength. The state had its fourth-longest span between tornadoes when tornadoes touched down Feb. 20 in north Alabama.
Dean Willis, the coach's kid who achieved Hall of Fame career for UAH Chargers

By: Mark McCarter

For nearly three decades, Dean Willis has been one of Huntsville's most acclaimed doctors in the specialized field of pain management. The Chief Medical Officer at Alabama Pain Clinic since 1986, he has also served as Adjunct Associate Professor at the University of Alabama-Huntsville's College of Nursing since 1997.

"Dean's at the top of profession, and he's one of the good guys to boot," said his friend, Jack Doss. "He was a pretty fair basketball player 40 years ago, too."

He was indeed, as evidenced by his enshrinement in the Huntsville-Madison County Athletic Hall of Fame.

In fact, Willis was the acknowledged leader of the men's varsity basketball program at UAH while playing for his father, Kayo Willis, who came from Murray State in Kentucky and coached the Chargers to 205 victories, five Southern States Conference championships, five SSC tournament titles and four trips to the NAIA tournament in 11 memorable seasons, beginning in 1973-74.

Kayo's point guard, Dean compiled 1,291 points as a four-year starter from 1973-77. In his career, he led the team in assists (740), steals (360) and most consecutive games played (116). As a senior, he was named to the All-SSC and All-America teams.

His father, now deceased, was inducted into the Huntsville-Madison County Athletic Hall of Fame in 1996.

Dean Willis was recently asked to identify the most influential person in his life. This is part of his eloquent response:

"It's difficult for most athletes to narrow it down. There are so many events, victories and defeats, buzzer beaters and crucial turnovers, heartbreaking losses and championships, thousands of hours spent practicing in lonely silent gymnasiums and stands filled with cheering fans and, of course, teammates you never forget. But for most, it turns out to be their coaches. There are many coaches - some who taught you the fundamentals, some who taught the value of being physically fit and mentally tough enough to gut out a fourth quarter or overtime, some who verbally kicked your butt whether you deserved it or not, and some who made you believe enough in yourself to achieve beyond your childhood dreams. For many, it's literally a sea of faces and names. For me, it's one face and one name - Kayo Willis, my father and my coach.

"No matter what was taking place in my life, he was the steady influence urging me to succeed. He was often overbearing and seemingly heartless in his push for perfection, but after the cheers and newspaper headlines faded, everyone who ever played for Coach Willis came to know, as I did, why he was so demanding and relentless.

"When you played for him, you were the best you could possibly be or you didn't play. Believe me, there were times he sat my butt on the bench to give me a chance to decide whether I 'really' wanted to play or not. I'd have to confess there were times I didn't care much for Coach Willis."

See next page
"But he didn't just coach basketball. He coached life. He didn't just coach basketball players, he taught young men how to succeed. He built character which comes from discipline and hard work, something often missing in the lives of so many young athletes today. That kind of tough love from a coach is a gift, not often appreciated at the time it's given, but later cherished for a lifetime.

"So although I may have felt like I hated Coach Willis at times, I always loved my dad. And now as a man with a family of my own and many life successes, I know how much he loved me and how much God blessed me to have him as my father and my coach. Now I can only hope that God will help me pass along to my children what Coach Willis gave to me."
Remote Sensing Moisture Model Could Aid Farmers

Global farmers could get better decision-making help as refinements are made to North Alabama soil moisture modeling research being done by an atmospheric science doctoral student at The University of Alabama in Huntsville. The models indicate how much added moisture would be needed in a given area versus historical data to achieve various crop yields, and they could aid in making expensive infrastructure investments by helping to determine their economic viability.

In areas where water is in short supply, irrigation infrastructure can be expensive and the model could help to determine its economic cost effectiveness. The model uses satellite data to determine the amount of soil moisture present and then estimates yields based on available moisture. The model encompasses all inputs into the crop, including weather, plant spacing, cultivar, fertilizer, soil type and fertility, and others, except precipitation.

At this point, soil moisture profiles are input, and yields can be modeled in kilograms per hectare based on how much soil moisture is available to the crop. The model can provide daily estimates of grain weights as well as water and fertilizer needs within a growing period. The work could prove especially valuable for farmers and government officials in the more arid countries of the world.
Frederiek Toney a big winner on the basketball court and in the corporate world

HUNTSVILLE, Alabama -- From an early age, Frederiek Toney always had his eye on the big prize. He was going to make something of his life, stand above the crowd, become a leader of men and maybe a captain of industry.

"I want to be my own man," the 18-year-old native of Madison said in a 1973 interview with a local publication called The Good Neighbor News. "Someday, I intend to own my own business."

The story was written shortly after Toney, who will enter the Huntsville-Madison County Athletic Hall of Fame next week, had enrolled at the University of Alabama in Huntsville.

"This is just the first step toward that goal," he said confidently as he embarked on his college career.

There was a time when young Toney also aspired to make a name for himself on the basketball court. A star at West Madison Junior High, he played three years from 1971-73 at Lee High School, making second-team All-City as a junior and first-team All-City, first-team All-Region and honorable mention All-State as a senior captain of the team.

His 5-foot-10 height worked against him after high school, however, and no colleges came calling. But Toney still had his academic record. In 1973, he won the Student-Athlete Academic Award for having the highest grade point average of any graduating athlete at Lee.

His subsequent enrollment at UAH roughly coincided with the university's decision to upgrade its club basketball program to varsity status. The school hired Kayo Willis, the freshman coach at Murray State, to kick-start basketball, and within three years UAH was playing in the NAIA national tournament with a scrappy team that included the coach's son, Dean, and two former Lee players, Richard Gattis and Frederiek Toney. All three are now members of the Huntsville-Madison County Athletic Hall of Fame.

Toney parlayed his degree from UAH and a Masters degree from the University of LaVerne in California into a remarkable business career, just as he foresaw as a young man.

He spent 16 years with Caterpillar, Inc., in a variety of managerial assignments, then worked seven years at American Honda Motor Company, rising to the position of Assistant Vice President, Parts Division. Then he joined Ford Motor Company in Dearborn, Mich., in 2000.

Fourteen years later, his title is Vice President, Ford Motor Company, and President of Global Ford Customer Service. He has been named a Global Top 50 Decision Maker and one of the 100 Most Powerful Executives in Corporate America.

The most influential person in his athletic and professional career, says Toney, has been his older brother, James Toney Jr., who transferred from Councill Training and played basketball at Lee in 1970-71.

"My game was molded on the playground, competing head-to-head with James," Frederiek said. "He was bigger, stronger, more experienced, more athletic. He forced me to develop my skills.

See next page
Most importantly, he taught me to compete and take pride in excellence. It was James' pursuit of his MBA that inspired me to do the same. His success in marriage, parenting and business inspired me to dream big and have confidence in my ability to achieve great things. It was James who urged me to leave a safe, secure position at Caterpillar to accept a more senior position at American Honda and later to leave Honda for Ford. He has been an unselfish supporter as only a proud big brother can be. He's exemplary as a loving family man, brother and human being. I owe much to him."

Frederiek Toney is on the Trustees Foundation at UAH and the School of Business Advisory Council at both UAH and Central State University in Ohio. He and wife, Cynthia, have four children: Frederiek Jr., Camille, Simone and Danielle.
Huntsville scientists ready to launch experiment to International Space Station

By: Lee Roop

What if you could turn a virus or bacteria off by blocking its cellular reproduction? It's a big idea and not a new one, but Huntsville scientists will be trying a new way to do it with an experiment flying on the International Space Station for the next six months.

On Monday, April 14, 2014, a SpaceX rocket is scheduled to lift a Dragon capsule toward a rendezvous with the station. On board the capsule is an experiment by the small Huntsville company iXpressGenes located at the HudsonAlpha Institute for Biotechnology, owned by the University of Alabama in Huntsville, and headed by UAH biology professor Dr. Joseph Ng.

Just getting your experiment to the space station is an accomplishment: iXpressGenes first beat out other applicants to win a research grant to grow protein crystals in space from the Center for the Advancement of Science in Space (CASSIS). That's the independent agency that controls science in the American laboratories on the space station.

An earlier SpaceX launch attempt this spring was scrubbed by technical issues, forcing Ng's team to start over with a new batch of protein samples. They're at the Kennedy Space Flight Center in Florida this week to try again.

Scientists like to grow crystallized forms of proteins for experiments because it's much easier to see how the protein works in its 3-D crystallized shape. Crystals can be grown on Earth, but they grow much larger and less flawed in microgravity. The difference is so dramatic that protein crystals experiments have turned out to be a major focus of science in space.

iXpressGenes is studying a protein enzyme involved in the passing of DNA instructions when genes replicate. If scientists can understand the arrangement of every atom in the enzyme, Ng says, they can theoretically use bioengineering techniques to make it more active or inhibit its growth.

"In case the (enzyme) is from a pathogen," Ng said, "an antibiotic can be made to deactivate the enzyme and in turn (destroy) the pathogen."

The experiment began in Huntsville with the production of a large amount of protein samples. They will grow into crystals on the station for six months, return to Earth aboard another capsule and be rushed directly to the Oak Ridge National Laboratory for analysis.

Ng and his team are hoping for good weather and a launch Monday. But they won't know until six months after that if they even have crystals to analyze.
Professor debunks 'E.T.' theory surrounding NASA pics

By: Sarah Navoy

Two photos recently captured by NASA have internet users and experts alike debating a mysterious light seen on the surface of Mars. Is there an explanation... or is it aliens?

If you look hard enough at the photos, you can see a glimmer of light captured on the horizon of Mars. But what if the light is actually life – Martians of some kind? Some folks on the internet are convinced.

Richard Miller is an astrophysics professor at the University of Alabama – Huntsville. He said before you jump to conclusions about the photos, you should listen up.

"If it was truly something in the far-off distance, it would have been seen in both cameras, and it wasn't," said Miller.

Miller said NASA uses two cameras on the rover the photos were captured on. They go off simultaneously, so anything seen in one should be seen in the other. If not, there is an explanation.

"It happens to all our cameras – it happens to your news camera," Miller told us. "Occasionally it leaves something that makes the internet start rumors."

Miller said the figure of light is more than likely just a cosmic ray that interacted with the sensor on one of the cameras. The news is likely to be a disappointment to some, but believe it or not, also to scientists like Miller.

"Don't get me wrong, I want there to be aliens as much as anybody, but this is not evidence for aliens," he said.
The University of South Alabama's new president is a man on the move.

On his first day at work, President Tony G. Waldrop led a squadron of media personnel on a fast-paced, tour of the Student Recreation Center, the under-construction softball facilities and the Glass Program hot and cold shops.

In the rec center, Philip A. Theodore, director of campus recreation, took the new president on a top-to-bottom tour and introduced him to staffs, with TV and camera crews recording every moment. Waldrop shot a few hoops on the basketball court and admired the rock wall and the indoor and outdoor pools.

Waldrop especially wanted to meet the members of the 11th-ranked Jags softball team, who were just about to get on the road to Tuscaloosa to take on the University of Alabama at 6 p.m. at Rhoads Stadium.

Waldrop and university personnel, trailed by the media pack, took a brisk walk from the rec center over to the softball fields, where USA's athletic director, Joel Erdmann, greeted Waldrop outside of the clubhouse.

Erdmann showed Waldrop the new, covered hitting facility before introducing him to head softball coach Becky Clark and several players.

Waldrop, who comes to USA from the University of Central Florida, complimented Clark on the Jags' recent matchup against the University of Georgia, which he saw in Orlando. "You picked a good game to watch," Clark said.

"What a great year y'all have had," Waldrop told the players, greeting each as they got ready to get on the bus. "Y'all get a win tonight."

The next stop on the morning's tour was USA's Glass Program, where director Rene Culler and students David Wiss and Leah Fox, surrounded by flaming furnaces, gave the new president a demonstration on basic glass shaping techniques.

After watching for a few minutes, Waldrop took off his jacket and tried out the glass blower himself.

Earlier, during a brief pause in the tour, Waldrop spoke to the media about his immediate plans as he begins his new job. What attracted him and his wife, Julee, to the university in the first place was the people, he said, and the warm welcome they received from the Board of Trustees, faculty, staff and students.

USA already has excellent programs in place, Waldrop said, thanks to the leadership of the late President Emeritus Gordon Moulton. "This is a great university already," he said.

His immediate goals are to improve the university's graduation and retention rates, and to raise USA's profile for recruiting.

"I want us to compete with Alabama or Auburn for the best students in the state," he said.

It will be a big task to live up to Moulton's legacy, Waldrop said.
Four furlough days at Stillman

Interim president says faculty, staff will take time off during next two months

By Ed Enoch
Staff Writer

Stillman College is furloughing employees in April and May as a way to avoid pay cuts or layoffs, according to a statement released Wednesday.

"Stillman has a history of success and will continue to excel despite challenging circumstances. Our decision to implement a furlough was not an easy one, but it is one that will ultimately serve the best interest of the college," said interim President Peter Millet in a released statement.

The small private college in west Tuscaloosa announced four furlough days for faculty and staff, excluding hourly plant employees, during the next two months, according to spokeswoman Mary Sood.

The announcement of the furloughs was paired with optimistic assessments of the college's future.

The university said its enrollment continues to increase, alumni giving has increased by 30 percent and new partnerships have been formed with local colleges and universities.

Stillman lists its current enrollment at 1,000.

Last month, Stillman and the Alabama Community College System finalized an agreement to allow community college graduates with associate degrees to be automatically admitted to the historically black institution to complete bachelor's degrees.

The agreement is among a host of programs the private college is considering or pursuing to help boost enrollment. In a January interview, Millet cited interest in becoming a military-friendly campus and reaching out to minorities and nontraditional students.

The private Presbyterian college is also now looking for a permanent president.
Bama scrambles to get past UAB

By Tommy Deas
Executive Sports Editor

Patrick Murphy isn't a fan of weeknight dramas, at least not at Rhoads Stadium. "Only on TV," the coach of the second-ranked University of Alabama softball team said.

He got one Wednesday as the Crimson Tide held on for a 4-3 victory over UAB. Alabama took a three-run lead into the sixth inning and watched as UAB closed to within a run, putting runners on first and second base with two outs in the top of the seventh before ace Jaclyn Traina got the final out for the save.

Alabama improved to 36-5, running its winning streak to 10 with its 19th victory in its last 20 games, but had to work for it.

"If we had gotten one or two hits from the middle of the lineup, it's a different story," Murphy said.

Instead, Alabama mostly manufactured what it got. UA batters never solved the puzzle of UAB lefty pitcher Lannah Campbell, but put together enough pieces to win.

UAB scratched first, scoring in the top of the first on a Danil Fernandez double followed by Mary Warren's RBI single.

Alabama answered in the bottom of the inning, with leadoff hitter Haylie McCleney reaching on a bunt single, stealing second and advancing to third on Danielle Richards' sacrifice bunt. McCleney, who went 3-for-4, scored on Kaila Hunt's line-drive triple up the middle.

Alabama stranded Hunt on third, starting a trend of frustration on a night when UA had plenty of base runners but a lot of trouble bringing them home.

UAB turned a double play on a delayed double steal in the third, getting runners out at home plate and at second, and the Blazers gunned down pinch runner Chandler Dare at the plate in the fourth, leaving the game still tied.

Alabama finally broke through in the bottom of the fifth. Third baseman Peyton Grantham started it off with a single.

See Scramble | 5C
through the left side of the infield. McClene and Richard both reached on bunt singles to load the bases with no outs.

Hunt singled through the left side to drive in the go-ahead run. Another run scored on an error, and after another UAB double play, first baseman Leona Lafacce singled in a run to make it 4-1.

"Sometimes it happens," Hunt said. "The always play us good. We had 12 hits but we only scored four runs.

"Especially against that type of pitcher, you have to think just try to hit a ground ball up the middle because you're going to hit a ground ball anyway."

UAB cut the lead in half in the sixth, with Megan McGrath hitting a sacrifice fly to bring in a run and Hayley Davis blasted a solo homer run with two outs in the top of the seventh to make it 4-3.

With a runner on first, Traina relieved Sydnee Littlejohn (6-0). A full-count walk put runner on first and second before Traina ended it with a strikeout.

"When I didn't get the first batter, I just went after the next one," Traina said. "I had full confidence in myself."

Alabama will visit Mississippi State this weekend for a three-game series, starting Friday at 5 p.m. UAB, which had won 10 of its last 13 games, fell to 23-17.
Clements leads pack as Blazers QB

Drew Champlin
dchamplin@al.com

Cody Clements had been at UAB for less than a week when he got the news.

It hadn't even been a month since the quarterback made the decision to finish his college career all the way across the country.

He still didn't know many of his teammates, but on that Thursday afternoon when Garrick McGee abruptly left for Louisville and UAB Athletics Director Brian Mackin held a team meeting calling for leadership, Clements knew what he had to do.

"Some of the guys who were original leaders on this team, and still are, talked to the players," Clements said. "At the end, I stood up and said a few words about what I was going to bring to the table. I wasn't going to sit back and take a sidelines role. I was going to be a leader."

There was no turning back for Clements, a La Habra, Calif., native who started his career at Washington State. He didn't play for two years before transferring to Cerritos (Calif.) Community College. UAB might not even have been an option had Austin Brown, a part-time starter over the last two years, not decided to transfer.

But Clements got a call in mid-December from Richard Owens, the lone holdover from the previous staff, took a visit, and decided to sign with UAB. Clements quickly got used to Southern accents and an abundance of fried chicken, he said. But he wasn't prepared for the events of Jan. 9.

"I'm thinking, 'I just got here, what's going on?'" Clements said of that whirlwind first week. "You've got to roll with the punches. You can't do anything about it. Keep a positive attitude and hope for the best."

Clements carried the leadership and attitude onto the field this spring. As it turned out, new coach Bill Clark and offensive coordinator Bryant Vincent's shotgun offense fit him best. He ran an under-center, pro-style offense at Cerritos and would have competed in that if the old staff had stayed, but the change turned into a blessing in disguise.

Clements ran out of the shotgun in high school and at Washington State.

"It's a perfect fit for me," Clements said. " Shotgun offense and these coaches are incredible. I love the way they run things."

It took just four practices for Clark to name Clements the early leader of the quarterback competition. Redshirt freshman Jeremiah Briscoe is hot on his heels, as the two have distanced themselves.

"All the quarterbacks definitely have a shot," Clements said. "We all have our things we're good at. All I can do is worry about myself and try to be the best I can be. Get the ball out quick and make good decisions. I'm a playmaker if something breaks down."

On the field, Vincent praised Clements' ability and decision-making.

"He works through his progressions extremely well," Vincent said. "He has a quick release and sees the routes as they're happening."

UAB has completed nine spring practices, getting No. 9 in at 5:45 a.m. Tuesday morning, and practices again on Wednesday night.

The spring game is next Friday, April 18, at 6 p.m. at UAB's West Campus Field.
Crimson Tide dominates to win regional title

Combined reports

SEATTLE | The Alabama gymnastics team won its NCAA-best 29th regional championship Saturday night in Seattle, outscoring second-place Nebraska 197.550-196.975. Both schools advance to the NCAA Championships which will be held April 18-22 in Birmingham.

"Advancing to the finals of the NCAA Championships never gets old," UA head coach Sarah Patterson said. "I think there's a lot of pressure around this meet and certainly we traveled a long way to get here, but we were able to come out and do our job and advance to the NCAA finals, and that has been our goal since day one of the season."

Senior Kim Jacob led the way with a 39.500 in the all-around while fellow senior Sarah DeMeo scored a 39.425 in her first all-around appearance since Feb. 14. Freshman Katie Bailey scored a 39.400 in the all-around, her second highest tally of her season.

"Not everything was perfect tonight, we had some struggles, but people just kept going and making adjustments and doing exactly what we needed them to do," Patterson said.

Alabama started things off with a 49.300 on the uneven bars led by senior Kim Jacob's 9.9 before moving to the balance beam where they were matching 9.8s from Jacob and freshman Aja Sims paced the Crimson Tide to a 49.325 team mark.

On the floor exercise senior Diandra Milliner led Alabama to a 49.325 with a 9.900.

After a good start on its first three events, Alabama dominated the vault, scoring a 49.600 behind a 9.95 from sophomore Lauren Beers and 9.9 or better scores from freshman Kaile Bailey, junior Kallie Clark, Jacob and Milliner.

In addition to winning its 29th NCAA Regional Championship, Alabama is advancing to the NCAA Championships final site for the 32nd year in a row, one of the longest streaks in the history of collegiate gymnastics.

The victory also gives Sarah Patterson the 1,000th win of her career. Patterson is only the second coach in collegiate gymnastics to earn 1,000 wins and she is the fastest to a 1,000, notching the total in the 12th meet of her 36th year, while Utah head coach Greg Marsden, who passed the 1,000 win barrier earlier this season, did it in the fourth meet of his 39th season at the helm.

ALABAMA'S TOP INDIVIDUAL FINISHERS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Gymnast</th>
<th>Score</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All-Around</td>
<td>Kim Jacob</td>
<td>9.950</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vault</td>
<td>Lauren Beers</td>
<td>9.900</td>
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<tr>
<td>Uneven Bars</td>
<td>Kim Jacob</td>
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<tr>
<td>Balance Beam</td>
<td>Kim Jacob</td>
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<tr>
<td>Floor Exercise</td>
<td>Aja Sims</td>
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<tr>
<td>Floor Exercise</td>
<td>D. Milliner</td>
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ALABAMA SCORES

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<thead>
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<td>Floor Exercise</td>
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TEAM SCORES

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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>Boise State</td>
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<td>BYU</td>
<td>194.650</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Alabama's Jacklin Byers, Katie Chambers, Veronica Bruner, Jackie Woudenberg and Kendall Scullion compete Saturday against SMU and Eastern Michigan.

**Tide gets three rowing wins**

**Combined report**

The University of Alabama rowing team got wins in three of the four races Saturday as the Crimson Tide hosted SMU and Eastern Michigan.

Alabama claimed three of the top four spots in the Varsity 4 race, with the Second Varsity 4 earning the win in 8:46.7. Alabama's First Varsity 4 placed in 8:53.0, while the Third Varsity 4 crossed the line in 9:19.0.

Alabama continued to roll in the Second Varsity 8, defeating the field by nearly 10 seconds with a finish of 7:38.0.

The Crimson Tide won its third straight race of the day with a first-place finish in the Varsity 8, crossing the line in 7:36.3. Alabama wrapped up the day with a second-place finish in the Novice 8 (7:58.5).

The Tide continues its season next weekend in Camden, N.J., at the Knecht Cup Regatta, beginning Saturday.

**VARSITY 8**
- Alabama - 7:36.3
- SMU - 7:46.9
- Eastern Michigan - 8:03.3

**SECOND VARSITY 8**
- Alabama - 7:38.0
- SMU - 7:43.4
- Eastern Michigan - 8:47.4

**VARSITY 4**
- Alabama (2V) - 8:46.7
- Alabama - 8:53.0
- SMU - 9:07.0
- Alabama (3V) - 9:19.0
- Eastern Michigan - 9:46.9

**NOVICE 8**
- SMU - 7:47.0
- Alabama - 7:58.5
- Eastern Michigan - 9:00.8