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Bentley signs education budget

Teacher raises not included

By Kim Chandler
The Associated Press

MONTGOMERY | Gov. Robert Bentley signed the education budget for the next fiscal year on Friday even though it did not include the 2 percent raise that he sought for teachers and school employees.

Bentley also announced that he would not force lawmakers into a special session over the issue of the raise. The governor cited the cost of a special session to taxpayers and the “attitude of the Legislature at this time.” However, Bentley said he would continue to push for the raise and did not rule out a special session later in the year.

“My strong push for a pay raise was to support our teachers, our bus drivers, our lunchroom workers and our janitors across this state because we have asked of them a lot,” Bentley said.

The governor said he might call lawmakers back to Montgomery in the fall if state revenue collections remain solid.

“We are not giving up on this,” Bentley said. “A special session and a 2 percent raise is not off the table, it just is at the present time.”

The Republican governor clashed with GOP legislative leaders over the raise. Bentley argued the state could afford it.

Legislative leaders said the state couldn’t afford both a raise and increased health insurance costs.

On the final night of the legislative session, Bentley had urged legislators to approve the $5.9 billion education budget and related spending bills in time for him.

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to attach executive amendments seeking the raise and then send the bills back to the Legislature for another vote. 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.

Senate President Pro Tem Del Marsh accused Bentley of breaking an agreement the governor and legislative leaders reached on the budget about two weeks before the session ended. Bentley said they agreed on including increased funding for health insurance, but that a raise was not discussed.

After his loss in the legislative skirmish, Bentley took a few parting shots at lawmakers.

Bentley laid blame at lawmakers' feet for the bills that died on the final night of the session when legislators adjourned several hours before their traditional midnight quitting time. A proposed payday loan database and a revision of the state's open meetings law were among the casualties, he said.

"It failed because the legislature adjourned five hours early. I believe in open meetings. I believe in transparency, and the legislature killed that bill."

Gov. Robert Bentley

"It failed because the legislature adjourned five hours early," Bentley said. "I believe in open meetings. I believe in transparency, and the legislature killed that bill."

Speaker of the House Mike Hubbard, R-Auburn, praised Bentley's decision to sign the budget.

"Unlike Washington, Republicans in the Alabama Legislature passed a balanced budget that provides needed funding for health insurance for education employees and retirees and prioritizes dollars that go directly into classrooms," Hubbard said.

House Minority Leader Craig Ford accused Bentley's raise push of being "election-year rhetoric" if he wasn't willing to call an immediate special session.

Bentley and the entire Legislature are up for election this year.
Japanese parts supplier joins local auto industry

Toyota Boshoku will build parts for Mercedes

By Patrick Rupinski
Business Editor

VANCE | A Japanese automotive supplier is the latest company to join Tuscaloosa County’s growing automotive industry.

Toyota Boshoku America announced that it will open a new production facility next year in an industrial park near Mercedes-Benz U.S. International in Vance. The company will make parts for a new model that Mercedes-Benz will add to its production lineup in Vance in 2015.

That new model has not been unveiled but has been described by Mercedes executives as a smaller, sportier sports utility vehicle. It will be the fifth model to be produced at MBUSI.

Shigetoshi Miyoshi, chairman of Toyota Boshoku America Inc., said his company will make an interior component for the new Mercedes model and that the plant will have 36 highly skilled employees.

Details about the interior component were not released, although a display Toyota Boshoku set up in the vacant production facility showed some of the automotive products it makes — seals, headliners, door trims, instrument panels and interior lighting.

Toyota Boshoku will occupy part of the BLG Logistics complex off Interstate 20/59 near the Mercedes plant. BLG has moved part of its parts logistics operation to a new warehouse site at the Mercedes complex, freeing up the space for Toyota Boshoku.

Toyota Boshoku is expected to invest about $1.5 million to equip the facility, officials said. The date for when its production will start has not been announced but will be tied to the production of Mercedes’ new SUV.

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Gov. Robert Bentley welcomed the new industry, noting that it brings “good skilled jobs and high-paying jobs to Tuscaloosa County and the state of Alabama.”

He said the jobs will require the new employees to have good science and math skills and a knowledge of technology—things he said the state is emphasizing in schools.

“One thing we are trying to do is educate (students for these types of jobs) and let students and their parents know of our skilled workforce training programs,” he said.

Toyota Boshoku, which is based in Japan, has more than $12 billion in annual global sales. The company is 95 years old and was founded by Sakichi Toyota. It originally did weaving on specialized looms. Today, the company has more than 32,000 employees worldwide, according to its website.

The Toyota family later founded the Toyota Motor Corp. The two companies, however, are separate publicly traded corporations. Both companies’ executive leadership includes descendants of Sakichi Toyota.
Local executive to advise on jobs

Bentley appoints Washington to workforce group

By Ed Enoch
Staff Writer

Alabama Gov. Robert Bentley has appointed Tuscaloosa businessman Fitzgerald Washington to the recently created Alabama Workforce Council, a board of business and industry leaders who will advise the state's two-year college chancellor and state school superintendent on policies and programs affecting workforce development.

"I appreciate the support I have received from Governor Bentley, his staff and the local community. I am looking forward to working with the other members of the council on making a difference in the lives of Alabamians," Washington said in a released statement, describing the appointment as an honor.

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Washington, the general sales manager at Buffalo Rock Co.’s Tuscaloosa Distribution Center, was appointed April 9 as the Region 3 Workforce Development Council of Alabama representative.

The council, which was approved during the regular session of the Legislature this year, will advise the state superintendent of education and the two-year system chancellor and is tasked with formulating policies, developing innovative educational workforce programming and discussing issues critical to the state’s workforce development needs.

Washington is one of three appointments made by the governor so far, according to Bentley’s Communication Director Jennifer Arcis.

Bentley also appointed Zeke Smith and Jerry Mays.

The state has 13 regional councils to help facilitate workforce development programs and services to support economic and job development in their regions. Bentley will appoint a member from each of the regions.

The council includes two at-large members appointed by the governor; one member each appointed by the lieutenant governor, the Alabama speaker of the House, the State Senate president pro tem; any additional members the governor deems necessary; and the director of the governor’s office of workforce development as an ex officio member.

Members serve at the pleasure of the state official who appointed them but for terms no longer than four years. Washington’s term is set to expire on April 9, 2018, according to Bentley’s letter announcing his appointment.

Earlier this month, Washington was rejected by the Alabama Senate Confirmations Committee as a nominee for the Alabama State University board of trustees, a move that Bentley described as disappointing. Bentley called Washington and fellow nominee Jacqueline Brooks highly qualified candidates.
UA’s AIME Day focuses on new technologies

17 teams scheduled to present or compete on campus today

By Ed Enoch
Staff Writer

The University of Alabama’s center devoted to helping staff and students take their ideas to market will have its annual event today featuring new technologies and the UA teams behind them.

UA’s Alabama Innovation and Mentoring of Entrepreneurs center will host AIME Day at the AIME building on campus from 8 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. today.

The 17 teams composed of UA faculty and students are scheduled to present or compete in the annual event. Some are competing for cash prizes or support to develop prototypes. Others will gain experience and feedback as they practice using their prototypes to sell their ideas to investors.

“We are going to be highlighting university technologies and entrepreneurial students,” said Rachel Frazier, AIME research engineer.

The teams, whose ideas range from software to technology with medical applications, will each give presentations that are about 10 minutes long, according to a release from UA. Seven outside entrepreneurial experts serving as judges will select winners and offer professional insight into commercial viability of the team’s pitches.

The event begins with opening

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remarks by Carl Pinkhert, UA vice president for research, followed by presentations throughout the day.

AIME Day marks the starting point for this year's competitors and the end point for last year's finalists, according to Frazier. The new teams are competing for support, while the past finalists are highlighting their work from the year.

The AIME center helps campus inventors and entrepreneurs commercialize their ideas. Crimson Innovation is a program for UA faculty, staff and students to get their ideas off the ground. Frazier described it as a vetting process for the commercial viability of the inventors' ideas. The Crimson Innovation process lasts about a year, she said.

"It's really trying to pull the technology out of the lab to the market," Frazier said.

Last year's Crimson Innovation finalists who built prototypes with the help of AIME will get a chance to display and promote their start-ups in a setting similar to conventions or trade shows where they would try to attract interest from investors or customers, said Dan Daly, AIME director.

"It's really for the education of the students how to use a prototype," he said.

The judges will rank the best displays.

Daly said it's likely that the top four finalists for Crimson Innovation this year will receive support. AIME has $100,000 to award this year, and the funds are based on the needs of the top winners to develop prototypes, he said. The finalists also get space in UA's business incubator if needed.

"We really just build prototypes until the money runs out," he said.

Frazier estimated it would be about a week before the finalists in the 2014 Crimson Innovation contest were announced.

Frazier said the judges also have the opportunity to decide to become business mentors to the Crimson Innovation finalists.

Daly said AIME also tries to help the teams find customers or investors to partner with and share the costs of development.

For the MBA students presenting this morning, AIME Day is a chance to make connections in the business and investor community through the judges, according to Daly.

"We are not necessarily looking for money at this point," he said.

AIME helps the inventors pair up with MBA students to help with customer development. Some of the MBA students come up with their own ideas they would like to develop into companies, Daly said.

AIME tries to help the MBA students recruit business people to partner with to run the companies while they are still in school. Frazier said AIME also assists the business students in finding help on campus to develop prototypes.

The student prototype completion today will recognize the best prototypes produced for the MBA students' ideas with cash prizes, from $500 for first place to $100 for third.
Portraits honors dean's service to UA

By Morgan Reames
Special to The Tuscaloosa News

A portrait unveiling ceremony honoring Milla Boschung, dean of the College of Human Environmental Sciences, was held April 9 at the University of Alabama System, spoke first at the April 9 ceremony.

"It was a celebration, but it certainly should have been a celebration of all the faculty and staff and students and all of their accomplishments," Boschung said.

"The dean does so much for our college. Much more than the average student would realize," said Angelique Dean, a senior majoring in hospitality management. "To see her hard work and dedication to HES be honored with a portrait is very special to us all."

The event, which hosted current faculty, retirees and UA employees, was run almost entirely by students.

"Because the University Club is an academic facility, it's always great to be here because there are students. The students are intimately involved in the entire running of the University Club," Boschung said.

Matt Stroud, catering and training manager at the University Club, said the students are involved with everything from planning to food prep.

"What we're trying to do here is give them a real-life, hands-on experience in a somewhat controlled environment in all aspects of food and beverage operations," Stroud said.

Students work with the University Club through a managing catering operations class, RHM 375.

"The students bring a real breadth of experiences, dynamic personalities and motivation," Boschung said. "It's really looking at the future of hospitality to have them involved."
Integration resolution passed by SGA Senate

Revised resolution shows support for Greek system desegregation

By CW Staff

In its regular meeting, the new Student Government Association Senate approved a resolution proposed by SGA President Hamilton Bloom to support the complete integration of The University of Alabama's Greek system last Thursday. Earlier in the day, the SGA Student Judiciary also announced its decision to uphold penalties imposed on Vice President for Student Affairs Stephen Keller by the Elections Board.

C&BA Senator Jonathan Hess presented the integration resolution at Thursday night's meeting and opened the floor for debate. Bloom discussed the positive influence of the Greek system and called for continued progress with this resolution. The bill was voted to be left in its original form and passed with an overwhelming number of votes on the floor.

In a statement released afterward, Bloom noted the progress the University and Greek system have made in the past two semesters, while adding those bodies “still have a long way to go.” He said he wants to commend students who have worked toward equality and justice while supporting students to move forward in the coming year.

“I believe the resolution passed tonight is a great solution,” Bloom said in the statement. “My administration and I are dedicated to seeing and encouraging results in the integration of both fraternities and sororities, and I believe the resolution passed tonight, in addition to the Diversity Caucus which will be introduced soon, are incredible first steps.”

This resolution comes weeks after the previous SGA Senate voted to end a resolution that would officially support the integration of the Greek system in March. In an email to the student body on April 10, Bloom listed the new resolution as one of the first he wanted to accomplish with the new administration.

“I am proud of the Senate's dedication to integration,” he said in the email. “Although our University has come very far over the past two semesters, we still have a long road ahead, and my administration is fully dedicated to seeing and encouraging results.”

Earlier Thursday, the SGA Student Judiciary released its decision to uphold the penalty imposed on Keller by the Elections Board. The Elections Board originally ruled Keller had violated the
SGA approves Bloom’s Greek system integration resolution

The second bill was proposed to specify certain rules of the Senate. This resolution would develop a new attendance system, which would give a Senator demerits for unexcused absences, with the exception of medical excuses. On the fourth demerit, a Senator could be removed from SGA with a two-thirds vote on the floor. Both bills have been sent to the SGA Rules Committee.

Additionally, the elections for speaker of the Senate and secretary were held during Thursday’s meeting. The election for speaker of the Senate was between Arts and Science Senator Branden Greenberg and Engineering Senator Caleb Lundy. After both candidates gave their respective speeches, the floor then voted for the next speaker. Greenberg won 34 to 10. The election for secretary was between Arts and Science Senator Erynn Williams and C&BA Senator Gracie Willingham. Willingham won the election 34 to 11.

Secretary-elect Willingham called for a more effective way of communication and the enforcement of the proposed attendance policy.

“I would like to utilize the Twitter account we have and make sure everything is publicized, and I also think we should make a Facebook page so students can send in suggestions,” Willingham said.
Resolution by UA's SGA backs Greek integration

TUSCALOOSA | Student leaders at the University of Alabama have approved a resolution supporting the full integration of the school's fraternities and sororities.

The move came Thursday just weeks after the student government association delayed action on a similar resolution backing an end to segregation in the Greek system in Tuscaloosa.

Fraternity and sorority members are a powerful force in student government at Alabama. The decision to postpone the resolution brought more attention to a system that came under fire in the fall refusing to admit black women into traditionally white sororities.

Rules have since changed and some white sororities now have minority members.

A sponsor of the original resolution, Chisolm Allenlundy, supports ending segregation. But he says the SGA's latest action is meant to generate positive publicity after the previous vote.
UA geologist honored at the White House

Obama, agriculture officials salute young scientists, engineers

Staff report

University of Alabama geologist Samantha Hansen was among a group of about 100 scientists and engineers honored Monday in Washington, D.C., for their innovative research and commitment to community service.

Hansen and the other recipients of the Presidential Early Career Award for Scientists and Engineers received their awards in a ceremony at the U.S. Department of Agriculture and were later greeted at the White House by President Barack Obama, according to a release from UA.

The award is given to nominees whose research is funded by the federal government or who work for the government. It is the highest honor bestowed by the U.S. government on scientists and engineers in the early stages of their independent research careers. Hansen learned she was to be a recipient in December.

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Hansen, a UA assistant professor of geological sciences, was nominated by the National Science Foundation, which awarded her a five-year $715,000 CAREER grant that has funded her trips to Antarctica to research the formation of the Transantarctic Mountains.

Hansen is studying the mountains using seismic sensors that use energy signals from earthquakes occurring worldwide to create images of the range, much of which is covered in deep snow and ice.

The NSF and other similar federal departments and agencies that fund research or employ the scientists and engineers make the nominations annually for the awards.

The nominations are based on early accomplishments that show great promise in science and engineering and contribute to the awarding agencies' missions, according to the White House.
No exhaust and no fumes

Joseph D. Bryant  jbryant@al.com

U.S. Transportation Secretary Anthony Foxx will be in Birmingham this week as UAB and the Birmingham Jefferson County Transit Authority present a new city bus powered by a hydrogen fuel cell.

The bus, which produces no tailpipe emissions, will operate on downtown routes for 18 months to test the performance and reliability of the technology.

Funding was provided by a $2 million federal grant to the UAB Department of Civil, Construction and Environmental Engineering.

Officials say Birmingham's bus is among just a few created worldwide.

GREEN ROUTE: HYDROGEN-POWERED BUS TAKING TO BIRMINGHAM CITY STREETS IN GREEN TECHNOLOGY PILOT PROGRAM.

In addition, Birmingham will have the only hydrogen-fuel-cell bus and fueling station in the Southeast.

Researchers hope the bus demonstration will aid in future design of fuel-cell bus fleets and ultimately automobiles.

Hydrogen fuel cells operate from storage tanks and oxygen from the air to produce electricity to run the bus. Rather than exhaust or fumes, the only byproduct is a trickle of water.

Foxx is scheduled to board the bus and tour several Birmingham landmarks. He will also speak briefly at the planned intermodal site on Morris Avenue.

Construction of the $30 million intermodal transit station is funded by $24 million in federal grants and $6 million in city matching money.

The current Amtrak station, along with the BJCTA building will be demolished and replaced with two, glass-front buildings and a plaza on Morris Avenue. The Greyhound bus station will also move into the new facility.
For the first time in its 67-year history, a black high school student has won top honors in the Gorgas Scholarship Competition.

Arrix Ryce, a senior at Jefferson County International Baccalaureate School, won the first-place tuition grant of $4,000.

Established in 1947 by a joint committee of the Alabama Academy of Sciences and the Alabama Chamber of Commerce, the scholarship competition was initially segregated with one contest for white students and a separate contest for black students.

While that practice ended by the 1960s, few black students participated until the competition was transitioned in 1998 to rely on funding from the Alabama Power Foundation and be administered solely by AAS, according to the Gorgas Scholarship Committee.

Ryce developed an interest in science at an early age, but his interest reached its peak under the direction of chemistry teacher and Gorgas teacher-sponsor Debbie Anderson.

Beginning in 10th grade, Anderson urged him to compete in local science fairs, leading him to take first place in both the Central Alabama Regional Science and Engineering Fair and the Alabama State Science and Engineering Fair.

By 11th grade, after being turned away by numerous professors, he started work as a high school research intern in a biophysics laboratory under the direction of professor Aaron Lucas at UAB.

The research work met the JCIBS requirement that he complete a volunteer work-study program before graduation. Ryce has volunteered there for two years.

His research, conducted with assistance from UAB undergraduate student Clarissa Weaver, included an investigation aimed at the prevention of neurogenerative diseases such as Alzheimer’s, Parkinson’s and Huntington’s diseases.

Ryce, the son of Tony and Sharon Ryce, will enroll in college this fall with a major in biochemistry. He plans to attend medical school.
EASY COME, EASY GO

EVANGELIST HITS THE ROAD: STUDENTS DROWN OUT TRAVELING STREET PREACHER WITH SONG.

Madison Underwood
munderwood@al.com

A traveling evangelist who commonly delivers his message at concerts, colleges and festivals set up shop outside of UAB’s Stimey Library on Thursday afternoon. He quickly drew the ire of students eating and studying in the area.

Kerrigan Skelly stood outside the library’s entrance with a Bible and a hat that read “Obey God,” preaching in a loud voice to passersby and students lunching in the area or waiting between classes.

Only a minute of preaching passed before one student spoke out. He muttered something when Skelly said the Bible condemns “fornicators.”

“You’re a fornicator?” Skelly asked the student, who replied that he was. “Well, the Bible has a message for you, young man: Stop it!” Fornicators get sexually transmitted diseases to “influence you to stop it,” Skelly said, and asked the student if he had an STD. He said no.

“Jesus will never lead you to get an STD,” Skelly said.

When the same student used an expletive later, Skelly said that he had “filth” in his heart. “It pours out of your mouth like water out of Niagara Falls. It pours out of your filthy heart.”

Focusing on sin

Skelly, founder of the Kentucky-based Pinpoint Ministries, emphasizes living an obedient life in his message and focuses on sin in his preaching.

On Wednesday, he visited the University of Alabama in Tuscaloosa, and faced similar resistance.

“We travel around visiting college campuses, as well as festivals, parades, concerts, spring events, in order to share the message of the Bible with as many people as we can,” Skelly said before showtime Thursday.

“A lot of churches will teach you that you can sin every single day and still be a Christian,” Skelly said. “They’ll teach you that no matter how much you sin, you’re still saved. They’ll say that all you have to do to be saved is believe, say the sinner’s prayer, ask Jesus into your heart and be baptized.”

“We want to preach the whole message, not a half-message or a partial message.”

‘I’m not a sinner’

Many of the students simply ignored Skelly. Others emerged from the library with confused looks on their faces. Many spoke back at Skelly while he preached.

When a student having lunch in the courtyard yelled that everyone sins every day, Skelly said that he didn’t.

“Oh, I’m not a sinner anymore,” he said. “Not anymore. No, I don’t sin every day. True Christians don’t sin.”

“We’re trying to do work; this is a college,” one student said, arguing that she pays tuition to be there. “You look not great, so please find another place,” she continued.

“All your words are in vain,” Skelly said. “All your attempts to get me to leave are in vain. I am steadfast.”

Soon, counter-protests developed. Music was the tool of choice.

After a group of students made a short-lived effort to sing “Kumbaya,” one man pulled out a portable speaker and proceeded to play Black Sabbath’s “War Pig” in order to drown out Skelly. He gradually moved closer to Skelly, until he, too, was standing in front of the library entrance. Skelly wasn’t fazed.

The student with the speaker left, but later returned with a laptop computer and took a seat in front of Skelly. A group of students gathered around him, and they began to sing Queen’s “Bohemian Rhapsody.”

As they sang, UAB Campus Police arrived with UAB Assistant Vice President of Student Life Andy Marsch. After several minutes of negotiation, Skelly agreed to move away from the library entrance, to the sidewalk by the street, eliciting cheers from the students.

Marsch said he had “more than a dozen” calls complaining about Skelly being disruptive of their studying. He said that while UAB is a public college, it does have the right to schedule events on its premises, and Skelly’s preaching wasn’t scheduled.

According to the Pinpoint Ministries online calendar, Skelly is scheduled to travel Friday to The Masters golf tournament, and next week to a Miley Cyrus concert in Nashville.
Researcher's protein crystal experiment set to fly to ISS

By: Jim Steele

A University of Alabama in Huntsville (UAH) biology professor's experiment that is set to fly to the International Space Station (ISS) could shed new light on the roles enzymes play in biological processes.

Developed by UAH-owned company iXpressGenes in association with Oak Ridge National Laboratory and utilizing a grant from the Center for the Advancement of Science in Space (CASIS), the experiment is among the cargo flying to space aboard the SpaceX-3 cargo resupply mission scheduled to launch to the ISS today.

The experiment, Protein Crystals for Neutron Crystallography (PC4NC), studies an enzyme inorganic pyrophosphatase (IPPase). The microgravity environment of the ISS may be essential to Dr. Ng's neutron diffraction study of IPPase to determine how it functions in cells. IPPase plays a critical role in DNA replication, gene expression processes, fatty acid synthesis and other critical biological reactions.

By studying the diffraction of neutrons from an IPPase protein crystal, researchers can locate the positions of hydrogen bonds in the enzyme, which will help determine how the molecule works in a cell.

"This is important because if you are designing an antibiotic or drug to interact with these enzymes, you first have to know how these enzymes work," said Dr. Ng. "It's the first time that we are going to try to decipher the mechanism of this enzyme's reaction.

"It's sort of like back in the days before they had cameras, when they would try to figure out how a horse runs," he says. "It wasn't until they developed cameras and slow-motion that they actually could see how a horse runs.

"We are trying to do that now with neutron crystallography to answer the question of how protein molecules work," he says. "We are trying to capture still shots of the enzyme reactions at certain stages. We are taking still photographs at atomic detail level so we can then put them together and get a sort of mechanistic view of how things work, in a sort of movie sense."

Neutron crystallography demands a protein crystal not easily obtainable on Earth.

"The requirement of neutron crystallography is that you need a large protein crystal," says Dr. Ng. "On Earth it is really difficult to grow a large protein crystal because of gravity."

The experimental thesis is that microgravity is an ideal environment for crystallizing large molecules like proteins, because gravity does not affect how the crystal structures form.

"So we will be bringing back from the International Space Station these grown large-volume

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crystals to utilize neutron crystallography to get the mechanistic view of how an enzyme works," say Dr. Ng.

The experiment is aboard NASA’s third contracted resupply mission to the space station by U.S. company SpaceX of Hawthorne, Calif. SpaceX’s Dragon spacecraft is slated to blast off atop the company’s Falcon rocket from the Cape Canaveral Air Force Station in Florida at 3:58 p.m. CDT today.

SpaceX developed its Dragon capsule, the only cargo spacecraft currently servicing the space station with the capability to return cargo back to Earth. Expedition 39 crew members plan to capture the SpaceX-3 Dragon using the ISS robotic arm at 6 a.m. CDT on Wednesday, April 16.

The capsule is scheduled to remain attached to the station until May 18. It then will return to Earth and splash down in the Pacific Ocean, off the coast California. It will return samples from scientific investigations currently underway aboard the space station. Dr. Ng will have samples returning from this flight as well as on the return flight of SpaceX-4 several months away to study long-term protein crystal growth effects under microgravity.

The International Space Station is a convergence of science, technology and human innovation that demonstrates new technologies and makes research breakthroughs not possible on Earth. The space station has had continuous human occupation since November 2000. It has been visited by more than 200 people and by a variety of international and commercial spacecraft. The space station remains the springboard to NASA’s next great leap in exploration, including future missions to an asteroid and Mars.
UAH Experiment Could Lead to Better Medicine with Fewer Side Effects

By: Beth Jett

More effective antibiotic drugs with fewer dangerous side effects — that’s what a team of biologists from UAH is aiming for with an experiment headed to space.

It all starts with the growth of a special crystal and analysis of protein molecules.

They’re contained inside a small box.

What comes from it could be the answers to better medical treatment for people.

“This is the core of drug design,” said Dr. Joe Ng, a biology professor at UAH.

He and a team of colleagues are trying to grow a special crystal in space and put the experiment on the SpaceX Three Rocket headed to the International Space Station.

The idea is to grow protein molecules and then dissect them to identify what is causing medical problems for humans.

“If it’s associated with any type of pathogenic function, then we’re able to design things that may block its function or re-engineer it,” said Ng.

He explained that it’s necessary to grow the crystal in space, since there’s no gravity to interfere with the molecules like there is on earth.

“It’s like trying to build a house in the middle of a hurricane, as opposed to building a house on a very very nice calm day,” said Ng.

The calmness of space is just what biologists need to get a one-millimeter crystal that could go a very long way in developing drugs that are more specific, with fewer side effects.

“If we can know the details of this, we can design targeted drugs that will inhibit those that are pathogenic and not that are human,” he said.

UAH is partnering with Oak Ridge National Laboratory.

They’re using a grant from the Center for the Advancement of Science in Space to pursue the experiment.
Cutting Wait Times: Huntsville Hospital Works With UAH To Fight Wait Times, Inefficiency

By: David Kumbroch

If you get stuck in the emergency room at Huntsville Hospital, you might not have to wait as long.

A partnership between the medical facility and the University of Alabama in Huntsville could improve your care.

Deep inside the Von Braun Research Hall at UAH, through the dingy corridors, past a labeled set of double doors, you find office D14. Inside, a man inhales oxygen and exhales efficiency.

UAH Research Scientist Joe Paxton admits, “I go into a restaurant. Well, if they move this over here and did this differently…”

His nameplate sits under a row of books on best practices.

Efficiency defines Paxton’s research and work at the university, probably a decent bit of his life too.

He describes it as “a disease.”

Maybe that’s why he took on Huntsville Hospital. Right now he works to make the small city of medical buildings run more smoothly.

Everything from registration to the supply rooms face scrutiny from Paxton’s team at UAH.

In the end, it should help the people who wind up in the hospital rooms most of all.

Huntsville Hospital’s Vice President of Emergency Services Tracy Doughty explains, “They ask questions that we don’t normally think about. Sometimes you get into doing things the old way, and it’s always been done that way. They’re questioning everything we do and making us take a second look at all of our processes.”

Paxton adds, “It’s really difficult when you’re down in the forest to be able to see things that you do on a day-to-day basis that don’t add value.”

They’ve already made progress, eliminating steps in the ER registration process.

The hospital says they’ve cut 12 minutes off of every ER visit. They get 94,000 visitors a year. That means they’ll save a total of 18,800 hours.

So for every engineer in Huntsville who paid a visit to the hospital and thought “I could do this better,” rest assured, the hospital will hear a lot more of voices just like yours.
Launch Delayed for New ISS Experiments

A space launch was postponed Monday and the delay is adding extra time to what many hope will lead to a medical breakthrough.

Those experiments will be sent up to the International Space Station. Not only will they be monitored from right here in Huntsville, one of the experiments themselves was designed here.

"We've been in business here for 13 years, so we've been in business pretty much since it started," said Ricardo Rodriguez, the Payload Operations Manager.

Here at the Marshall Space Flight Center, workers are kept busy studying science.

"We are in charge of the science that happens on ISS. This control room you see behind me is where we manage all of the science that is going on ISS," Rodriguez said.

Part of that science is from right here in North Alabama at the University of Alabama in Huntsville.

"There's a payload going up. It's a protein crystal growth payload, and what that means is they're growing crystals of our human proteins on orbit," said Rodriguez.

That could have big implications here on earth.

"The reason they do that is because in zero gravity. They get bigger crystals and then they can bring them back home and test those crystals. One of the things they're doing is designing drugs that can attack a particular protein so that rather than a drug attacking your body generally, it may pick up a cancer cell and attack just that cell," says Rodriguez.

But the Marshall Space Flight Center will have to wait just a little longer to start these experiments. Monday's SpaceX shuttle launch was delayed because of a helium leak.

"It's kind of nice to have home grown experiments going up there. The fact that Alabama does have a lot of science, Huntsville is a big science place. Birmingham is a huge science place when it comes to medical science. So we see their payloads going up and their science going up there all the time," said Rodriguez.

There hasn't been a rescheduled date yet for the SpaceX launch. The next opportunity for the launch could be this Friday.
Huntsville scientists will soon be testing a new way to fight infectious diseases — more than 200 miles above the Earth's surface. The experiment aboard the International Space Station will last for the next six months and explore how blocking cellular reproduction could turn off harmful viruses or bacteria.

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

Just getting the 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. That's the independent agency that controls science in the American laboratories on the space station.

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 are less flawed in microgravity. The difference is so dramatic that protein-crystal 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 said, they can theoretically use bio-engineering 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.
USA professor, students research chemical leak effects after W.Va. spill

Sally Pearsall Ericson • sericson@al.com

University of South Alabama assistant professor Andrew Whelton and USA graduate students are continuing research on the effects of a chemical spill that contaminated West Virginia’s Elk River on Jan. 9.

“We’re wrapping up our interpretation of the unfunded work we did back in January,” Whelton said. “The students are… also continuing work on chemical absorption or permeation of plastic piping; how it absorbs (and) the rate at which it absorbs and de-sorbs.”

The water crisis, which affected about 300,000 residents, began when 7,500 gallons of 4-methylcyclohexane methanol or MCHM, an industrial chemical used in the preparation of coal, leaked into the Elk River upstream of a regional water utility treatment plant. The leak was discovered after residents detected a licorice odor in their water.

Soon after the crisis began, Whelton and an engineering and science team of USA professors and students traveled to Charleston, at their own expense, to help residents impacted by the spill.

Back in Mobile, the USA students have been conducting experiments to determine the levels of the chemical’s permeation in the pipes, and the rate at which the chemical is leaching from the pipes back into the water supply after the original contamination.
Consultants: More time needed for UWA probe

President alleges political collusion by enemies skewed his evaluation

By Ed Enoch
Staff Writer

The independent consultants hired by the University of West Alabama board of trustees say they will need more time to investigate allegations by UWA President Richard Holland that trustees and administrators colluded to tamper with an annual presidential evaluation.

The board originally asked for a report by Tuesday, but former Tuscaloosa County District Attorney Tommy Smith said the investigators were still working their way through “an awful lot of documents” and interviews with UWA personnel.

UWA board President Terry Bunn said the trustees have requested the investigators attend an April 22 board meeting to give a status report. The agenda for the meeting was unavailable Tuesday.

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Bunn said he hopes after the meeting next week, the board will have a better idea of the schedule for when the report would be ready. While the investigators hope to finish by next month, Smith said it is difficult to provide an estimated date of completion for the investigation.

The board's executive committee appointed former UWA trustee and Livingston attorney Drayton Pruitt and Smith in March as special independent investigators tasked with investigating allegations made by Holland.

Holland publicly accused Bunn, Trustee Jerry Smith and Vice President of Institutional Development Clemit Spruiell of involvement in a report published ahead of the board's March 3 meeting. Holland alleged Spruiell, with the help of Business College Dean Ken Tucker, provided a series of concerns about Holland's leadership of the university and a list of respondents to provide negative feedback.

Holland has been on paid leave since the March board meeting, during which trustees voted not to extend his contract beyond the end of September and placed him on leave while the allegations were investigated.

Reach Ed Enoch at ed.enoch@tuscaloosanews.com or 205-722-0209.
Auburn cancels classes after threatening note

The Associated Press

AUBURN | Auburn University canceled classes Wednesday over a message found in a campus restroom threatening violence on the anniversary of the massacre at Virginia Tech University, school officials said.

Authorities had not substantiated any immediate safety threat, but police were still investigating, according to a university statement.

Officers increased visibility around the east Alabama campus of more than 25,000 students, and a city middle school was briefly locked down as a precaution before police gave an all-clear.

The university said it called off classes because of anxiety among parents and teachers over information circulated about the threatening message.

A university alert went out late Tuesday after the posts began spreading about the message on social media, and officials later called off classes.

"Reports late yesterday of a suspicious person on campus and a photo circulating on social media that connected the threat to the anniversary of the Virginia Tech tragedy raised legitimate concerns among the campus community," said Auburn spokesman Mike Clardy.

University police don't believe the alleged threat represented any danger, but the school increased security and suspended operations "out of an abundance of caution," Clardy said.

The shutdown came a day after

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**AUBURN**

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the University of North Alabama in Florence said it was increasing police patrols because of a threat posted on social media to "shoot up the campus."

Police determined the threat was not credible but stationed more officers on campus as a precaution, officials said.
Shelton State dean getting new job

Huebner appointed acting president of Bevill State

Staff report

The dean of student services at Shelton State Community College has been appointed acting president of Bevill State Community College.

Thomas M. Huebner Jr.’s appointment was announced Friday by Mark Heinrich, chancellor of the Alabama Community College System. His appointment will take effect Monday.

“Dr. Huebner has worked in a variety of positions in his more than 20 years in post-secondary education, and brings a wealth of knowledge and expertise to this new position,” Heinrich said in a news release. “Strong leadership through a transitional period is critically important, and I am appreciative of Dr. Huebner’s willingness to serve at this time.”

The news release said that Huebner played a key role in forming the partnership between Shelton State and Mercedes-Benz. The college offers training for students in robotics, electrical and other high-tech skills required in manufacturing.

Huebner has served as professor of communication studies, director of intercollegiate speech and debate, dean of admissions and vice president of student affairs during his career in postsecondary education.

He earned a bachelor of arts degree with majors in communication and English from Southwest Baptist University in Missouri, a master of arts in communication from the University of Georgia, and a Ph.D. in communication from the University of Southern Mississippi.

Bevill State Community College has more than 5,400 students on campuses in Fayette/Pickens, Hamilton, Jasper and Sumiton.

Thomas M. Huebner Jr.’s new appointment takes effect Monday.
ALABAMA GYMNASTICS

Crimson Tide right at home at Championships

By Charlie Potter
Special to The Tuscaloosa News

The University of Alabama gymnastics team will return to Birmingham this weekend to compete in the 2014 NCAA Gymnastics Championships. With the BJCC Arena being only an hour's drive from Tuscaloosa, the Crimson Tide gymnasts will essentially be competing in another home meet in front of an Alabama-dominated crowd.

"The home crowd makes us feel like we're in Coleman Coliseum," junior Kaitlyn Clark said. "The only difference is, we're on a podium, and we like that better anyways. We're really excited for that."

Alabama competed in Birmingham for the Southeastern Conference Championship in March and is glad to have only a short bus ride ahead. The Crimson Tide has seen success in its home state in the past.

This year marks the fifth time the NCAA Championships have been held within the borders of the state of Alabama. The 1991, 1996 and 2002 championships were hosted in Tuscaloosa, while the 2005 championships were hosted in Auburn. Alabama won the 1991, 1996 and 2002 championships and finished second in 2005.

"We talked about right from the beginning, my appreciation to (SEC) Commissioner (Mike) Slive and the administration because putting the SEC's in the same season, and the podium, all of that," Alabama coach Sarah Patterson said. "There's only four teams at the national championship that have had that experience, and they're all from the SEC. Hats off to Commissioner Slive for getting that done and helping us because I think it definitely will be a comfort zone for the SEC teams having already experienced it this year and the great competition we had earlier."

But Patterson is not alone in her excitement of the NCAA Championships being in Birmingham. Georgia coach Danna Durante praised the fans of the sport in the state of Alabama for their gymnastics prowess.

"The fans are knowledgeable. They're experienced," Durante said. "There's a great deal of energy in the area. They're very experienced gymnastics fans, and they understand great gymnastics when they see it, so I anticipate a very high energy and excited crowd and looking forward for our team to be a part of that."

The excitement has reached a peak for the teams preparing for the final competitions of the season, but for the senior gymnasts, this will be their final appearances of their collegiate careers.

Alabama senior Kim Jacob said she is happy to end her career with the Crimson Tide inside the state of Alabama.

"This is it," Jacob said. "So exciting, my senior year, getting to compete in Nationals at home, well, not at home but close to home. It's kind of just the perfect ending, and hopefully we can have that great meet that we're looking forward to."
ALABAMA GYMNASTICS

Patterson: UA facing ‘the best of the best’

By Charlie Potter
Special to The Tuscaloosa News

Coming off her 1,000th career victory and an NCAA-best 29th regional championship, University of Alabama gymnastics coach Sarah Patterson has seen her fair share of success this season. But she knows there is still one obstacle left between her team and the gymnastics program’s seventh national title.

Facing three teams with national championship trophies already in their trophy cases, Patterson said the Crimson Tide is up against the country’s best competition.

“I think the pressure is already there because everybody wants to advance,” Patterson said. “I think what it says is that you’ve got a lot of coaches that are very successful in doing this, so I think we’re up against the best of the best.”

Alabama will compete in the program’s 32nd NCAA Championships on Friday in the evening session, which begins at 7 p.m.

In Friday’s two semifinal sessions, the top three teams from each semifinal will advance to the NCAA Super Six Team Final, which begins Saturday at 6 p.m.

Alabama will open the semifinal session on a bye before starting competition on the uneven parallel bars, which is the same rotation the team followed in the regional championships in Seattle.

That familiarity is a welcome sight for the Crimson Tide gymnasts, who can use that comfortable state of mind to their advantage.

“We’re really just going to go out there and show that we are one of the top teams in the country,” junior Kaitlyn Clark said.

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"We were talking about how to be competitively great and what that means. Obviously, the goal is to win the national championship, but we really want to show everyone that we're competitively great."

In order to be "competitively great," Alabama must polish a few things before Friday's competition, senior Kim Jacob said.

"In the gym, we're focusing on the little details," Jacob said. "We have the major routines going, and we have the depth, if someone gets hurt, if someone gets sick, we know that any six we put up can hit a routine that's great and national championship-worthy. We're just focusing on the little details, trying to stick the landings, hit the handstands, finish it with that little extra spark."

For Alabama, the setting could not be better, as the team will only have to travel about 60 miles from Tuscaloosa. The BJCC Arena will likely be filled with screaming Crimson Tide fans, and the podium format is something the UA gymnasts would rather compete on.

Now, it simply comes down to execution and enjoying the moment.

"I think it's just excitement at this point because we've worked all season and we're finally here," senior gymnast Diandra Mil-liner said. "This is what we've been working for, and I think it's time to leave it all out on the line and we all know that. We're practicing our hardest and getting ready."

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University System of Georgia bans tobacco

ATLANTA | The board governing Georgia's public colleges and universities has approved a systemwide proposal to ban the use of all forms of tobacco products.

The University System of Georgia board of regents approved the ban last month, and the policy is expected to go into effect on Oct. 1, said University System of Georgia spokesman John Millsaps.

The tobacco ban applies to all employees, students, contractors and visitors on all property owned, leased, rented or in the possession of the University System of Georgia, officials said in a statement.

The ban will also apply to events being hosted by institutions within the system, officials said; exceptions to the policy could be made for research purposes.

"Our aim with this policy is to preserve and improve the health, comfort and environment of employees and any persons occupying USG facilities," Marion Fedrick, the University System's vice chancellor for human resources, said in a statement.

Fedrick added that officials feel a responsibility to promote health and well-being on University System of Georgia property. The University System of Georgia is also planning to provide information on tobacco cessation for those looking for help.

Enforcement of the tobacco ban will be left up to the presidents of each institution within the system, and visitors who don't comply with the policy may be asked to leave campus, officials said.

The Georgia Public Library Service and the Georgia Archives are also included in a list of University System of Georgia institutions.