APRIL 24, 2014

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Campuses honor Shelby’s impact on UA System

By Samuel Yang | Staff Reporter

Senator Richard Shelby and his wife Annette Shelby’s names have been on Shelby Hall since 2004. This year, they lent their faces to a commemorative pillar guarding the sidewalk en route to their namesake building.

Senator Shelby, first elected to Congress in 1978, is the vice chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee and its Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science and Related Agencies. Now, his influence on The University of Alabama System is commemorated in the pillar, building and fountain at the new engineering complexes.

“Senator Richard Shelby has played a vital role in helping our three campuses become national front-runners in scientific research and development,” said UA System Chancellor Robert Witt. “To be a top-tier competitor for grants and contracts, as well as for premier students and faculty, a university must have state-of-the-art laboratories and research centers. Senator Shelby clearly understands the direct link between university research and economic development, and his efforts on our behalf are having a direct impact on job creation and on the well-being of Alabama’s citizens.”

A strong education, with “world-class math, science and engineering facilities” at Alabama universities would help state residents find and create high-quality, skilled jobs, Shelby said.

This is a major draw for global companies who seek to do business in America. Companies like Mercedes, Airbus, Toyota, Honda and Hyundai want to locate talent from these pools, he said.

“We want to keep this job creation going and take it to the next level, and that’s why education has been a main focus of my career in the U.S. Senate,” Shelby said. “It’s all about opportunities for the people of Alabama—now and well into the future.”

For the Tuscaloosa campus, Shelby
helped secure federal funding to construct the Engineering Quad and Shelby Hall. In Birmingham, he contributed to biomedical research at UAB, sparked in part by their treatment of Annette Shelby’s lupus. The UAB interdisciplinary biomedical research building bears their names.

UAB President Ray Watts said Shelby is an important champion in Washington, D.C., for education during a time when research funding is choked by sequestration, among other things.

“Because of Senator Shelby and others like him who support leading-edge research for life-saving and improving advancements, UAB was awarded more than $190 million last year by the National Institutes of Health,” Watts said. “This support consistently positions UAB as one of the top 12 NIH-funded public research institutions in the country, which influences UAB’s annual economic impact exceeding $5 billion in Alabama.”

For UAH, Shelby secured funding for a building with multiple research centers and academic departments. That building is also named for him. UAH President Robert Altenkirch said Shelby’s support of their research programs have helped the institution in ranking and achieving several research milestones.

“Senator Richard Shelby has been a leading advocate for The University of Alabama in Huntsville for many years. He described UAH as the MIT of the South, and has been instrumental in creating that vision with his long-time support of the campus,” Altenkirch said.

Shelby said he has focused on STEM education because of global competition in hard sciences and engineering.

“World class educations in math, science, and engineering are critical to the ability of our young people to compete and win in today’s global economy,” Shelby said. “We don’t want to merely adapt to the next wave of technological progress; we want to be in the vanguard of it.”
AEA is fighting private school tax credits in court, at ballot box

By Phillip Rawls
The Associated Press

MONTGOMERY | The state teachers' organization is fighting private school tax credits in court and the architect of the tax credits at the ballot box.

The Alabama Education Association's political action committee filed a campaign finance report showing the largest donation it gave in March was $50,000 to Democratic state Senate candidate Taylor Stewart, an Anniston attorney and son of former U.S. Sen. Donald Stewart of Anniston. Taylor Stewart is opposing Republican Sen. Del Marsh of Anniston, who was the chief architect of the Alabama Accountability Act.

The Republican majority in the Legislature passed the act last year over the objection of most Democrats, and it took effect with the 2013-2014 school year. It permits students in public schools rated as failing to transfer to non-failing public schools or private schools. It provides state income tax credits of $3,500 per child for a parent to cover the cost of moving a child from a failing public school to a participating private school. It also provides tax credits to individuals and businesses that donate to programs providing scholarships for low-income students to attend private school.

AEA members filed two suits over the law after it passed. One contended the Legislature violated Alabama's open meetings law in passing the act, but that suit got blocked by the Alabama Supreme Court in September. The other addressed the specifics of the law, and it is pending before Montgomery County Circuit Judge Gene Reese. He has heard arguments from both sides but has not ruled.

AEA contends the act damages public schools by taking away millions of dollars. It says the tax credits reduce state income tax collections, which support public education.

Marsh and other advocates say...
the act allows students trapped in failing schools the choice to pursue a better education elsewhere.

Marsh said Thursday that he's not surprised AEA is supporting his opponent. "They oppose any school choice and always have," he said.

Stewart said that if he is elected, he will push to repeal the Alabama Accountability Act. "Our public education system is not failing, and we need to support public education," he said Thursday.

AEA spokeswoman Amy Marlowe said the Alabama Accountability Act is a major issue in deciding who to support. "It was our position that someone who voted for the Alabama Accountability Act voted against public education," she said.

The campaign finance report from AEA's PAC shows it gave large amounts last month to opponents of other legislators who voted for the act.

It gave $25,000 each to Republican Bruce Whitlock, a Cullman County store owner and bus driver; and former Democratic state Rep. Angelo "Doc" Mancuso, a Decatur physician. Both are running against Republican Sen. Paul Bussman of Cullman.

AEA's PAC also donated $25,000 each to Democrat Terry Jones, an educator from Hazel Green who is running against Republican Rep. Jim Patterson of Meridianville; educator Bobby Jackson of Athens, who is opposing Republican Rep. Dan Williams of Athens in the GOP primary; and Republican Ginger Fletcher, who is challenging Republican Rep. Kerry Rich of Albertville.

Marsh said AEA appears to be trying to elect enough legislators to repeal the act, but he said he doesn't expect that to happen because parents like having an option for their children.
City schools manage cuts

Tight funds to affect summer school program

By Jamon Smith
Staff Writer

During the 2011-12 school year, Tuscaloosa City Schools Superintendent Paul McKendrick and his administration made some big changes to how summer school was run.

The changes — opening summer school to all students instead of a limited number, opening it to high school, removing the $250 fee, having it in different parts of town, allowing students who weren’t behind to take classes to get ahead and adding enrichment activities like field trips — spurred the six-week program to record student enrollment numbers and academic progress.

In the summer of 2011, attendance rose from an average of 350 students to about 1,150. In the summer of 2012-13, attendance rose to about 1,550 students, said Elisabeth Davis, assistant superintendent of curriculum and instruction.

Academically, high school students recovered more than 146 class credits during the summer. Overall, on a scale of 1 to 10, summer school students went from scoring an average of 3.24 in math and 0.94 in language arts on their Classworks assessment to an average of 9.5 in math and 8.6 in language arts on the same assessment at the end of summer.

This year, summer school may not boast those same results. The system is cutting the program’s offerings, which will result in a reduced number of students in the program, no enrichment activities, no opportunities for students to get ahead and more.

The reason is money.

“We have to do some belt tightening,” said Ed LaVigne, chief school financial officer. “A year ago …, we spent $600,000 to run summer school. … Our goal is to save the system about $200,000 with summer school.”

At the end of the 2013 fiscal year, the system had a general fund balance of $19.6 million.

But because the system adopted a fiscal year 2014 general fund budget of $86.5 million when
SCHOOL

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its general fund revenues are estimated at $78.6 million, it is expected to end the fiscal year with a balance of $12.2 million.

The system's $19.6 million reserve has shielded it from the full brunt of its $7.4 million in overspending, but the reserve cannot survive another $7.4 million blow next year without falling below the state-mandated minimum one-month reserve of $7 million.

That's why the system is looking to make about $3 million in cuts.

"I hope that we only have a negative deficit of $3 million next fiscal year," LaVigne said. "The goal is to have our reserve at about $9 million instead of possibly $5 million."

Prospective summer school students won't be left completely without options for making up their work. Davis said high school faculty and staff have been encouraging students who are behind to take credit recovery courses two days a week in two-hour sessions and on Saturdays during four-hour sessions.

"That will run from now until the end of May, which is the last week of school," Davis said. "So we don't have a gauge on how many students we'll have in summer school yet until we get through with this. On April 29, I'm going to ask my counselors what the number (of summer school students) are in middle school.

"We aren't offering any type of program for elementary schools this year since they have 21st-century grants and MLK (Martin Luther King Jr. Elementary) has the SIG (School Improvement Grant). Hopefully all of this will take our summer school numbers down a bit."

LaVigne said other planned cuts include reducing the number of buildings open to save power, reducing access to areas of open buildings to save power and reducing employee counts by not replacing them when they quit or retire.

"We are generously staffed, and we'll have to use attrition to help get our deficit down," LaVigne said.

William Tunnell, a director for the Alabama Education Association, said he warned school board members in September not to approve a budget that was $7.4 million over revenues.

"The fear that I've had is that next year, student services, teacher jobs and people who operate with students will suffer because of budget cuts," Tunnell said. "Any time you have the central office growing and classroom teacher ranks are shrinking, there's a problem."

Tunnell said the system's plan is to retain 100 locally funded teachers. The problem with that, he said, is the system has 157 locally funded teachers this year.

"Whether someone actually loses a job or a job doesn't get filled, the remaining staff and students at those schools will still feel the difference," he said. "Your class sizes will get larger, or you'll lose a certain program that you had."

According to the April 14 personnel committee meeting agenda, system leaders are considering the creation of a new pre-K coordinator position and a new building and grounds assistant position for the 2014-15 school year. They're also considering filling a systemwide athletic director position.

LaVigne said the state revenues have been flat three years in a row.

"This is 2014, and as a district, we're still not back to 2007 funding levels," he said. "The only reason we're still in good shape is because the local revenue has continued to grow."

LaVigne said that in fiscal year 2007, the state funded the system $54.5 million. For fiscal year 2014, state funding is only $47.6 million.

"We're not a bank or a for-profit company," he said. "Educated students are dividends that we return to the shareholders, which is the community. That's why I don't think we need more than two months reserve in the bank."

"I believe in spending this year's money on the students. As long as we have an adequate reserve, which is one to two months operating funds, we need to return a dividend to our shareholders on an annual basis."

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William Tunnell, a director of the Alabama Education Association, said the school system's plan is to retain 100 locally funded teachers. The problem with that, he said, is the system has 157 locally funded teachers this year.
Ala. economic outlook brightens

UA forecasters say they believe state is on track to grow at 2.4 percent this year

By Patrick Rupinski
Business Editor

Economic forecasters at the University of Alabama are slightly more optimistic about the state's economy as they update their annual economic outlook for the second quarter.

UA's Center for Business and Economic Research economists said the state's economy is now on track to grow 2.4 percent this year.

In January, when they issued the 2014 forecast, they projected the state's economy to grow at a rate of 2.2 to 2.3 percent for the year, said Ahmad Ijaz, an economist and director of economic forecasting at the center.

Ijaz said the latest upgrade in growth is due in part to a look at revised data from previous months.

"We were having growth in the third and fourth quarters of last year, but it was coming from inventory," he said.

The buildup of inventory meant manufacturers would not need to produce as much going into 2014, so the Center for Business and Economic Research economists predicted a slowdown in growth in the first quarter, he said.

But when the revised figures for the last half of 2013 came in, they showed there was not as much growth in inventory as had been expected because consumers and businesses were spending more, he said. That resulted in the slight uptick in the state's economic growth for 2014.
The forecasted output growth of 2.4 percent would be a nice acceleration from last year's 1.9 percent, CBER said in its quarterly update.

About 25,000 payroll jobs could be added during the year, an increase of 1.3 percent from last year, it said. Economic growth of 2.4 percent would put Alabama's gross domestic production at about $163 billion.

The Center for Business and Economic Research's second quarter forecast said industries making vehicles and parts, metals, wood products, electrical equipment and appliances should see stronger output gains this year. Firms in professional and business services and health care and social assistance could also experience above-average growth, it said.

The majority of new hiring, however, will be in services, where broad-based gains could total around 18,000, including more than 3,500 retailing jobs.

Part of the Center for Business and Economic Research's forecast and its quarterly updates is based on a confidential survey of the state's business executives. Their responses show solid optimism about their businesses' prospects in the second quarter of 2014, the center's report said.

Their responses, which make up the center's Alabama Business Confidence Index, moved up 4.4 points to 55.6—the highest level in two years.
Wilson donates awards to UA
University of Alabama alumnus, world-renowned entomologist establishes research fellowship

By Ed Enoch
Staff Writer

Perhaps it is predictable that talk on the Monday after the Crimson Tide's spring football scrimmage turned to college football during a ceremony in downtown Tuscaloosa announcing a donation by a prominent University of Alabama alumnus. Though it might seem odd that the gridiron moment renowned entomologist and UA graduate Edward O. Wilson picked to celebrate was Auburn University's last-second return of a missed field goal that derailed dreams of a third consecutive national title for the Crimson Tide.

But perhaps it's just the complex perspective to be expected from the professor emeritus at Harvard University and Pulitzer Prize-winning author, one of the world's leading experts on ants, evolution and biodiversity.

"Edward O. Wilson is respected throughout the world for not just advancing knowledge but also for his beautifully articulated and insightful perspectives on what it means to be human and the responsibility we have as stewards of the earth," UA College of Arts and Science Dean Robert Olin said Monday as he introduced Wilson, who, Suzzy Wilson | TA

Dr. Edward O. Wilson, a two-time Pulitzer Prize winner and University of Alabama alumnus, has donated the 246 awards, prizes and tributes bestowed on him during his career to UA and established a research fellowship at the university.
Some of the awards donated to the University of Alabama by E.O. Wilson are displayed.

The Edward O. Wilson Biodiversity Fellows program will help develop young scientists in biodiversity and will support research in Alabama and elsewhere,” Olm said.

Reflecting on his age, Wilson, 84, said he decided to donate the collection of awards to his alma mater as a way to preserve it.

Olm said the collection will be displayed at UA as an inspiration to future generations of researchers.

The announcement of the gifts came ahead of the start of the Edward O. Wilson Biodiversity Symposium, which begins today at UA. Representatives from multiple countries and 18 states are scheduled to attend the symposium. The three-day symposium featuring international biodiversity experts and Wilson will include presentations and discussions on the state and future of biodiversity on the planet.

Wilson is scheduled to present "The State of Global Biodiversity" today and "How Humans and Ants Conquered the World" on Thursday.

Wilson said his discussion of the state of global biodiversity will include how much biodiversity exists globally, how much of it is being destroyed and how it can be saved.

"We have slowed it a little bit, but only partially," he said.

His second talk will include an exploration of what has helped humans and ants be so successful. Wilson said he will use parallels between ants and humans as he explores the topic. The talk will also address further in future publications.

Wilson said Monday he plans to focus on the meaning of human existence and its impact on biodiversity in future books.

"I think the only people who can explain the meaning of human existence are evolutionary biologists," he said, acknowledging that his idea was controversial. Wilson argued that an understanding of biology and how systems evolve is key.

The UA alumnus traced his fascination with the natural world and insects to the biologically rich landscape of his childhood in Alabama. Wilson, who lived in Mobile, Brewton and Decatur, recalled discovering something new each time he explored.

"I knew right then and there I wanted to be an entomologist," he said.

Butterflies were the first insects to captivate him, though ants soon became his focus. Wilson said he was already working seriously on ants when he came to UA in 1948, a first-generation college student. His parents were tolerant of his passion for entomology but approved of his interest in college.

Wilson was faced with a choice after high school graduation. He was working as an office boy in a steel mill in Decatur. With his diploma, he could rise quickly through the ranks to a well-paying job at the mill, he said, or he could go to UA and pursue his dreams of being a scientist.

"I'm glad I didn't stay," he said.

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The Tuscaloosa News Tuesday, April 22, 2014
CW staff awarded for race article

Reporting addressed segregation in Greek system on UA campus

Staff report

Staff members of the University of Alabama’s Crimson White student newspaper were among the winners of the University of Oregon School of Journalism and Communication 2014 Ancil Payne Awards for Ethics in Journalism. Editor Abbey Crain, magazine editor Matt Ford and editor-in-chief Mazie Bryant were chosen for an Ancil Payne Award for their work on “The Final Barrier,” the September 2013 article reporting allegations that black students were passed over for bids at traditionally white UA sororities because of their race.

The annual award recognizes journalists and news organizations that act with integrity and character and demonstrate an extraordinary commitment to ethical conduct, even when faced with economic, personal or political pressure, according to the April 15 release announcing the winners. Michael Phillips of The Wall Street Journal and Reuters were among the other winners for 2014.

The awards ceremony will be on May 15 on the University of Oregon campus in Eugene, Ore.

The award was established in 1999 by Seattle broadcasting legend Ancil Payne, who died in 2004, to reward journalists who act with integrity and character, restore public trust in the media and inspire people to do good work.
A-DAY FIELD DAY

Annual spectacle is a family tradition for many

By Angel Coker
Staff Writer

Shadows of kids and adults were cast onto the Walk of Champions and steps of Bryant-Denny Stadium Saturday as the sun beat down on their backs. It looked like Christmas in April with a sea of crimson dotting the green spring grass surrounding the cement. For many Alabama fans, A-Day, the final football practice of spring, in Tuscaloosa is as big of a tradition as Christmas is anywhere.

Infants to teenagers, parents, grandparents, couples and friends surrounded the stadium and blanketed the Quad, Fan Zone and the Walk of Champions, where Terri White stood in line with her sister and their grandchildren to get a picture with the Paul W. "Bear" Bryant statue. White said it took three cars to get her family to Tuscaloosa, including her sister who drove from Tallapoosa, Ga.

"To me, (A-Day) is more about bringing the family in," White said.

About five yards behind White, Grace Nelson was a blur of pink in her girl's Alabama jersey as she ran the football cradled in her arms to her older brother and his friend Brody Clark. Clark has been to A-Day before, and his parents say they hope to make it a tradition for the family.

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Alabama fans flood the field Saturday after the annual A-Day game at Bryant-Denny Stadium.
A-DAY

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"It's really fun. We sit out there and watch them practice, and it's the time of our lives," Clark said.

Aiden Blankenship, 5, has only seen the inside of Bryant-Denny on TV. As he swayed from side to side on his father's shoulders with an excited grin, his grandfather walking beside him said he was excited to see running back Derrick Henry on the field.

Dennis Schultz, who drove from Nashville, Tenn., said he came to see Henry as well. Schultz said A-Day is about seeing new faces on the team and spending time with his two sons without the women of the family.

"They were brought up right: Bama fans," Schultz said. "It's like in Harry Potter you couldn't speak the word Voldemort. In our home you can't say Auburn.'

Joe Brocious isn't an Auburn fan but close enough. In return for his brother attending his team's spring game with him, the Gator fan drove from Navarre Beach, Fla., to see how the Tide would shape up after some of its best players graduated last year.

"I want to see what the Tide's got after last year's successful season, until the end, we should say," Brocious said. "I want to see how they reload."

The smell of charcoal wafted through the air under the shade of the quad's oak trees while the Brocious brothers talked football and drank from Bud Light cans with two of their friends.

At 11 a.m. they headed into the stadium behind a line of fans that started at the lower level gates and backed up along a fire engine parked on Wallace Wade Avenue.

His brother may make Brocious an Alabama fan yet. "I don't mind them until they play each other," Brocious said of the Crimson Tide and Florida Gators. "If I had to choose a second team, like if the Gator's stadium blew up, no more, I'd go with the Tide."
Local police probing string of robberies late Saturday

Three separate incidents took place near the UA campus

By Stephanie Taylor
Staff Writer

Tuscaloosa police are investigating three robberies that happened near the University of Alabama campus Saturday night and early Sunday morning.

The victim of the first robbery said that he was walking to his apartment on Grace Street at 8:15 p.m. when a man approached, said Sgt. Brent Blankley, a Tuscaloosa police spokesman.

The robber asked how he could walk through a nearby gated area, he said.

"The victim said 'yes,' and went around the corner to show him how to get through the fence," Blankley said.

"The suspect pulled a silver pistol, pointed it at the victim and told him to hand over his wallet and phone."

The victim, 20, said that the man left the area and headed south toward the Strip on University Boulevard. He called police an hour later and was only able to describe the suspect as a black male.

Three hours later at 11:26 p.m., a victim and a friend were walking in the 500 block of Frank Thomas Avenue when a man approached with a pistol.

The man pointed the gun at the victim, 18, before reaching into his pocket and stealing his phone and wallet.

The robber is black, has a stocky build and short hair, Blankley said. He is about 5 feet 9 inches tall and was wearing a red or purple long-sleeved flannel shirt and tan pants. It is believed that he left the area in an older

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CRIME

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model light-colored Nissan sedan.

The third robbery happened at 2:25 a.m. in the same area. The victim, 20, told police that he met a group of people for the first time Saturday and that they had been drinking together for several hours.

"Later in the evening, after having drinks, the three suspects became aggressive and attacked the victim," Blankley said.

The suspects, who are white, left the area with the man's cellphone and wallet. No further description of the men was available.

No arrests have been made in any of the cases.

Anyone with information is asked to call University Police at 348-5454, Tuscaloosa Police at 205-349-2121 or Crime Stoppers at 752-7867 (STOP).

Reach Stephanie Taylor at stephanie.taylor@tuscaloosa news.com or 205-722-0210.

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Less affluent more prone to obesity?

Mike Oliver  
meliver@al.com

Socioeconomic influences on diet and exercise are often blamed for racial disparities in obesity rates.

So go the assumptions: The less affluent have less access to healthy foods, like fresh veggies and fruits, and are less prone to exercise due to less access to parks and fitness centers. Thus a greater risk for obesity.

But new findings at UAB published in the research journal Obesity suggest those assumptions might be false. At least for African-American women.

Bisakha Sen, associate professor of health care policy at UAB, used health behavior data for whites and blacks from Alabama and Mississippi from the national Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System for her study. By analyzing gender wage disparities, she observed how much could be explained by differences in socioeconomic status, diet and physical activity levels.

Without the variables of disparities in women, only 10 percent of the differences in white and black females could be explained.

"It's pretty well-known that disparities in obesity are more in women than in men, but I thought surely we would get rid of 50 percent of the disparity, not just 10," Sen said. "So while we think we know what matters — socioeconomic status, fruit and vegetable intake, physical activity level — these actually matter very little in explaining racial disparities among women."

So what is the reason behind the difference in obesity rates in black and white women?

Other factors like culture or genetics may need to be studied more closely, Sen said.

But she says policymakers should take note:

"Right now, many are focusing energy making sure minorities get enough fruits and vegetables," Sen said.

Nothing wrong with that, but Sen’s findings suggest African-American women can consume the same level as white women without much effect, which leads to more questions.

"Our findings suggest you can get African-Americans to consume the same level that whites do, and — while it appears to work for men — it won't do very much in women. Let's start thinking of what we're not thinking of when collecting big data sets like BRFSS. What do we need to be asking, and what else could be affecting racial disparities in obesity that we aren't looking at already?"
UAB Commencement

By: Jesse Chambers

BIRMINGHAM, Alabama -- UAB will host two commencement ceremonies at Bartow Arena on Saturday, with about 1,206 of the school's 2,800 spring graduates taking part, according to a news release from the school.

Also on Saturday at noon, the UAB Graduate School will host a doctoral hooding ceremony at the Alys Stephens Performing Arts Center with about 45 candidates taking part.

The commencement for graduates of the College of Arts and Sciences and School of Education will take place at Bartow at 9:30 a.m. All other graduates will attend a 2 p.m. ceremony, also at Bartow.

An estimated 600 students will participate in each ceremony, according to the release.

Tickets are not required for guests at the commencement ceremonies. Seating is first-come, first-served. The doors at Bartow will open at 8:30 a.m. for the 9:30 a.m. ceremony and at 1 p.m. for the 2 p.m. ceremony.

The ceremonies will be videotaped and available for viewing online at www.uab.edu/commencement about a week after the ceremonies.

Bartow Arena is located at 617 13th St. South. The Stephens Center is located at 1200 10th Ave. South.

Other UAB commencement ceremonies are as follows:

--The Doctor of Nursing Practice hooding ceremony will be held at the Alumni House on April 28 at 6 p.m.

--The School of Optometry doctoral convocation and hooding ceremony will be held at the Stephens Center on May 16 at 2 p.m.

--The School of Medicine commencement ceremony will be held at Bartow Arena on May 18 at 1 p.m.

--The School of Dentistry commencement will be held at the Stephens Center May 31 at noon.
WILL YOURS BE NEXT?

PRESSURE ON HOSPITAL BUDGETS: 10 ALABAMA HOSPITALS HAVE CLOSED IN THE LAST 3 YEARS.

Mike Oliver • moliver@al.com

It's a long list with some familiar names: Hartselle Medical Center, Chilton Medical Center, Cooper Green Mercy Hospital, Infirmary West.

All gone. Joined by... Florala Memorial, Elba General, Searcy, Grell Memorial Psychiatric, Randolph Medical Center, and Southwest Alabama Medical Center.

Ten Alabama hospitals shuttered in the last three years.
Seventeen have succumbed since 2000.

Huntsville's Hartselle Medical Center closed in 2012. And Decatur Morgan Hospital's Parkway Campus, known as Parkway Medical Center before it became part of the Huntsville Hospital system in 2012, is no longer admitting patients. While the emergency room, radiology department and some clinics remain open, all in-patient services have been taken over by Decatur Morgan Hospital's Decatur campus, formerly known as Decatur General.

Part of it can be blamed on long-term and ongoing national trends where outpatient treatments, better technology and other factors reduce expensive inpatient stays.

HOSPITAL CLOSINGS
Alabama hospitals that have closed since 2011:
Florala: Florala Memorial Hospital, Dec. 27, 2013
Elba: Elba General Hospital, Jan. 31, 2013
Clanton: Chilton Medical Center, March 5, 2013
Birmingham: Cooper Green Mercy Hospital, Dec. 31, 2012
Mount Vernon: Searcy Hospital, Oct. 31, 2012
Mobile: Infirmary West, Oct. 31, 2012
Montgomery: Grell Memorial Psychiatric, Aug. 31, 2012
Hartselle: Hartselle Medical Center, Jan. 31, 2012
Thomasville: Southwest Alabama Medical Center, Aug. 5, 2011
Roanoke: Randolph Medical Center, March 17, 2011

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But recently there are extreme pressures on hospital budgets related to health care reforms, Medicare cuts, the lack of Medicaid expansion and Alabama’s peculiar health care landscape, which is pushing hospitals, especially those in rural areas, to the brink.

There are 94 acute care hospitals in Alabama, according to the Alabama Hospital Association.

During 2012, the average operating margin for a rural hospital was 1.1 percent, and 22 rural hospitals were operating with a negative margin.

Glenn Sisk, CEO of Coosa Valley Medical Center, said the three biggest factors stressing hospital budgets in Alabama are no Medicaid expansion, $225 billion in Medicare cuts to hospitals and Alabama’s low wage index which helps determine Medicare reimbursement rates.

“It’s well-documented Gov. Robert Bentley will not expand Medicaid,” Sisk said. “The problem associated with that goes back to the passage of the (Affordable Care Act) bill several years ago. It imposed cuts of $225 billion nationwide to hospitals.”

Gov. Robert Bentley

“While that was a difficult pill to swallow for hospitals, there was the promise that everyone in America would have some level of insurance.”

But when the Supreme Court allowed states to make their own decisions regarding Medicaid expansion, that promise of expanded revenue, not to mention expanded health care, was not delivered in about two dozen states that chose not to expand.

Dr. Will Fernamy, president of UAB Medicine, said the financial pressures on hospitals can be seen through the lens of the payers.

The three biggest payers of hospital bills are Medicare (38 percent), commercial insurance (31 percent) and Medicaid (20 percent).

Medicare dollars have been cut. Medicaid is a money loser for hospitals. Fernamy said UAB gets about 67 cents on every patient dollar spent on Medicaid. And so to make ends meet hospitals have to squeeze what they can out of the commercial insurance side, which in Alabama is primarily the formidable Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Alabama, which has major market share and is quick to point out it has had some of the lowest premium rates in the country.

The trend toward high deductibles is leaving more patients with the inability to pay the bills before meeting their $6,000 or $12,000 deductible, he said.

**Retracing the problems**

Now the roots of some of Alabama’s hospital woes go back many decades when the state took advantage of funding to build small community hospitals, said Dr. Allen Perkins, chairman of Department of Family Medicine at the University of South Alabama, and president of the Alabama Rural Health Association. As time passed, those hospitals didn’t have the reach needed.

“Alabama is behind the curve on regionalization of care,” Perkins said.

In other states when hospitals reached their useful life, new bigger hospitals were built, he said, like building a big new high school to address population trends and needs.

Perkins said a regional system of care giving is needed, but it need not necessarily include hospitals.

“We need care delivery, but we don’t need all care to be provided by hospitals, and we don’t need hospitals to provide every service.”

But we do need health care infrastructure, he said.

“Optimistically, what I see happening is the leadership in the state comes to understand that without health care infrastructure, we cannot recruit industry,” Perkins said. “Pessimistically, I see a lot of hospitals closing.”

Glenn Sisk
CEO of Coosa Valley Medical Center
UAH Planning for Regional Vehicle Manufacturing Center

By: David Wood

Greater research ties between vehicle manufacturers and The University of Alabama in Huntsville (UAH) will result from a regional Industry/University Cooperative Research Center (I/UCRC) for vehicle manufacturing that has received a National Science Foundation grant to support its planning.

Lead institution Auburn University and partners UAH and Tennessee Technological University are using the grant to plan the creation of the Southern Alliance for Advanced Vehicle (SAAV) Manufacturing Center. The center will have sites at each campus, and the trio of universities is already in discussions with Clemson University, Louisiana State University and the University of Alabama about possible future expansion.

"A vehicle is anything that transports people or products from one location to another," said Dr. Phillip Farrington, UAH’s principal investigator and a professor of Industrial & Systems Engineering and Engineering Management. "That would include automobiles, planes, trains, ships, submarines, spacecraft, missiles, unmanned aerial systems and helicopters."

Regional automotive manufacturing growth is one of the factors driving the need for the SAAV Manufacturing Center. Alabama ranks fourth in the U.S. for automotive exports, with 5.4 billion in exports and auto plants owned by Mercedes-Benz, Honda, Hyundai, Toyota Motor Manufacturing Alabama and Navistar International. Regionally, they are joined by Volkswagen, Nissan and General Motors plants in Tennessee; Nissan in Mississippi; a Kia plant located in Georgia just across the border from Auburn; and BMW in South Carolina.

"The South has become a hotbed for automotive manufacturing and we are interested in serving their needs," Dr. Farrington said. "In addition, Huntsville is a major center for the aerospace industry, another important component in the economy of Alabama that we want to support, as well."

Familiar names among Huntsville aerospace firms include Dynetics, The Boeing Company, General Dynamics, Lockheed Martin, Raytheon and Northrop Grumman, among many others. "We’re interested in addressing the manufacturing concerns in those industries, and helping suppliers that support those industries," Dr. Farrington said. "In the future, we hope to include manufacturing enterprises from Mobile, such as organizations in the shipbuilding industry."

"The automotive and aerospace industries share common challenges related to manufacturing processes," said UAH center co-investigator Dr. Farbod Fahimi, assistant professor of Mechanical & Aerospace Engineering. "By investing in the new center, they gain access to teams of experts that find solutions to the common challenges, while only paying a portion of the cost of high-caliber research and expertise."

Core thrust areas for the SAAV Manufacturing Center will include manufacturing systems design; technologies and processes for mass customization, including using lightweight-high
strength materials or additive manufacturing; Lean manufacturing and management; data driven approaches for advanced quality control; and occupational safety and ergonomics.

“In our initial meeting with the representatives of the automotive and aerospace industries, we proposed some research thrusts to initiate discussions about their interest,” Dr. Fahimi said. “We collected valuable feedback and suggestions from the representatives, which help us identify their areas of interest. Our next step is to meet with all participating universities to finalize the thrust areas such that they cover the diverse areas of interest of the automotive and aerospace industries.”

Having the center in Alabama helps the manufacturers in the state and it may become an attractor to other manufacturers such as Remington, Dr. Farrington said. “We’re ultimately interested in trying to improve the conditions for manufacturers across the state,” Dr. Farrington said. “In my view, our economic future – in the state, in the region and in the country – is based on our ability to manufacture products. The faculty and staff working to establish this center are trying to help manufacturers in Alabama and the Southeast region, which ultimately helps all of us.”

The lead principle investigator at Auburn is Dr. John Evans, professor of Industrial & Systems Engineering, who graduated from UAH with a master’s degree in Industrial and Systems Engineering before going on to earn a doctorate in the subject. At Tennessee Tech, the principal investigator is Dr. Stephen Canfield, professor of Mechanical Engineering.

At UAH, Dr. Farrington is joined in the center effort by co-investigators Dr. Sherri Messimer, associate professor of Industrial & Systems Engineering and Engineering Management; Dr. Sampson Gholston, associate professor of Industrial & Systems Engineering and Engineering Management; Dr. Fahimi; and Dr. Sara Graves, director of the Information Technology and Systems Center (ITSC).

“The SAAV Manufacturing Center will be a real asset for UAH, industries and government in providing the infrastructure for collaboration to address difficult and real-world problems in various aspects of manufacturing,” said Dr. Graves.

“There will be large volumes of data from various participants with different needs and requirements for usability, availability and security. The ITSC will be a key member of SAAV that will provide data management, data mining and integration, analytics and visualization, and cyber security capabilities to the Center.”

Initial industry response to the SAAV Manufacturing Center has been strong, with over 40 letters of interest gathered among the three educational institutions, more than doubling the 18 minimum required. As part of the planning process under the NSF grant, the universities are now talking with possible industry partners. The planning grant expires in March 2015.

“We are working to develop some common synergies and understandings between the automotive industry and aerospace industry in discussing their manufacturing challenges,” said Dr. Farrington.

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“We’re trying to strengthen the collaboration between the Alabama engineering and manufacturing organizations, then reach out to natural regional industry partners to help manufacturers in the state and region. We want to build up a stronger research infrastructure to support the manufacturers in Alabama and throughout the Southeast.”

The SAAV Manufacturing Center’s planning grant follows announcement in February of an NSF grant to plan a center at UAH to focus on advanced composites in transportation vehicles, in collaboration with lead organization Mississippi State University.
CHATTANOOGA

DRAWING ATTENTION

Lucy Barry  lberry@al.com

An award-winning 3D printing startup founded in the Rocket City will soon take part in the GIGTANK accelerator program by the Company Lab (Co.Lab) in Chattanooga. Nestegg Bio, which was launched by University of Alabama in Huntsville student Tanner Carden and business collaborators Devon Bane, Gavon Carden and Tim Gauldin, uses 3D printing to cut the costs of producing cell structures for drug testing.

Co.Lab will provide $15,000 in seed funding to Nestegg Bio during the annual accelerator program, which takes place May 12-July 31. Businesses selected for the program receive the tools, capital and connections needed to bring their product or service to market.

3D PRINTING: UAH STUDENT'S PRODUCT EARN A SPOT IN ELITE GIGTANK ACCELERATOR PROGRAM.

"The investment from the Co.Lab is in exchange for a small percentage of equity," Carden said in a news release. "We went up to Chattanooga to see the Co.Lab and the surrounding facility and we were very excited. I really like the community they have synthesized up there."

Nestegg Bio's founders, who are discussing the possibility of securing a place at HudsonAlpha Institute for Biotechnology, plan to keep their growing startup in Huntsville. The agreement Nestegg Bio has with Co.Lab will not require them to relocate to Chattanooga after it incorporates this summer.

In addition to Co.Lab's $15,000 investment, Nestegg Bio will receive free workspace and housing at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga during the program.

Nestegg Bio, which was one of two teams to recently win UAH's second annual E-Launch business plan competition, was previously awarded $9,908 from the UAH Charger Innovation Fund. The fledgling company is currently competing in Boeing's New Business Plan Challenge.

"We intend to win that," said Carden, who noted Nestegg Bio is in the process of building a new custom printer.

An event hosted two months ago by Rocket Hatch at Zero Point Frontiers in Huntsville was the catalyst Nestegg Bio needed to connect with Co.Lab. Founded by Antonio Mentoya, Rocket Hatch is a new Huntsville-area organization that supports startups in the area.

"Nestegg Bio is a prime example of the innovation potential within our local startup community," Mentoya said. "We will continue to grow and connect our startups and entrepreneurs to the global ecosystem and bring the best resources available to our region."
UAH Students Have Inexpensive Craigslist Find Doing the Work of a $20,000 Robot

By: David Wood

A team of student employees at UAH’s Systems Management and Production Center recently combined inspiration with innovation.

They made a $250 motorized wheelchair do the work of a $20,000 robot.

“We turned an electronic wheelchair into pretty much a portable and remote control device that, you can send it into a building and it will take panoramic pictures of all the rooms,” said Jessica Sisk.

Equipped with a Ricoh Theta panoramic camera on a mast, the device has helped school systems digitally map their emergency plans.

As its first official task, the robot built on the cheap photographed UAH’s new Charger Union building for inventory and insurance purposes.

The prototype also cuts down on job time.

“Dramatically. We were taking between four and six hours to do an entire school, now we went and did the Charger Union on campus in an hour and a half or two hours.”

The machine rolls into position and snaps the shot, which is stitched together in an app and is viewable on a smartphone within seconds.

“For $250 off Craigslist,” Sisk said.
UAH student team designs project for Special Operations Forces

By: Dr. Christina Carmen

A 10-member team of capstone design students from The University of Alabama in Huntsville (UAH) has created a torpedo-like device with the goal of stopping suspect sailboats while they are under engine power by fouling their propellers.

Advised by Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering lecturer Dr. Christina Carmen and headed by team leader Dustin Coffman, the students are working on the Dept. of Defense project for the U.S. Special Operations Forces (USSOF). The project is made possible through the Stevens Institute of Technology (SIT) Systems Engineering Research Center (SERC).

"The U.S. Special Operations Forces (USSOF) have specific needs and, via the Stevens Institute of Technology Systems Engineering Research Center, the Dept. of Defense is able to specify their needs that, in turn, are made available to universities via Capstone design class projects," says Dr. Carmen. "It is always exciting to see what senior engineering students will create. They are not, in any way, inhibited in exploring unique solutions. It's an honor for UAH students to work on this project and aid the USSOF as they protect the security of our nation and our allies."

After a detailed design process, the UAH team devised the tubular device that can be dropped over the side of a pursuing boat or ship and guided by remote control to cross in front of the craft to be stopped.

"When we first started, we almost approached it with a James Bond approach. We initially designed a very complex device that had bladders and motors and a propulsion system," Coffman says. "The design we originally had would have taken us at least three years to develop and test."

"This was a complex project and I was immediately impressed by each team member, as they understood the challenges that they would face in the design of this disablement system," Dr. Carmen says. "They also knew that they had to fabricate a working prototype and present it to the USSOF, and that takes true dedication.

"The team initially wanted to design and build the underwater torpedo that would be launched from a vessel and be guided to the target, at which point the disablement system would be activated," she says. "However, that would have been far too complex for a senior design project. I do, however, give credit to my students for being ambitious and wanting to accomplish this grand endeavor. However, their budget was $5,000 and it would not have been realistic to design and build the entire system."

With that input from Dr. Carmen and a tight deadline for the project, the team analyzed their design for complexity and decided to focus on a portion of the device that involves a net deployment mechanism, leaving propulsion and guidance development to a future team.

The design starts with a main tube, inside which are three smaller tubes on top that contain floats and three on the bottom containing weights. The netting, made of an ultra-high molecular weight polyethylene called Dyneema, is located in the main tube between the top and bottom tubes.

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As the 100 feet of net is deployed from the tube, the weights immediately sink and the floats rise, spreading it so it can wrap around and foul the propeller of the boat to be stopped.

The team has tested the net to be sure it floats properly and has pulled the assembled torpedo device to conduct a full-scale net deployment in water.

Besides the engineering challenge, Coffman says he learned a lot about teamwork.

"The most critical thing is communication," Coffman says. "Without clear communication, you can't expect your design to work well."

The UAH team's USSOF customer visited Huntsville last December and was pleased with their design.

"This project provided a very real-world engineering design experience as the team had to meet the requirements, adhere to a budget, schedule, complete detailed technical and materials analyses, hazard and risk assessment, cost assessment, human factors evaluation, failure modes analysis, testing, etc.," says Dr. Carmen. "The final product will also come with a detailed Operations Manual. The team has also gained invaluable speaking and technical writing experience."

The UAH team has been invited by the North Alabama American Society of Mechanical Engineers (ASME) section to be its guest speakers on May 7.

"The capstone design projects provided via SERC provide exceptional experience for our students here at UAH and we value our relationship with SIT SERC," Dr. Carmen says. "Affording students the opportunity to work with external customers and sponsors only accelerates their ability to do so when they are in the professional world."
Trend Shows Women Prefer Turkey Hunting for First Hunt

By Brian McCombie

Hearing three tom turkeys gobbling in the distance, Whitney Hurt and her guide set up next to a logging trail cutting through the jungle of pine trees, palmetto and brush that is the Mississippi Delta in the spring. Hurt’s guide started calling. One tom moved closer but then faded away, as did another. All this took about an hour, and just as Hurt was thinking the morning’s hunt was going nowhere, bird No. 3 suddenly boomed out a series of deep gobbles—very close.

Her back to a tree, Hurt shifted toward the direction of the calls and got her shotgun ready, while her guide coaxed the tom with clucks and the occasional yelp.

“That tom got pretty close to us—we could tell by his gobbles—but then he just shut up,” Hurt remembers. “I was looking at that brush and it was all green, and then all of a sudden there was this white spot: his head, maybe 20 yards away. I aimed and shot.”

And she bagged her tom.

It wasn’t Hurt’s first tom—she comes from a hunting family and married into another hunting family—but it was the first bird taken at the inaugural Outdoor Women Unlimited (OWU) Annual Turkey Hunt.

Hurt notes that turkeys are among the top game species hunted by OWU’s 5,000-plus female members, especially for an introductory hunt. A big-game hunt, for example, can be intimidating for a first-time hunter, says Hurt. The colder weather and the chance to potentially spend all day in a deer stand can seem like way too much for a newbie.

But spring turkey hunting is much more appealing to the outdoor-oriented women Hurt knows, and the (usually) warmer weather is a real help. More importantly, turkeys provide a better chance for some action, even if it’s only hearing gobbles in the distance.

“I feel like turkey hunting’s a lot more interactive,” says Hurt. “You’re trying to fool that bird into range, calling, and he’s gobbling. You can never get a shot and still have lots of excitement.”

OWU and Hurt are on the leading edge of a national trend. According to U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) surveys of outdoor recreation, there were 116,000 women turkey hunters 16 years old and older in 1996. By 2001, that was up to 174,000 hunters, and, though the number dipped down a bit in 2006, the 2011 USFWS survey revealed an impressive 332,000 women turkey hunters—a doubling of female participation in just 15 years.

Turkey hunting as a whole also has grown over this same period, from 2.189 million hunters (male and female) in 1996, to 3.1 million in 2011, according to USFWS. So while it’s not a huge surprise that overall numbers of women turkey hunters have gone up, they’ve actually increased at a much faster rate compared to male hunters.

According to Richard Aiken, an economist with USFWS’ National Survey office, “The percentage of turkey hunters who were female was 5 percent in 1996, 7 percent in 2001, but was

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all the way up to 11 percent in 2011.” And these increases are real, he adds, not simply a matter of adjusting for possible sampling errors.

Teresa Carroll, Hunting Heritage Program coordinator for the National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTF), notes that recent surveys also show a growing percentage of women afield for a key reason: to provide food for their families.

“We’re not sure if they are hunting for the meat because of the economy or as a way to provide their families a healthier food source,” says Carroll. “But the data show that, for women, the meat is now a primary reason for the hunt. Being with friends and family used to top the list [as a reason for hunting]. Not now.”

Interestingly, once the plan was formulated to hold an annual turkey hunt, OWU had no problem lining up sponsors to help with equipment and costs. Weather by provided the shotguns, SA-459s in 20-gauge, Winchester Ammunition the 20-gauge turkey loads, Mississippi-based Longleaf Camo the clothing and Stream light a variety of flashlights. The Mississippi Department of Tourism heard about the plans and offered logistical and funding assistance to bring the hunt to the Magnolia State. (OWU is a national group, but is based in Alabama.)

“At Weather by, we feel it’s critical to the growth and longevity of our hunting heritage to promote women hunters and bring attention to their impact as role models to future generations of young women and young men alike,” says Mike Schwiebert, the gunmaker’s vice president of marketing. “I’m sure the majority of the public see hunting and shooting as a predominantly male activity, and I think they’d be surprised to learn women are some of the best shooters and hunters out there.”
UT Arlington's new president sets a standard

By: Betty Dillard

Since taking the reins as the eighth president of the University of Texas at Arlington nearly a year ago, Vistasp Karbhari is committed to advancing the university’s national and international profile while encouraging and celebrating student, faculty and staff success. Karbhari is a familiar face not only across the campus of nearly 33,800 students and more than 2,200 faculty members but also around Arlington and North Texas. Over the past few months, he’s been meeting and working with the community to build on the university’s assets and see UT Arlington achieve greater prominence in academics and research, particularly in achieving Tier One recognition as a premier public research institution.

“Together, we will not just continue the journey toward Tier One status, but we will become a world class institution, a preeminent place for intellectual pursuits and a driver of positive change,” Karbhari said.

A noted engineer and researcher, Karbhari earned his bachelor’s and master’s degrees from the University of Poona in India and his doctorate from the University of Delaware, where he served on the faculty of the College of Engineering and as a scientist at the Center for Composite Materials.

In 1995, he joined the University of California, San Diego, and served as a professor of structural engineering and of materials science and engineering. He was provost and executive vice president for academic affairs at the University of Alabama in Huntsville from 2008 to 2013. During his more than 20 years in higher education, Karbhari has received numerous awards for research, teaching and innovation. He holds one patent and has served as principal investigator or co-principal investigator on more than $37 million in research projects.

This is your first role as a university president. Has the reality of it been different from what you expected?

In many ways, the job is exactly what I expected – but yet so much more. I am continually amazed by the depth and breadth of excellence we have at UT Arlington and with the opportunities to share our story with so many diverse groups of alumni, supporters and friends. I knew that the University of Texas at Arlington benefited from its location at the epicenter of a vibrant, growing economy. But the past year has cemented my belief that UT Arlington is uniquely positioned to be the model 21st century urban research university – one that combines excellence with access, serving a base of undergraduate and graduate students, but one that also pushes its limits to implement innovative ways of providing knowledge and education to students, and lifelong learners, within Texas and across the globe.

To be a truly comprehensive research institution is to balance the arts and the sciences, to shape minds for the worlds of business and nursing, but also for engineering and social work, architecture and education. UT Arlington is a place known for access, diversity and excellence, one where teaching and research are balanced and move forward in symphony, and one where innovation infuses everything we do. You’ve been on a “journey of discovery,” meeting with faculty, staff, students and community leaders these past few months. Anything surprise you that you’ve learned since being on the front lines?

No, I haven’t been surprised. But I have been pleasantly pleased to find the world of opportunity that exists at UT Arlington. The fact that we are centrally located in the fourth-largest metroplex in the United States is an advantage, and we will continue to leverage our location and serve our
community as our region continues to grow and its economy expands. We know that much of our region’s economic growth is driven by transportation and logistics, manufacturing, health and biomedical technologies, telecommunication and information technologies, and business services, among other industries. UT Arlington’s academic and research programs already are very much aligned with these areas, and the university is primed to play an increasingly important role in not only enhancing the intellectual capital of the region but also catalyzing economic growth.

I do think we must loudly and continually remind our community, supporters, civic and business leaders of the excellence that exists here among our faculty and students and of the work we are doing not only to join the ranks of top-tier universities in the United States, but around the world. Our electrical engineers, for example, have developed micro-windmills that may be used to power personal electronic devices, such as cell phones.

Our bioengineers are developing new ways to use the body’s own stem cells to regenerate bone tissue and are making advances in the field of neural regeneration.

Our High-Energy Physics group literally developed the computer software systems used to manage and analyze mammoth amounts of data collected through the global particle physics experiments under way in Geneva. Our analytical chemistry faculty members are foremost experts in chiral separations—a field vital to drug development and other processes—and in analyses of environmental sampling.

If anything is surprising, it is how many UT Arlington resources can be brought to the table to meet the needs of our thriving region and the demand for a highly educated and highly productive workforce.

Has your vision for UT Arlington changed since becoming president? What are your goals and what goals have you set for the university?

Nothing has changed, though we continue to assess our strengths and shape our vision for the university that UT Arlington will be. When I joined the university almost a year ago, I said that UT Arlington would strive to be the best of the best—not just a Tier One institution by state metrics but an institution that will have a national and international reputation as a leader in scholarship, research and creative activity across all colleges and disciplines.

This year alone, UT Arlington has been ranked by the Chronicle of Higher Education as the nation’s seventh-fastest growing public research institution and has been ranked fifth in the nation for diversity based on our undergraduate enrollment. We have the highest degree-production ratio of all University of Texas System campuses—which indicates the relationship between baccalaureate graduates in proportion to the total number of full-time equivalent undergraduates enrolled four years earlier. Our research program is expanding at a rate of about 10 percent a year, and our faculty continues to gain national and international recognition including the recent addition of four Fellows of the National Academy of Inventors, bringing our total to eight—the highest of all universities in the nation. Likewise, our students continue to gain plaudits for their successes.

As a university we are completing our strategic plan that will set out a very ambitious agenda and will establish strategies and tactics for continuing to advance the university and ensure that UT Arlington sets the standard for others to follow.

UT Arlington is on a quest to attain Tier One status. What are some of the challenges the university faces reaching Tier One designation?

Like many public research universities, engaging alumni, civic and business leaders and

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members of our communities in a very active, thriving philanthropy program is among our
greatest challenges – but it also is a wonderful opportunity.
Many of our public institutions were not actively engaged in such programs until 2003, when
state support for universities began a steep decline.
Nurturing philanthropic relationships takes time and much effort on the part of the institutions,
our alumni and our supporters. But strong philanthropy programs can make the difference
between attracting and supporting the brightest students, recruiting world-class faculty and
providing the resources and technology they need to thrive and succeed. So this is extremely
important to the future of UT Arlington.
We must work hard every day to engage our supporters, prove the value of our work and make a
difference in the world around us.

Tell us about UTA DNA, the new website.
We launched UTAdna.com in February as a graphic vehicle to showcase our expertise around 12
themes at the university that dominate our research and academic enterprises. Among these
themes are Defense and Security; The Built Environment; Entrepreneurship and the Economy;
and Health and the Human Condition.
The Built Environment, for example, highlights research and expertise in the areas of
architecture, civil engineering, and urban and public affairs. For Health and the Human
Condition, the interactive website allows visitors to explore research such as the advances being
made in organ tissue regeneration, to learn about campus lectures by health care experts and to
view social media interaction on the broad topic.
Ultimately, the message at UT Arlington is that collaboration across disciplines leads to
innovation and solutions to the world’s most pressing problems. UTA DNA helps showcase
faculty and student excellence, events and achievements in a fresh and dynamic way.

Did you know what career you wanted to pursue when you were in college?
My father was an engineer, and he led the development of hydroelectric projects across India
when I was young. We moved across India, and I had unique opportunities to not just see
projects but to also appreciate a breadth of culture and society. We saw firsthand the impact that
technological advances could have on communities. I may have briefly pondered other fields of
study, but in my heart I knew early on that I wanted to be a scientist and an engineer, contribute
to society and make a difference.

What career advice do you give to college students?
Focus, dream and stretch beyond what you think is possible. Do what you love and with all your
heart and soul. But also think realistically about the future. For some students, that may mean
picking up a double major or a minor that helps develop different skills or an alternate expertise.
In picking an academic area that fuels your passion, make sure you also choose a career path that
will enable you to support yourself and your family.
UWA names search panel

Trustees appoint committee to find new president

By Ed Enoch
Staff writer

LIVINGSTON | The University of West Alabama board of trustees appointed a nine-person search committee to find a replacement for President Richard Holland during a resumption of its March quarterly meeting on Tuesday.

The committee includes faculty and staff, the student government association president and trustees.

"I know we are excited to get this process started," board President Terry Bunn said.

The search committee includes assistant professor and Faculty Senate President Amy Jones, interim Provost and Dean of the UWA College of Liberal Arts Tim Edwards, physical plant director Bob Holycross, SGA president D'Anthony Jackson and assistant professor Aliquippa Allen. The trustees on the committee are Jerry Smith, Victor Vernon, Sheila Cloud and Randy Hillman. Smith is the chairman of the search committee.

The board put Holland on paid leave on March 3 while special investigators appointed by the trustees look into allegations by the president that members of the board and administrators colluded to sway employee comments during the last presidential evaluation. Holland made the allegations ahead of the March meeting, where trustees voted not to extend his contract beyond the end of September.

On Tuesday, the trustees also approved a consulting agreement outlining the powers and pay for special administrator John Blackwell, who was appointed at the March meeting to oversee the campus during Holland's paid leave.
UWA

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The consulting agreement between UWA and Blackwell’s firm VISVI LLC. names Blackwell as the special administrator and grants him all the power of the UWA presidency.

Blackwell, a former Auburn University trustee and onetime treasurer for UWA, is empowered to undertake all actions that would be performed by the president and to conduct the daily affairs of UWA to ensure proper operation of the campus during Holland’s leave or until further action by the board.

The university will pay VISVI $192,000 annually, or $16,000 a month, for Blackwell’s services as special administrator under the agreement. UWA will also provide Blackwell a residence during his time as special administrator and provide a vehicle and any other necessary equipment.

Blackwell made his first presentation to the board as the special administrator on Tuesday. He praised the staff and members of the UWA community with whom he had met during his month on campus.

“I have felt it has been totally positive. Everybody wants to move on, is dedicated to moving on,” Blackwell said.

The trustees also heard a brief status report from the special investigators, who said they hoped to make a written report on their findings in May. Last week, the investigators were originally expected to make a report, but they requested more time to complete their work. The investigators have compiled 3,500 pages of testimony during their investigation, which began the week after the board put Holland on leave, investigator Drayton Pruitt said.

“It is a very serious matter and a matter we have taken to heart because the University of West Alabama is the economic foundation of West Alabama,” Pruitt said.

Pruitt said the anticipated report is due in the next two weeks and planned to reconvene the board at that time to hear a report on the findings.

The board voted in March to retain Pruitt; a former UWA trustee and Livingston attorney, and former Tuscaloosa County District Attorney Tommy Smith as investigators. The two are tasked with investigating whether there was any wrongdoing by trustees, administrators or faculty and staff during the annual presidential evaluation.

The board went into a lengthy executive session Tuesday to discuss possible future litigation. Bunn said he was unable to comment on the potential litigation at this time.
UWA's president calls for unity

University's board of trustees will meet Tuesday to consider forming presidential search committee

By Ed Enoch
Staff Writer

Ahead of the University of West Alabama board of trustees meeting on Tuesday, President Richard Holland is urging unity in the UWA community following the decision not to extend his contract last month, a move that put his supporters at odds with the board.

The board is scheduled to reconvene its March meeting on Tuesday to consider approval of a consulting agreement with the special administrator hired to oversee the campus after Holland was put on paid leave and appointment of a presidential search committee to find a permanent replacement.

On April 17, Holland released a statement urging unity moving forward and asking his supporters to stop dwelling on his removal.

"I'm trying to get people to move past this," Holland said Friday. "The university needs to move forward."

Holland's supporters took to social media beginning late last year to lobby on his behalf ahead of the vote on his contract.

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Terry Bunn, left, president pro tem of the University of West Alabama board of trustees, and UWA president Richard Holland listen during a meeting on March 4 in which the board of trustees voted not to renew Holland's contract.
extension, encouraging people to contact trustees and state officials on his behalf.

The March meeting drew a large audience to watch as the board declined to extend Holland's contract beyond the end of September and subsequently put the president on paid leave while special investigators looked into his allegations that trustees and administrators had tampered with an annual president evaluation process.

The situation prompted an alumnus to contact the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, the university's accrediting organization. Following Holland's removal, the supporters shifted attention to lobbying the governor's office. On Friday, Holland called the divide over his removal from the presidency disruptive.

"I do not wish to be a hindrance to the university moving forward. It is of utmost importance that every facet of the university community is focused on the future of the institution. There are many challenges in our region that only the university, its faculty and staff, and board of trustees can address," Holland said in his statement. "I leave with great pride in what has been accomplished by the faculty, staff, students, alumni and board of trustees that I have worked with during my 46-year tenure at UWA. Let all of us focus on the future success of the University of West Alabama."

Former Auburn University trustee John Blackwell was named special administrator when the board met in March in Livingston. Details of the agreement for Blackwell's consultancy, which outlines the duties and authority of the position, were not available ahead of the meeting, but will be released if the agreement is approved by the board on Tuesday, according to a spokesperson for the university.

The board is also scheduled to hear a preliminary report from its investigators, Livingston-based attorney and former UWA trustee Drayton Pruitt and former Tuscaloosa County District Attorney Tommy Smith. The two are tasked with investigating any improprieties by trustees, university administrators or staff during the annual presidential evaluation. The report on the finding was originally expected by Tuesday, but the investigators requested more time to complete the investigation, Smith said.
Shelton interim president vies for N.O. job

Delgado Community College eyes Joan Yvette Davis, 2 others

By Ed Knott
Staff Writer

The interim president of Shelton State Community College has been named as a finalist in the search for a new chancellor for Delgado Community College in Louisiana.

Joan Yvette Davis is one of three candidates for the job. Davis has served as interim president since June 2013.

Shelton State recently posted a job listing for the presidency. The application period closed in early April. The Alabama two-year system chancellor’s Advisory Search Committee is scheduled to meet on April 30 as part of the search for the Shelton State presidency.

The other finalists for the community college chancellor in New Orleans are John L. Graham, the executive director of the Manhattan Educational Opportunity Center in New York, and Gordon May, the past president of the Auburn Hills Campus, Oakland Community College in Auburn Hills, Mich., according to a release from the Louisiana Community and Technical College System.

The finalists have been invited to participate in a series of interviews with the Delgado Community College search committee on Wednesday in New Orleans.

The finalists are also scheduled to participate in a series of public forums and interviews with Louisiana Community and Technical College System President Monty Sullivan, according to the release.
Mr. Basketball: William Lee has a bright future ahead at UAB.

He is no longer even the prize blue chip in UAB's 2015 recruiting class. The Alabama Sports Writers Association named him its 30th Mr. Basketball at a Montgomery banquet sponsored by the Alabama High School Athletic Directors and Coaches Association.

Here's a quick recap of things to know about Lee:
- He averaged 22.2 points, 12.7 rebounds, 9.2 blocks, 3.9 assists and 3.2 steals per game.
- He is 6 feet, 9 inches in shoes but still a few biscuits shy of 200 pounds.
- He chose UAB over Alabama, Auburn, Georgia and others.
- SMU coach Larry Brown told Lee's coaches he was "the best power forward in the nation" as he recruited him the past year. He knows he can be a pro player.
- He holds the national record with 26 blocks in a game and has more than 1,000 for his career.

Despite those staggering block totals, he's no Mutombo on the offensive end. Lee scored the final five points in regulation to force overtime in the 4A state championship game, including a game-tying trey as time expired. He also scored the final five points in regulation to nail down the 4A title.

Dream up the best of the best around Alabama basketball. Think of the guy who might rate as best leaper or hold the best shooting touch.

Then mix in the player with uncanny raw athletic ability and a knack for altering shots. Throw in a dollop of the ability to pass the ball. He is not a supreme ball-handler, but who is at that size? He needs to work on his left hand, but that ball will be in Jerod Haase's court now.

Miss Basketball is Sylacauga's Shakayla Thomas, the Florida State signee who already had McDonald's All American and Class 5A Player of the Year on her list of senior season highlights.

"Being All-American and Miss Basketball is the best feeling," said Thomas, who averaged 33.1 points, 12.8 rebounds and 3.3 assists last season while helping lead Sylacauga to a state runner-up finish. She had 31 points, 15 rebounds and six four blocks against Wenonah in the championship game.

Thomas finished her career as the state's all-time leading rebounder with 2,643 boards, and the No. 6 scorer with 4,242 points. Lee was surprised when his name was called.

"I never thought I would win this," Lee said. "There were a lot of great players in this room. I didn't come here thinking I was the best player here or anything. That's not me. That's not who I am."

That's a good sound bite a PR guy would love to trot out. Yet real life reflects that.

There's the story surrounding the shot that would become that game-tying three-pointer against I. O. Johnson in the title game. Dallas County coach Willie Moore told Lee he wanted him to take the last shot.

He had never asked that of him before.

Lee hesitated. He looked to his left. The Hornets had already lost one of their top scorers and best ball-handlers due to fouls. He saw nods of encouragement. Then he looked to his right. That side nodded.

Then assistant coach Kenny Allen interjected.

"You are taking the last shot and you are going to make that shot," Allen said.

He understood and then had his Jimmy Chitwood moment.

"I got it," Lee said. "I got this."

"That's just the way he is," Moore said. "He doesn't see himself like other people see him and he is the best player in the state is what he is."

Get ready Blazers. Mr. Basketball will report on June 1. He's not expected to redshirt.
UAB fans were going to get their first look at new head coach Bill Clark’s first team Friday night, but weather interfered and risk for further injury was too great.

The game was scheduled to be played at West Campus Field — UAB’s on-campus soccer field, a field used year-round.

Clark said the program initially made the decision to have the game at West Campus Field because of the on-campus setup. There was going to be a block party, but that was also canceled. The band was going to be there, and there would have been autographs after the game. Moving the scrimmage to Legion Field wasn’t in the works, Clark said, because of the on-campus activities planned for the fans.

"Nobody is more disappointed than I am," Clark said. "It was a big deal to us. It wasn’t like we just saw a little bit of rain and decided to call it off. We were excited. We had been planning this for months. The biggest thing was that people were going to get to see us."

Moving the scrimmage back a few days wasn’t an option, either. UAB starts spring finals next Monday.

But the big topic for the spring has been injuries. UAB had around 30 players injured in January. Most have recovered, but the offensive line was still low on numbers.

Clark said UAB was still going to hold the spring game, but playing on a wet field would have caused a greater injury risk. Cameron Blakenship, a junior with plenty of experience, was injured earlier this month and ruled out for the game.

"It’s coach speak, but our No. 1 deal is player safety," Clark said. "Once we locked ourselves into playing (at West Campus Field), we were going to be there or not do it. We have eight offensive linemen. We can’t lose any more or lose anyone else.

"It would only take one offensive lineman getting hurt and then you can’t hardly scrimmage."

Losing Blankenship for the game dropped the number to seven — Victor Salako, Roscoe Byrd, Brian O’Leary, Zach Sims, Vincent Hunter, Dominic Sylvester and walk-on Bryant Novick. Hayden Naumann is still recovering from a knee injury. Several defensive linemen are also injured.

Clark was also disappointed because they planned to host several recruits in the upcoming class, and the 2014 high school signees were supposed to be in attendance.

Practice No. 15 won’t happen because of upcoming finals, but Clark said he expects the full roster to be healthy by summer workouts.

Clark said that, as of now, all spring signees are on pace to qualify. Carson Miller and tight end Neal Gray both left the team after spring practice began.

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In other news:

1. The quick emergence of quarterback Cody Clements allowed some stability with the first unit at practice. Usually, four-man quarterback battles last all spring and summer, but Clements distanced himself early. He’s pushed by Jeremiah Briscoe.

2. Not many people were familiar with redshirt freshman linebacker Jalyn Coleman, but the Daphne native moved to the top of the depth chart at one spot this spring. He’ll have to hold off returning starters this fall, but is in good shape to play.

3. Alabama A&M transfer Ja’Wen Arrington, a Wrennaw product, moved to the top of the depth chart at running back while returning starter Jordan Howard was out. The walk-on sat out last year after transferring.

4. Cornerback Jimmy Jean started all of last year, but was running with the second unit behind Kelton Brackett and LaMarcus Farmer this spring. Jean was one of Garrick McGee’s prized recruits in 2013. Don’t count him out for fall, though.

5. No serious injuries. UAB went into the spring with 30-something injuries, got most of them healed, and reported no injuries that would last into the fall. Everyone should be healthy by June.

Drew Champlin
NCAA leader wants quicker change

New governance system aimed at helping student-athletes

By Michael Marot
The Associated Press

INDIANAPOLIS | Mark Emmert wants the NCAA to fast-track upgrades for college athletes — regardless of whether a player union is pushing for them.

One day before the board of directors meets in Indianapolis and two days before Northwestern football players are scheduled to vote on creating college sports' first union, the NCAA president told The Associated Press that a new governance system could solve many problems by providing more opportunities for college athletes and their families.

"It's the intention of the membership and my hope with the governance (proposal) in place, that the 65 universities in the Big Five conferences and the other schools can come to a quicker resolution about ways to help student-athletes," Emmert said Wednesday.

Speaking to reporters earlier this week, Southeastern Conference Commissioner Mike Slive expressed his desire for the Big Five conferences (the SEC, ACC, Big Ten, Big 12 and Pac-12) to have autonomy over certain issues.

Chief among those issues was for the 65 institutions comprising the Big Five conferences to provide full cost of attendance for its student athletes.
NCAA
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"...the Big Five conferences have put forth a proposal, as part of the restructuring process, to create autonomy in certain areas for the five conferences," Sive said. "The nexus for the autonomy is what we believe, what we call a vision for the 21st century as it relates to our relationship with student-athletes."

Along with full cost of attendance, Sive highlighted other areas of the vision including:

- "Purifying the health, safety and nutrition needs of our student-athletes."
- "Creating more opportunities for student-athletes to complete their undergraduate degree, if their education is interrupted, cost-free."
- "Updating rules governing agents and advisors, to better assist student-athletes during their transition from the collegiate setting to professional sports, including those outside of athletics."
- "Addressing the time commitment of the student-athletes to ensure a balanced collegiate experience."
- "Providing comprehensive support for the cost of the educational success of academically active student-athletes."
- "Giving the student-athletes a voice and vote in NCAA decisions affecting college athletes."

A formal vote on the proposal is not expected until at least this summer.

The 67-page draft proposal would give schools in the five biggest conferences (ACC, Big Ten, Pac-12 and SEC) more autonomy to implement changes deemed to be in the best interests of their athletes. The list could include adding the full cost of attendance in scholarships, expanded health insurance, additional help with academic and career counseling, and providing money for families of athletes to travel to NCAA tournament events.

Back in October 2013, the board approved a stipend that would have given athletes up to about $2,000 per year to cover expenses beyond tuition, room and board, books and fees. Two months later, it was shelved amid opposition from full Division I membership.

Despite having the full support of Emmert, nothing has happened since then, and the criticism has only grown — sometimes from commissioners of the Big Leagues themselves.

"The group of five would argue we've been doing nothing and overlooked," said Morgan Burke, Purdue's athletic director and a key broker in helping find a consensus on the new structure. "The other schools would say, 'Yeah, but we're competing against you in the championship.'"

Emmert believes this proposal might be the best solution for an NCAA increasingly under fire.

The organization is facing a number of lawsuits, including the potential landmark Ed O'Brien case that is seeking compensation for athletes who were depicted in video games, and the possibility of a player's union in Northwestern that is seeking more benefits and better working conditions for college athletes.

Emmert has repeatedly said he opposes unionization, though he acknowledged Wednesday that he agrees with some of the concerns raised by labor leaders.

"I think the most interesting response in the Northwestern conversation is when the student-athlete said, 'Here's what we're worried about,'" he said, "Great, this is what we've been working on, for some time."

Emmert said, referring to former Northwestern quarterback Rainier Curley. "These are things we've been talking about since the summer of 2011. There's been a lot of frustration that it's taken longer to get where we need to be, but here it is."

Governing isn't the only issue on the board's agenda. It will also debate proposals to allow athletes to have year-round unlimited meal plans and snacks and a change in transfer rules that would affect a small group of athletes.

The new transfer proposal would give players who receive "hardship waivers" but had good enough grades to compete immediately, one additional year to be granted an extra year to complete their four years of competitive eligibility. Those players would still be required to sit out one year. Even if approved, the new rule would not apply to the growing number of graduate students who transfer to new schools with remaining eligibility.

Last week, the Legislative Council approved an expanded arrest rule — drawing plenty of fanfare because it came less than two weeks after Shabazz Napier, the Most Outstanding Player in the men's basketball tournament, said he sometimes went to bed "staring." That proposal had been discussed for months and led into the notion that the NCAA system had become too cumbersome.

Emmert wants that to stop.

Other potential changes if the proposal were adopted later this year would give athletic directors, athletes and other university representatives such as faculty athletic reps and senior women administrators a greater voice in the process, and create a committee in which all Division I conferences would be voting members, with a weighted system that would allow the five largest conferences to account for 36 to 65 percent of the total vote.

Emmert is convinced this can work.

"We need to be more aggressive, more competitive, with one scholarship model, ensuring a bachelor's degree and that we can do to help safety rules and providing (athletic) families with money to travel to postseason events," he said. "It's my hope, and I think that the new structure that would allow them to concentrate on, that it can work.
Supreme Court upholds Mich. law against colleges’ racial preference

By Ed White
The Associated Press

DETROIT | The U.S. Supreme Court decision Tuesday upholding the state’s ban on racial preference in college admissions comes as the University of Michigan has been taking steps to reach out to minorities and make them feel welcome on campus.

Blacks made up just 4.6 percent of undergraduate students last fall, a figure that has dropped since voters in 2006 said race couldn’t be used as a factor in the selection process. Nearly eight years later, the Supreme Court said the Michigan constitutional amendment will stand.

“Seeing the rights of minorities is a shocking decision,” said George Washington, a Detroit lawyer who challenged the law. “With this, and the voting rights decision last year, it’s clear the Supreme

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Jose Alvarenga, center, BAMN (By Any Means Necessary) national organizer, and others protest the Supreme Court ruling on the campus of the University of Michigan on Tuesday in Ann Arbor, Mich. The justices ruled 6-2 that Michigan voters had the right to change their state constitution in 2006 to prohibit public colleges and universities from considering race in admissions decisions.
The university also is making money available for transportation between the campus and surrounding communities when buses aren't available.

Jennifer Gratz of Fort Myers, Fla., was personally involved in the campaign for the constitutional amendment and said the Supreme Court decision is a "great victory" for Michigan voters. She sued over the university's racial preferences in 1997 after being rejected for admission.

Gratz, who is white, recently challenged a black Detroit High School senior to a debate about affirmative action after Brooke Kimbrough appeared at a rally to complain about not getting accepted to the University of Michigan with a 3.6 grade-point average and a 23 on the ACT.

Attorney General Bill Schuette, who defended the amendment at the nation's top court, praised the 6-2 decision.

"We need to have diversity in our campuses ... across the state of Michigan and across America," he said. "And we need to achieve this diverse student population by constitutional means. That's the message of this opinion."

While the focus has been on the University of Michigan, the ban on affirmative action in college admissions applies to all public schools. Michigan State University, the largest school in the state, said blacks were 6 percent of undergraduates last fall.

Washington said the University of Michigan could boost minority enrollment by dropping ACT and SAT scores from the admissions process. He said blacks and Hispanics historically post lower scores than white students and are rejected.

Washington also called for sit-ins.

"The Supreme Court has taken the gloves off, so we'll be taking the gloves off," he said.

Coleman has publicly acknowledged that minority students have concerns.

"We hear loud and clear that students of color feel isolated and marginalized, and that our frequently declared commitment to diversity is perceived as disingenuous," she said in February. "Students here and elsewhere are raising real — and painful — concerns about campus climate and the diminishing number of students of color in classrooms."
Job market better but still weak for college graduates

Labor Department: Unemployment rate 10.9% for 2013 class

By Paul Wiseman
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON | With college commencement ceremonies nearing, the government is offering a modest dose of good news for graduating seniors: The job market is brightening for new grads — a bit.

But finding work — especially a dream job — remains tough for those just graduating. Many are settling for jobs outside their fields of study or for less pay than they'd expected or hoped for.

The Labor Department on Tuesday said the unemployment rate for 2013 college graduates — defined as those ages 20 to 29 who earned a four-year or advanced degree — was 10.9 percent. That was down from 13.3 percent in 2012 and was the lowest since 7.7 percent in 2007. The drop reflects the steady recovery in overall U.S. economic growth and hiring.

But unemployment for recent grads was still higher than the 9.6 percent rate for all Americans ages 20 to 29 last October, when the government collected the numbers.

"I'm finding that all these entry-level jobs are requiring experience I don't have or degrees that are just unattainable right out of college," says Howard Rudnick, 23, who graduated last year in political science from Florida Atlantic University and wound up earning $25,000 a year working for an online shoe company.

"The worst part is that I'm afraid at some point I may have to go back to school to better myself and take on more debt just so I can get a better-paying job."

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Over time, though, Americans who have college degrees are still far more likely to find employment and to earn more than those who don't. And while opportunities for new college grads remain too few, they're increasing.

"It really is getting better," says Jean Manning-Clark, director of the career center at the Colorado School of Mines in Golden, Colo. She says more automotive and steel companies are now looking at the school's graduates, joining energy and technology companies that have been actively recruiting for several years.

Last year's female graduates fared better than men: 9 percent were unemployed as of October last year, compared with 13.7 percent of men. Analysts note that the economy has been generating jobs in many low-wage fields — such as retail and hotels — that disproportionately employ women.

"It seems like the jobs that are growing fastest are jobs that are low-wage jobs, service jobs," says Anne Johnson, executive director of Generation Progress, an arm of the liberal Center for American Progress that studies youth issues.

Other fields that attract women — including health care — weren't hit as hard by the recession.

Philip Gardner, director of Michigan State University's Collegiate Employment Research Institute, says women also "have skill sets that employers want... They have better communications skills. They have better interpersonal skills. They are more willing to work in teams."

Alexa Staudt's job search lasted just three weeks. Before graduating from the University of Texas last spring, Staudt, 23, had landed an administrative position at an online security company in Austin.

"I had marketable skills from my internships" in event planning, marketing and copyediting and experience working as a receptionist for a real-estate firm, Staudt says.

She's happy with the job and the chance to stay in Austin.

Yet the McKinsey & Company consultancy last year found that 41 percent of graduates from top universities and 48 percent of those from other schools could not land jobs in their chosen field after graduation.

Even in good times, many college graduates need time to find a good job. But researchers at the Federal Reserve Bank of New York concluded earlier this year that "it has become more common for underemployed college graduates to find themselves in low-wage jobs or to be working part time."

The Labor Department reports that 280,000 college graduates were stuck last year working at or below the federal minimum wage of $7.25 an hour. That's down from a peak of 327,000 in 2010. But it's more than double the 127,000 in 2007, the year the recession began.

"Every way you cut it, young college grads are really having trouble — much more trouble than they used to have," says Heidi Shierholz, an economist at the liberal Economic Policy Institute. "The labor market is not producing decent jobs."

In a study last year, economists at the University of British Columbia and York University in Canada found that college graduates were more likely to be working in routine and manual work than were graduates in 2000, technology was eliminating some mid-level jobs that graduates used to take. The result is that many have had to compete for jobs that don't require much education.

Their sobering conclusion: "Having a B.A. is less about obtaining access to high-paying managerial and technology jobs and more about beating less-educated workers for the barista or clerical job."