ARTICLES OF INTEREST
APRIL 25, 2014 – MAY 1, 2014

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HIGHER EDUCATION: WHICH ALABAMA CITIES HAVE A HIGH CONCENTRATION OF DOCTORATES?

Challen Stephens | cstephens@al.com

Huntsville boosters on occasion can be heard boasting about their city having more Ph.D.s per capita than most. But that’s not quite right, not even within the state of Alabama.

The Auburn-Opelika metro area by far tops the state for concentration of doctoral degrees. There, 3.5 percent of residents 25 or older have earned a doctorate, which the U.S. Census Bureau defines as a Ph.D. or Ed.D. No other area comes close.

The top of the list is filled with university towns both large and small. Huntsville is the first to city to pop up that is not expressly known for its college. Baldwin County is right behind.

Alabama is not among the top states when it comes to the share of residents with the highest academic degree. According to the latest census data, Maryland leads, where 2.4 percent of residents have earned a doctorate. Massachusetts is just behind.

Alabama ranks at the other end of the spectrum, eight from last for concentration of doctorates among residents over 25. Alabama ranks just ahead of Oklahoma, Louisiana, Mississippi, Kentucky, West Virginia and Arkansas. Nevada is last.

Doctorate degrees are not spread evenly across Alabama. Several towns and cities have almost no residents with the highest academic degree.

In the Huntsville metro area, 1.42 percent of the residents have doctorates. (File)

PERCENTAGE OF ACADEMIC DOCTORATES IN ALABAMA

Auburn-Opelika: 3.5 percent
Birmingham-Hoover: 1.09 percent
Decatur: 0.51 percent
Florence-Muscle Shoals: 1.05 percent
Fort Payne: 0.21 percent
Huntsville metro: 1.42 percent
Montgomery: 0.97 percent
Scottsboro: 0.19 percent
Troy: 1.51 percent
Tuscaloosa: 1.47 percent

Source: U.S. Census, American Community Survey 2008-12
STATEWIDE

COLLEGE TUITION

It's no secret that the national economic downturn has been hard on higher education. From 2008 to 2012, as public revenues dwindled, Alabama slashed funding for higher education by $556 million, some 28 percent, according to a study published by the Gapevine project at Illinois State University. Now, the latest data from College Board's Annual Survey of Colleges shows that four-year schools in Alabama have increased their in-state annual tuition by an average of $3,095 since the recession.

That's an increase of 19 percent, ranking Alabama 12th in the nation for tuition hikes in dollars adjusted for inflation as of 2013. That exceeds the national average of 15 percent since the start of the recession.

According to Gordon Stone, executive director of the Higher Education Partnership in Montgomery, an organization that lobbies for increased public funding, the drawdown in state support for higher education has forced colleges to increase tuition in order to stave off cuts to quality.

The result is that a college education in Alabama now costs 18 percent of the state's median household income, compared to 12 percent for the rest of the South.

Evan Belanger
General manager named for new Embassy Suites

Hotel to open in December

Jon Crisp has been named the general manager for the Embassy Suites Hotel under construction at 2410 University Blvd. in downtown Tuscaloosa.

The hotel is expected to open in December.

Crisp served as a general manager with several well-known hospitality brands, according to a statement from Wilson Hotel Management LLC, a division of Kemmons Wilson Companies LLC, the Memphis, Tenn., company that will own the hotel.

Crisp, who has received numerous hospitality industry awards during his career, will be in charge of the hotel's operations.

"Jon is a seasoned veteran in this industry, and has worked for us several years at our flagship hotel in Memphis," said Jim O'Brien, executive vice president of Wilson Hotel Management, which will operate the hotel. "He has the desire, knowledge, experience and enthusiasm to achieve our goals for Embassy Suites Hotel Downtown Tuscaloosa. It's great to have him lead our team for this new endeavor in the Tuscaloosa market."

Crisp attended the University of Memphis and Vanderbilt University and is a member of the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary.

The new Embassy Suites will feature a variety of one and two-bedroom suites, free cooked-to-order breakfast, free snacks and beverages at a nightly reception, an atrium lobby with extended ceiling, more than 5,300 square feet of banquet and meeting facilities, an executive boardroom, indoor pool with a whirlpool, 24-hour fitness center and free 24-hour BusinessLink business center.

It also will have a restaurant and lounge operated by Chris Hastings, the chef and owner of The Hot and Hot Fish Club in Birmingham and "The James Beard Best Chef: South Award Winner for 2012."
UA extends multimedia deal with Learfield

Athletic department could net up to $160 million over 10 years

By Aaron Suttles
Sports Writer

The rich just got richer.
University of Alabama Director of Athletics Bill Battle confirmed Wednesday morning that UA has signed a 10-year extension with Learfield Sports for multimedia rights that will net the athletic department between $150 million to $160 million over the life of the contract.
The deal with Learfield, which has held Alabama's multimedia rights since 1998, is one of the most profitable deals in the nation.
Alabama took advantage of a clause in its contract to opt out after five years. With Alabama's recent unparalleled success on the football field, Battle exercised the clause to strengthen the deal for UA.
"We were in the fifth year of a 10-year contract, and with most long-term deals, there are good and bad to long-term deals. For a deal to be good over the long haul, it's got to be good for both sides," Battle said. "If it gets one-sided either way, it doesn't work. So part of what was in our contract was that halfway through, after five years, we had a look-in. We could test the market to see what we thought the market would bear and go back and renegotiate the deal.

See LEARFIELD | 7A
LEARFIELD

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"It's been pretty good at Alabama the last five years, we won three national championships in football, so market conditions had changed. We had a good negotiation with Learfield and came to what we think is a good, mutually-beneficial long-term deal."

Battle never entered into or initiated talks with another company, instead using Alabama's recent success as leverage in the renegotiation.

"We're pleased with it and they're pleased with it," Battle said. "We have the right to look at it again in five years."

Alabama is currently in the middle of an eight-year, $30 million contract with Nike than runs until 2018. During the 2012-13 fiscal year, the UA athletic department reported $143.4 million in revenue, according to the Department of Education. Football alone generated $88.7 million in total revenue with a profit of approximately $47 million.

The $15 million to $16 million per year deal with Learfield puts Alabama among the top three schools in multimedia rights revenue, behind only Texas and Notre Dame, according to the Sports Business Journal.

The deal gives Learfield concession and pouring rights at athletic venues, which the company contracts out to vendors, including Coca-Cola and Gatorade, as well as other in-stadium merchandising rights. The agreement also calls for Alabama to upgrade its concession stands at Bryant-Denny Stadium, including adding viewing areas so fans can keep up with the game while on the concourse.

Reach Aaron Suttles at aaron@tidesports.com or at 205-722-0229.
More than 4,400 to receive UA degrees

Multiple services slated on campus this weekend

Staff report

More than 4,411 undergraduates and graduate students are scheduled to receive degrees Friday and Saturday during spring commencement ceremonies on the University of Alabama campus.

Graduation will be split into multiple ceremonies, all at Coleman Coliseum:

- 6 p.m. Friday: Graduates from the College of Arts and Sciences and the School of Social Work will participate in a ceremony.
- 9 a.m. Saturday: Graduates from the College of Commerce and Business Administration and the College of Engineering participate in the first of two sessions, while graduates from the Capstone College of Nursing, College of Communication and Information Sciences, College of Education and the College of Human Environmental Sciences will participate in a session at 1:30 p.m.
- 5 p.m. Saturday: The School of Law will have its graduation ceremony.

Dorothy J. Martin, an associate provost at UA, will serve as commencement marshal. Martin, who has completed 48 years of service at UA, was the first female graduate in the first graduating class of the executive master’s of business administration program. During her tenure at UA, Martin has worked with 11 presidents.

Judy Franks, a chemistry and physics teacher at South Choctaw High School in Gilbertown, will receive the 2014 Capstone Inspiring Educator Award.

Continued from page 1B

UA

Franks, in her 25th year teaching at South Choctaw, has led the school’s robotics team to several state-level awards in its first year and serves as the head coach of the high school’s softball and volleyball teams. Franks was nominated by UA senior journalism student Kristen Campbell, a South Choctaw High School graduate.

The Capstone Inspiring Educator Award was created in 2010 to recognize high school teachers who have inspired UA students.

Members of UA’s senior class were invited to nominate a high school teacher whose commitment to helping students and inspirational approach to teaching made a difference in their lives.

The weekend ceremonies will be broadcast live on the Internet. The webcast will be archived on the UA website ua.edu/commencement and will be available for viewing for 30 days after the ceremony.
Texas regents tap Bailey

Former UA president to head new UT campus

By Ken Roberts
City Editor

Guy Bailey, who served as the University of Alabama's president for 57 days before resigning in 2012, will soon become president of the newly formed University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, according to the San Antonio Express-News.

Multiple news reports in Texas said that Bailey was named the sole finalist to lead the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley.

Guy Bailey was unanimously selected to lead the new University of Texas Rio Grande Valley.

The nine-member UT System board of regents unanimously voted Monday to name Bailey the sole finalist, according to the Austin-American Statesman. Under Texas law, the board must wait at least 21 days before firming up the appointment, the newspaper reported.

The new university will combine UT Pan American, UT Brownsville and the UT Health Science Center at San Antonio's Regional Academic Health Center—which ultimately will become a new medical school.

The school will welcome students beginning in August 2015 and will have about 29,000 students.

"He has experience being a president and chancellor, he's experienced with both academic and health institutions, and he's operated at a very high level and had a great deal of success over his career," board chairman Paul Foster told The Associated Press. "He rose to the top."

Bailey was also the chancellor of the University of Missouri-Kansas City from 2006 to 2008.

In a statement released Monday by the UT system, Bailey said: "I view this role as the single most exciting educational opportunity."

BAILEY

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in America today."

In the summer of 2012, UA hired Bailey away from Texas Tech University, where he had been president for four years.

Bailey abruptly resigned from UA on Oct. 31, 2012, citing his wife's illness. Judy Bonner was named UA's president the next day.

Bailey's wife, Jan Tillery Bailey, died on Sept. 1, 2013.

After Bailey's resignation, he stayed on at UA as a linguistics professor.

He was previously mentioned as a candidate in presidential searches at New Mexico State University and Memphis University.
Girl Scouts honor 13 women for service to community

Special to the Tuscaloosa News

The Girl Scouts of North-Central Alabama recognized 13 women at the Women of Distinction luncheon on April 25 at Hotel Capstone in Tuscaloosa. Women recognized at the event represent Bibb, Fayette, Greene, Hale, Hamilton, Lamar, Marengo, Perry, Pickens, Sumter and Tuscaloosa counties.

The Women of Distinction program pays tribute to women who have made special contributions to their community through civic, academic and/or professional involvement.

Jean Caldwell of Tuscaloosa, retired from the Tombigbee Girl Scout Legacy Council, received the 2014 Karen LaMoreaux Bryan Lifetime Achievement Award. The award is given to a woman who has demonstrated a lifelong dedication to making the world a better place through community service.

The Women of Distinction are:

- Judy Bonner, the University of Alabama's president, was honored by the Girl Scouts of North-Central Alabama as one of the 13 Women of Distinction.
- Judy Bonner, president of the University of Alabama.
- Vanessa Fitch of Livingston, president of the Children of the Village Network Inc.
- Nancy Green of Tuscaloosa, mobilization chairwoman of the Compassion Coalition of Tuscaloosa County.
- Joy S. Humphrey of Tuscaloosa, director of the Tuscaloosa County Department of Human Resources.
- Virginia Joiner of Tuscaloosa, community volunteer.
- Pamela H. Parker of Tuscaloosa, a partner in the Philanthropic Partners LLC.
- The Phifer family (Karen Brooks, Susan Cork and Beverly Clarkson Phifer) of Tuscaloosa, Phifer Inc.
- Toni Smith Robertson of Fayette, community volunteer.
- Margaret P. Smith of Centreville, retired director of the Bibb County Department of Human Resources.
- Carol Prejean Zippert of Bataw, co-publisher of the Greene County Democrat Newspaper and volunteer director of the Society of Folk Arts and Culture.
UA among 16 schools picked for car contest

By Ed Enoch
Staff Writer

The University of Alabama is among 16 universities selected nationwide for a four-year contest co-sponsored by the U.S. Department of Energy and General Motors to redesign a Chevrolet Camaro into a high-performance hybrid-electric car, with goals of reducing its environmental impact while maintaining its muscle-car performance.

The EcoCAR3 teams and the car were announced Thursday in Washington, D.C. The program will conclude in the summer of 2018.

"We had all been waiting and guessing," Kaylie Crosby said of the announcement of the car. "We are excited..." See Contest | 4A
CONTEST

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to be working with the Camaro.

The contest is set to officially begin in September, and Crosby said the UA team will get its Camaro in 2015. Ahead of the arrival of the Camaro, the UA team, which is still being recruited, will be working on preliminary designs, Crosby said.

Crosby and Jim Krafcik, a junior in electrical engineering from St. Louis, were on-hand for the announcement. Crosby, who is participating in the STEM Path to MBA program in UA's Culverhouse College of Commerce, is the student project manager.

"It's a role she would see for herself after graduation."

"It's a new position for me," she said. "I am very excited to combine the technical side and the business side." The contest, which has had two previous rounds, is the latest in a series of Advanced Vehicle Technology Competitions (AVTC) by the U.S. Department of Energy aimed at developing the next generation of automotive engineers.

Other contest sponsors include MathWorks, California Air Resources Board, Freescaler, Clean Cities, AVL Powertrain Engineering, Bosch, ETAS, dSPACE, Snap-On, Siemens, GKN Driveline, Transportation Research Center, Enerdel, Protecra, Ricardo and A123 Systems.

The university teams are tasked with designing, developing and integrating powertrains into the Camaro that will allow it to reduce energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions while maintaining the performance, utility and safety of the production gasoline model, while also considering cost and innovation.

This will be the first EcoCAR competition for UA, according to faculty advisor Paul Puznaukas, an associate engineering professor in UA's Center for Advanced Vehicle Technologies. Puznaukas is joined by assistant professor Hwan-Sik Yoon, Electrical and Computer engineering department head professor Tim Haskew, and Rob Morgan, head of the STEM MBA program.

EcoCAR3 was announced last spring and the university developed its proposal during
The university submitted a two-part proposal. Students who volunteered their time worked on a technical package evaluating the efficiency of several vehicle powertrain designs with computer simulations and proposing and evaluating a new design, one that might be pursued if the university team was chosen as a participant. An administrative package documented UA's capabilities to participate in the program including support facilities, faculty expertise and a fundraising plan.

"It's kind of a little hoop to jump through and see if the schools and students are serious," Puzinauskas said.

While the 16 teams will receive a wealth of material, financial and technical support from the contest sponsors, it won't be enough to cover all the expenses, forcing the teams to fundraise to make up the difference, Puzinauskas said.

"The contest requires students to consider a variety of aspects of the project including mechanical, electrical, computer and software engineering, as well as communications, marketing and project management.

"It's very multidisciplinary," Crosby said.

While other projects for students offer valuable experience to prepare students for the workplace, the EcoCar3 contest takes the challenges to the next level, Puzinauskas said.

The teams are overseen by GM and are required to follow the company's design process. The length of the contest requires the teams to establish ways to retain knowledge and expertise institutionally as its members cycle through.

"By the time they are done, it's like they worked for GM for three years," Puzinauskas said.

The contest offers students a mix of managerial, design and support roles. Puzinauskas said UA is still working out how they will recruit and build the team but anticipates it will include about 20 active student members and another 20 to 25 for a supporting cast, noting the student membership will see turnover during the four-year contest.

Puzinauskas said the progress of the teams will be evaluated annually in end-of-the-year competitions.

Crosby said the team is currently trying to recruit members in upper level STEM classes.

"We are hoping all these students who are getting involved are interested in the industry," she said.

The team will be divided into sub teams responsible for different aspects of the project. The sub team categories are established by the contest directors, Crosby said.

Crosby and Puzinauskas hope to find student team members whose interest goes beyond resume padding or idle curiosity.

"We are looking to recruit as many as we can who will stick with it," she said.

Reach Ed Enoch at ed.enoch@tuscaloosanews.com or 205-722-0209.
WVUA broadcasts today from new media center

Studios remain under construction at UA stadium

Staff report

WVUA is set to begin first broadcast from the new Digital Media Center in the University of Alabama's Bryant-Denny Stadium tonight.

"Parting with our current location is going to be incredibly bittersweet," said longtime WVUA News Anchor Lynn Brooks in a released statement. "We have definitely had some great years here and this has become home, but I look forward to seeing all of the things WVUA News can accomplish in our new state of the art facility."

The commercial television station operated by UA's College of Communication and Information Sciences broadcast its last program from its longtime home in Reese Phifer Hall next door to the stadium on Friday night, according to a release from the station. The news team will temporarily broadcast from its newsroom in the center while construction of their studio set is completed.

The new $14.6 million, 46,000-square-foot center on the third and fourth floors of the north endzone of Bryant-Denny Stadium houses the College of Communication and Information Sciences' professional media operations, including the Center for Public Television and Radio, WVUA-TV and WUOA-TV, and Alabama Public Radio.

The center is also home to UA Athletics' Crimson Tide Productions, the department's multimedia component.

The station is also undergoing a rebranding process and hopes to officially launch its WVUA 23 rebrand in September.

"This is an exciting time for the WVUA family," said Amy Martin from WVUA's Creative Services. "The rebranding efforts paired with the move into the DMC is sure to take the station to new places. I can't wait to see all that WVUA is going to accomplish."

Chris Dodson, operations manager for WVUA, and Daniel Hughes, master control operator, talk to guests during a tour of the new Digital Media Center.

"I look forward to seeing all of the things WVUA News can accomplish in our new state of the art facility."

Lynn Brooks, longtime WVUA anchor
Horwitz appeal goes to state

Alabama Supreme Court to hear challenge on Tuscaloosa Board of Education race

By Stephanie Taylor
Staff Writer

The outcome of a hotly contested Tuscaloosa Board of Education race is now in the hands of the Alabama Supreme Court.

The city's District 4 race had dominated headlines and even made national news after the incumbent board member made allegations of widespread voter fraud by members of the University of Alabama's Greek community.

Kelly Horwitz claimed that organized block voting by the UA group known as "The Machine" included illegal offers of alcohol and other inducements to vote for challenger Cason Kirby, a UA graduate and former Student Government Association president. She also claimed that many of the voters didn't meet the 30-day residency requirement and that some registered to vote using someone else's address.

Horwitz's challenge of the results was thrown out by Tuscaloosa See Election | 7A
ELECTION
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County Circuit Court Judge Jim Roberts in November.

Attorneys for Horwitz filed an official appeal with the state’s high court late Tuesday, asking the justices to overturn Roberts’ ruling.

Horwitz claims the alleged voter fraud led to Kirby’s 416-329 victory in District 4.

During court hearings held in October and November, Horwitz’s attorneys argued that at least 167 of the votes cast should be invalidated. After reviewing affidavits submitted by most of the people who cast contested ballots, the judge ruled that there were only 70 ballots that could be considered questionable, short of the 87 needed to overturn the results. He said that Horwitz didn’t present evidence that proved allegations that students were offered wristbands for free drinks at local bars and other inducements that would render a vote illegal.

At the circuit court hearings, Horwitz’s attorneys said that Roberts’ ruled that they could not call or cross-examine voters and said that he barred them from taking depositions that they say would have proven their case.

Roberts, however, wrote in his order dismissing the case that he never restricted them from taking depositions.

Specifically, Horwitz is asking the Supreme Court to rule whether Roberts ruled correctly when he determined the voters met residency requirements, whether he should have allowed live testimony instead of submitted affidavits and whether he prevented Horwitz’s lawyers from taking deposition or abused his discretion by prohibiting it. They also asked that the court rule on whether Roberts was correct by concluding that an inducement offered to a person to vote must be conditioned on voting for a specific candidate to constitute misconduct.

Attorneys for both sides will present their cases through legal briefs. The Supreme Court will likely issue an opinion several months after that process.

Kirby took office in November.

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

Hundreds gather for rally against state’s closure of Greene County gaming centers

By Jason Morton  
Staff Writer

Hundreds of bingo supporters gathered Saturday on the University of Alabama campus to protest the March 31 raid by the state attorney general that seized bingo machines and cash from four gaming operations in Greene County.

But the organizers of the rally said the Rally for Justice was not just about the elimination of approximately 1,000 jobs and loss of millions of dollars for Greene County charities.

Rather, they see the actions of Alabama Attorney General Luther Strange as an infringement on the civil and voting rights of predominantly black Greene County residents.

"Since 2010, this has happened..."
RALLY
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1B

three times," said Carol Zipper, of the Greene County Committee for Civil Rights, which organized the rally, of law enforcement raids on Greenertrack and other-gaming operations in Greene County. "But this is going to be the last time."

"Zipper, Greenertrack President and CEO Luther W. "Nat" Winn, state Sen. Bobby Singleton, D-Greensboro, and Alabama Rep. A.J. McCampbell, D-Livingston, all point to the 2003 amendment to the Alabama constitution that gave Greene County the right to hold bingo games for the benefit of charities.

They said Gov. Robert Bentley, who was then a member of the Alabama House of Representatives, was among the legislators who voted for the amendment that was approved by more than 80 percent of Greene County voters.

Now, with the third law enforcement raid on Greene County bingo operations — Greenertrack in Eutaw has been raided three times, Frontier Bingo in Knoxville has been raided twice, and two other Greene County bingo halls have been raided once — residents have had enough.

"There is hypocrisy over the way we are treated in Greene County," McCampbell said, "and we're not going to stand for it anymore."

The plight of Greene County residents has drawn the attention of the National Action Network, the civil rights organizations founded in 1991 by the Rev. Al Sharpton.

The Rev. W. Franklyn Richardson, chairman of the National Action Network's board of directors, traveled from the group's New York City offices to Tuscaloosa to protest the governmental shutdown of what bingo supporters contest is a legal operation.

"I want (Winn) to know that we stand with him," Richardson said at a press conference held on the plaza in front of Foster Auditorium, where a monument to Vivian Malone and James Hood stands. "We cannot let this go by in this atmosphere of voter suppression."

"I'm here today to express our outrage."

Malone and Hood were the University of Alabama's first black students, and the press conference was intentionally held in front of Foster Auditorium, where former Alabama Gov. George Wallace's staged the infamous Stand in the Schoolhouse Door, his symbolic protest of racial integration at the school in 1963.

Winn originally wanted to hold the entire rally, which lasted more than two hours, in front — or at least within sight — of Foster Auditorium, but was prevented by UA officials because of a previously scheduled event at the culturally significant building.

But no one besides the Greene County supporters was on the plaza for the 11 a.m. press conference, a fact that did not go unnoticed by those who were pushed to the university's band practice field for the rally.

Still, he did not allow the few minutes the organizers were granted to stand in front of Foster Auditorium to dilute its meaning.

"In 1963, George Wallace stood here at Foster Auditorium and blocked (Hood and Malone) from the University of Alabama," Winn said. "And today we have a governor in Robert Bentley who is standing in the way of justice for the people of Greene County."

"We are asking Gov. Bentley to intervene in this situation and declare once and for all that the people's vote in Greene County does count."

Reach Jason Morton at jason.morton@tuscaloosanews.com or 205-722-0200.
Bingo rally to go on as planned

UA says group doesn't have permission to hold rally in front of Foster Auditorium on Saturday

By Jason Morton
Staff Writer

Saturday's Rally for Justice by the Greene County Committee for Civil Rights will go on as planned, organizers say, despite their failure to receive permission from the University of Alabama to hold the event in front of Foster Auditorium.

The rally is set for 11 a.m. Saturday, and organizers, who still hope to hold the event on the UA campus, expect to draw between 500 and 1,000 people. The rally is meant to highlight what Greene County bingo supporters are calling a miscarriage of justice in the state attorney general's raids on bingo parlors within its borders.

But organizers failed to obtain the proper permits from UA officials. Had they tried, they would have learned that another campus group, the university's bands department, already had scheduled Foster Auditorium for use on Saturday.

Greenertrack President and CEO Luther W. "Nat" Winn obtained a special event permit from the Tuscaloosa Department of Transportation, but he said he was never told that a UA permit also would be required.

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RALLY
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"When I went to TDOT, if they're not the permitting agency, I should not have gotten a permit," Winn said on Thursday. "I thought I'd done all I needed to do."

Tera Tubbs, TDOT's director, said the city's permit is meant to alert City Hall to the potential need for additional resources to protect and prepare for such demonstrations.

"We use the physical address to identify the location of the right of way to be used," she said. "It is the responsibility of the permittee to obtain permission from any other property owners if they intend to use their property as well."

"As stated on the permit application, it is the applicant's responsibility to secure all necessary permits, and approval from TDOT does not constitute permission from other agencies," Tubbs said.

After learning of Foster Auditorium's unavailability, Tubbs said Annette N. Shelby Park at the corner of 15th Street and Queen City Avenue was offered as an alternative site.

Winn said that while he would prefer to be on the steps of Foster Auditorium, he would accept any location on campus that is near or provides a direct line-of-sight to Foster Auditorium.

UA spokeswoman Cathy Andreen said university officials learned of the planned rally through media reports last week.

After speaking with Winn, efforts were made to relocate or reschedule the rally, but no compromise has yet been made, she said.

"There is no space available on campus Saturday that could accommodate a group as large as Mr. Winn's," Andreen said.

"The university worked with the city to offer Mr. Winn alternate locations or dates, but he was not interested."

"We hope Mr. Winn will respect the fact that another group reserved Foster Auditorium six months ago."

Since 2010, Greentrack in Eutaw has been raided three times, Frontier Bingo in Knoxville has been raided twice, and two other Greene County bingo halls have been raided once.

Winn said that, with each raid, the bingo operators have not been given due process.

The most recent raid was ordered by Alabama Attorney General Luther Strange last month and resulted in the seizure of 1,372 machines and $116,819 from a total of four gaming centers in Greene County.

The raids, Winn contends, are in direct violation of the 2003 amendment to the Alabama constitution that granted Greene County the right to host bingo games for the benefits of charity.

Winn has maintained that Greentrack operates bingo games in nonprofit and charity groups, which he described as the operators of the bingo games, while Greentrack serves as only as the host site. This arrangement is legal, he said, based on the Alabama law and the bingo rules crafted by the Greene County sheriff.

The Saturday rally is meant to draw attention to these claims, and choosing Foster Auditorium as its planned location was not by accident.

"The doorway of Foster Auditorium is where former Alabama Gov. George Wallace made the infamous Stand in the Schoolhouse Door, his symbolic protest of racial integration at the University of Alabama in 1963."

Winn is accusing current Gov. Robert Bentley from failing to fulfill promises he made to Winn; state Sen. Bobby Singleton, D-Greensboro; and state Rep. A.J. McCampbell, D-Livingston, that state resources would not be used to shutter Greentrack.

"We had a governor in '63 who stood up for injustice," Winn said, "And now we have a governor refusing to stand up for justice. That's what I'm trying to highlight."

"But it's gone past bingo for me — you can't take away my rights. I'm not going to sit by and let that happen. I'm going to fight it as long as breath is in my body, and that's why Foster Auditorium is important."

An email sent to the governor's press office went unreturned.

But Strange, the state attorney general, did respond and said the raids on the Greene County bingo halls were conducted according to state law.

"This is about the rule of law, pure and simple," Strange said through his press office. "When the Alabama Supreme Court makes a ruling, it is my job and my duty to uphold the rule of law."

"The Alabama Supreme Court has been clear about what is legal in Alabama when it comes to bingo, and following the orders of the Supreme Court is not optional."

Reach Jason Morton at jason.morton@tuscaloosanews.com or 205-722-0200.
Swimmer remembered as a ‘hero every day’

UA athlete John Servati, 21, died Monday after storm-related injuries

By Tommy Deas
Executive Sports Editor

When he was 13 years old, John Servati came to a youth swim meet at the University of Alabama.
The kid from Tupelo, Miss., asked his Shockwave Aquatics Swim Team coach, Lucas Smith, a question.

“He was already pretty fast,” Smith recalled. “He said, ‘Coach, do you think I’ll ever be fast enough to go to Alabama? This is where I want to go.’”

“I told him, ‘You could make it here one day. I think that you can.’ He looked at me and said, ‘Really? Coach, thank you for saying that.’

“It was one of those kid dreams that got fulfilled. He couldn’t wait to get there when he signed.”

Servati, a 21-year-old junior and a member of the UA swimming and diving team, died at DCH Regional Medical Center from injuries sustained when a retaining wall collapsed on him in the basement of a home on 22nd Avenue. He and his girlfriend were taking refuge from the storms Monday when the wall collapsed.

For video of UA’s swim coach and team captain’s reactions to the death of John Servati, visit www.tuscaloosanews.com.

UA confirmed his death early Tuesday.
Smith coached Servati from age 11. He got the news Monday night at about 11:45 p.m. that Servati was being taken to the hospital.
Less than an hour later, he received word that the young swimmer had died.

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SERVATI
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“IT gets harder as the shock wears off,” Smith said. “When a kid dies, it’s hard to take. It’s one of those things, he was just a golden child.

“I’ve been getting texts and emails and phone calls. A lot of them are his former teammates who are from Tupelo who swam with him when he was in high school but don’t swim in college. John was a stallion. It’s hard to believe it when it happens to someone like that.”

Smith admired his former pupil, and not just for his swimming ability.

“I don’t know where to begin,” Smith said. “Man, as a person, John was a great guy. He was a great Christian, he was strong in his faith. You could tell that by the way he lived his life, not the way he talked about it.

“He cared. This summer he couldn’t wait to go to some Christian camp and help others.”

That quality carried over to his time at UA, where he did volunteer work with Big Brothers Big Sisters of West Alabama and area churches.

“This is a young man who volunteered to help me coach my son’s baseball team last year, coach-pitch baseball team,” said UA assistant coach James Barber. “In fact, he was going to start working my son’s baseball team this week. He was always quick to say ‘I’ll help you do this or move that.’ He was that kind of guy.”

Barber recalled Servati’s recruiting visit in the fall of his senior year of high school. He went to an Alabama football game and to a reception at the Alabama Aquatic Center.

“John, he had a very strong grip, he was a strong guy,” Barber said. “I remember John coming up and shaking my hand and telling me how great it was here and he wanted to be a member of the Crimson Tide family.

“I’ll always remember John for the big smile, the big heart and the big handshake.”

Anna Rae Gwarjanski, a senior UA swimmer, posted on her Twitter account that Servati “died a hero. Held up a concrete wall long enough for his girlfriend to get out from under it before it collapsed again on him.”

Said UA team captain Phillip Deaton, “John was a hero every day, just constantly doing great things, so the fact that he did that doesn’t surprise me at all.”
"John spent a lot of his time trying to motivate others. He was a servant. ... He helped people his own age, or if it was a younger kid he would say, 'Coach, I've got this,' and go help them."

Lucas Smith, former swim coach of John Servati

"Smith remembers Servati for being a teammate as much as for being a superior athlete. He was always a hard worker," Smith said. "It didn't matter how hard the workout was or what kind of day he'd had, he'd always find a way to get through it and go hard. As a teammate, John would always push himself to go faster just to help his team.

"John spent a lot of his time trying to motivate others. He was a servant. One of the neat things about John was if somebody was trying to get better on a certain part of a race, he would go help them. He helped people his own age, or if it was a younger kid he would say, 'Coach, I've got this,' and go help them.

"He loved it when other people on the team swam fast. That's rare. A lot of people don't have that quality."

Deaton swam with Servati and also lived with him when the two were freshmen roommates. They often roomed together at road meets.

"He had just a genuine heart, he cared about every one of his teammates," Deaton said. "I can definitely say he's one of the best teammates I've ever had. He pushed me as a swimmer and as a person, and I'll miss him very much."

"My freshman year, we swim the same events so we're competing against each other and together. I'll never forget one of the dual meets in the spring semester we both swam some really fast backstroke times and he just got out of the pool and gave me a great big hug. He was happy for himself, but probably more so happy for me that we had just accomplished a goal together."

Alabama head swimming and diving coach Dennis Pursley was out of town on a recruiting trip, but issued a statement.

"John Servati was an extraordinary young man of great character and warmth who had a tremendously giving spirit," Pursley said. "During this incredibly difficult time, our thoughts and prayers go out to his family and to all who had the good fortune to know him. He will forever be in our hearts and a part of the Crimson Tide legacy."

Servati, a general business major, was recently one of a dozen UA swimmers named to the SEC Academic Honor Roll, an honor reserved for those with at least a 3.0 grade-point average. Also a member of the dean's list, Servati swam freestyle and backstroke events for the Tide and scored at the Southeastern Conference championship meet.

Servati's teammates have met and been given access to grief counseling.

"The team, right now, they're managing the best they can," Barber said.

Said Deaton, "We're just sticking together and trying to get through it."

UA Director of Athletics Bill Battle also issued a statement.

"We are all saddened to learn of the untimely death of John Servati," Battle said. "He was a model student-athlete who excelled in his sport of swimming, his pursuit of excellence in academics, and his value as a son, brother, friend and teammate to all who knew him. Our thoughts and prayers go out to John's family and friends as we grieve his passing."

Digital Editor Lyons Yellin contributed to this report.
OUR VIEW

ONE LONGTIME TREND BIRMINGHAM HAS TO REVERSE

A prominent local CEO is often known to say that the two hardest parts of his job are getting people to move to Birmingham and getting them to leave once they are here.

If that same anecdote were true for businesses, Birmingham's economy would be considerably different today.

The Magic City has a rich entrepreneurial heritage. Buoyed by assets like Innovation Depot, Southern Research Institute and the University of Alabama at Birmingham, our entrepreneurial ecosystem is getting even stronger.

Birmingham's traditional challenge hasn't been starting companies. It's keeping them.

Our loss of Fortune 500 and publicly traded companies is well-documented. But we've also lost more than our fair share of up-and-coming technology and pharmaceutical companies — often homegrown startups originating out of UAB.

This month is a good posterchild for Birmingham's not-so-stellar track record for retaining locally headquartered businesses.

On April 2, one of our largest private companies, Integrated Medical Systems International, was bought by Ohio's Steris Corp. A few days later, the long-awaited sale of Alagasco was announced, with St. Louis' Laclede Group as the buyer.

There's nothing wrong with outside companies buying into Birmingham. We've been blessed with a number of large corporations headquartered elsewhere that have woven themselves into our community fabric.

Acquisitions will always be part of doing business. But it is worth considering where our economy would be if we had a better track record of keeping companies from leaving.

Think of all the back-office and support jobs lost over the years due to acquisitions of Birmingham companies. The recent upheaval in the local legal community has been attributed to the loss of large clients and headquarters, among other factors.

It's a complex problem, and there's no quick fix.

Part of the problem is infrastructure. We've had no shortage of companies leave Birmingham on their own to get closer to R&D clusters in places like North Carolina and Maryland.

Of course, every time a promising firm leaves town, it makes it harder for Birmingham to enhance the cluster of companies we have here. That means we need to do everything we can to keep the impressive lineup of tech startups in town so they can grow here and allow the Magic City to reap the rewards.

As with many of Birmingham's problems, education is also critical. We need more partnerships and cooperation to produce the workers companies will need 10 to 15 years from now to make sure we have the talent necessary to attract and retain companies.

Finally, we must continue making strides to improve quality of life. Amenities like Railroad Park and Regions Field have done that. Others, like Rotary Trail, are on the way. We need to keep that pipeline full.

Reversing our fortunes won't be easy, but if we approach every decision with the long term in mind, it can be done.
BLAME GAME

COOPER GREEN: PROBLEMS HAVE PERSISTED SINCE HOSPITAL'S INPATIENT CARE AND ER WERE CLOSED, BUT WHO'S TO BLAME?

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W
ho is to blame for the lingering problems persisting in the wake of the closure of the inpatient care unit at the former Cooper Green Mercy Hospital? Jefferson County officials are pointing fingers.

How do we get there:

Commission President David Carrington and commissioners Jimmie Stephens and Joe Knight voted in August 2012 to end the inpatient care and close the emergency room at the former county-owned hospital for the poor. It took five months to officially close the inpatient care and emergency room, and in January 2013, Cooper Green Mercy Hospital became solely an urgent care center with primary and specialty care clinics.

The commission downsized the hospital because the facility, which was being subsidized by the county's general fund, was costing more than $10 million a year that the financially strapped county could no longer afford, a commission majority said.

Ramifications:

One area hospital reported its emergency department experienced double-digit increases following the changes at Cooper Green.

"What we're finding is other area hospitals are seeing a lot of the people Cooper Green used to handle," Commissioner George Bowman said.

The finger-pointing came up during commission committee meetings.

County Manager Tony Petelos announced contracts were imminent with area hospitals to help shoulder the care for the sick poor.

It's been more than a year since Petelos said those contracts would be in place.

Pointing fingers:

1. Stephens blames Petelos for the continuing problem. "We changed the county managers when implementing the model necessary to provide quality health care for our citizens. The commission is still being criticized, and we need someone else to take ownership of this. It's true that that was done."

2. Petelos blames lawyers for making last-minute changes to the contracts and thus delaying the process.

3. Commissioner Sandra Little Brown blames the Republican majority for taking "premature action on this issue in closing Cooper Green and not having a plan."

4. Knight said "the buck stops with the county commission."

Moving forward:

Petelos announced this week that contracts with UAB; Baptist Princeton; and St. Vincent's were in place to help care for the indigent. But he also said those hospitals had not been paid since October.

However, with contracts in place, Petelos said he expects the hospitals to be paid and the problems with Cooper Green to smooth out.

Also, Petelos said a health system administrator is being recruited to serve as a director of the new Cooper Green Mercy Health Services, but the county will have to delete three positions including staff nurse, medical clerk and communications operator positions to pay for the position.

"We need to have a director there, we need to have someone in place to continue to move us forward," Petelos said.

"Moving us forward is a good cliché," Knight said during this week's meeting. "Where are we going? Where is forward?"

JEFFCO COMMISSION PRESIDENT DAVID CARRINGTON Responds

With recent criticism over Jefferson County's handling of the downsizing at Cooper Green Mercy Hospital, Commission President David Carrington was asked to respond to statements from several who have outlined concerns.

Ross Mitchell, vice president of external and governmental affairs for Baptist Health System: "Baptist Princeton has seen a double-digit increase in patient volume through our emergency department. That volume has been steady, and it has had a significant impact on our operations."

Carrington response: "Baptist has not shared any numbers with me, but based on the emergency room patient volume at Cooper Green prior to closure, I'm confident that all of this increase cannot be attributable to Cooper Green patients."

Ronald Sims, court-appointed receiver in charge of county's human resources department: "Much like the county as a whole, Cooper Green desperately needs a well-thought-out strategic plan and vision. What is its purpose for existing? What are its goals? What are its benchmarks for success? Cooper Green may or may not be an inpatient hospital, but county leadership must articulate a clear definition of what it is and what it aims to be. Otherwise, it is doomed to fumble like a rudderless ship."

Carrington response: "The commission has approved a hub-and-spoke strategic model, which the county manager is in the process of implementing."

Dr. Will Fillingham, CEO of UAB Health System, on the transition: "It has not gone smoothly at all. We need more primary doctors, more sites, more contracts with other hospitals to take patients... UAB has done as much as anybody to provide care for people who had been using Cooper Green. But there is much more that needs to be done. I just don't believe they [the county] understand the health care business."
UAB Medicine looking at budget cuts, no "immediate plans" for layoffs
By: Mike Oliver

UAB Medicine, which includes the state's largest hospital, is conducting a sweeping review of operations to find ways to cut expenses, the hospital has confirmed.

"There are no immediate plans for workforce reductions," said chief operating officer Reid Jones in a statement. "However, 400 open positions are being reviewed, and it is unlikely all will be filled."

Jones said in the statement UAB Medicine is conducting a comprehensive review to "increase alignment, optimize efficiency, emphasize quality outcomes and the patient family experience."

"We will consider many opportunities to reduce expenses including with supplies, services and contracts," he said.

Like many hospital systems, UAB faces shrinking Medicare money and low Medicaid reimbursements. Those government programs account for more than 50 percent of revenues at hospitals, according to the Alabama Hospital Association.

On Wednesday, Baptist Health System based in Birmingham cited the low federal reimbursements as it confirmed 23 layoffs in a reorganization across four hospitals and its headquarters.

Dr. Will Ferniany, president of UAB Medicine, said in a recent interview that Medicare cuts in reimbursement and low Medicaid rates are hurting hospitals large and small. He said UAB gets about 67 cents on every patient dollar spent on Medicaid.

Some $200 billion in Medicare cuts nationwide came out of the Affordable Care Act as a way to pay for the significant expansion of health care coverage in the country. Part of that plan was to expand Medicaid to lower and middle income citizens without insurance. But at least 19 states, including Alabama have declined the government's offer to fund that expansion, leaving billions in federal dollars on the table.

Alabama also has one of the lowest Medicare reimbursement rates based on a formula tied to economic or market conditions in the area.

UAB Medicine is a $3 billion system with nearly 16,000 employees and 2,300 licensed beds in six hospitals, including UAB Hospital which is the largest in Alabama and third-largest public hospital in the U.S.
UAB researchers remind area residents to use helmets to help prevent injuries during storms

By: Jesse Chambers

BIRMINGHAM, Alabama -- With severe weather threatening Alabama this week, injury scientists at the University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB) are reminding area residents to have helmets on hand to help prevent potentially fatal head and neck injuries, according to UAB spokesman Bob Shepard.

The scientists at the school's Injury Control Research Center describe a safety helmet as any structurally sound helmet, such as a motorcycle helmet, football helmet, baseball helmet or bicycle helmet -- or even a construction hardhat.

Any helmet will work if its intended purpose is to minimize anatomical damage from high-velocity impacts, according to Shepard.

The findings come from a commentary the scientists published in the wake of the deadly tornadoes that swept through the state of Alabama in April 2011. They said that helmets should be an essential addition to an individual's tornado-safety preparations.

The paper published by UAB, as well as other publicity after the storms, helped push the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to acknowledge on its website that helmets might be useful, as long as running around looking for them doesn't interfere with attempts to find shelter.

In the months following the April 27, 2011, tornadoes, the Birmingham News/AL.com reviewed Jefferson County autopsy reports of tornado victims and found that 11 of the 21 deaths were the result of a neck or head injury.

People usually die from going airborne and smashing their heads or breaking their cervical spines upon landing.

AL.com culled some additional storm-survival advice in 2011 from the autopsy reports, medical experts and other observations.
SWIRLL

GAME CHANGER: TORNADO OUTBREAK LED DIRECTLY TO BUILDING AT UAH FOR SEVERE WEATHER RESEARCH.

Paul Gattis  pgattis@al.com

It's a bit odd, perhaps, that for all the buildings the historic tornado outbreak on April 27, 2011, knocked to the ground, those same tornadoes are now essentially raising a building.

If not for that horrid day three years ago, the SWIRLL Building at the University of Alabama in Huntsville might not be under construction right now.

"That event probably kind of sealed the deal," said Kevin Knupp, a UAH atmospheric science professor and a leader in tornado research.

"I think it exemplified the need to better understand these storms so that we can improve warnings and readiness and things like that."

Tornado design

Right down to its name, the SWIRLL Building says "tornado." The centerpiece of the facility is a spiral staircase designed to look like a tornado.

The acronym, developed by Knupp, stands for Severe Weather Institute and Radar & Lightning Laboratories. The $7 million facility, located on Bradford Drive behind the National Space Science Technology Center, is scheduled to open in late summer.

In wake of the 2011 outbreak, Gov. Robert Bentley commissioned a task force to review what happened and how to be better prepared in the future.

The Tornado Recovery Action Council, whose executive director was Huntsville's Ron Gray, said in its recommendations that the state needed a severe weather laboratory for research.

Gray has said Knupp was the author of that recommendation.

"Pursue funding to conduct academic research in Alabama on the factors responsible for the generation and maintenance of tornadoes in order to better understand the conditions that produce, strengthen..."
Construction is moving ahead on the Severe Weather Institute and Radar & Lightning Laboratories (SWIRLL) Building at UAH.

(Bob Gathany/bgathany@al.com).
and direct tornadoes; research focus would include the relative importance of topography, differential surface roughness and gravity waves,” the TRAC recommendation stated.

And that’s, in part, is what the SWIRLL Building is all about.

“The report carried a lot of weight and probably played a role in the birth of SWIRLL,” Knupp said.

**Game-changer for UAH**

The University of Alabama System board of trustees gave initial approval for the facility less than a year after the tornadoes.

Even while under construction, it’s helped attract a campus visit from The Weather Channel and is serving as a magnet to graduate students.

“It’s certainly attracted the attention of colleagues and prospective graduate students especially,” Knupp said.

“It’s really acting as a magnet — as was the intent for that. A lot of the students that come in and visit us and are considering UAH as a graduate program to sign up with; they’re really interested. They’re fascinated and excited about working in the SWIRLL Building.”

It’s been described as a game changer for UAH, raising its profile as a leader nationally in severe weather research. Knupp said the facility will enhance the school’s ability to attract research dollars, which is the backbone of higher education.

Knupp can hardly wait for it to be operational.

“I can’t put it out of my mind because I see it every day,” he said. “Every time we have an operation, I look at that SWIRLL Building and I say I wish that was done because we could do so much better if we had that facility right now.

“We’re all looking forward to it, and I think our research will be more productive when that is completed.”
How do we clean up the junkyard orbiting Earth?

The biggest-sized junkyard in the world orbits it, and a University of Alabama in Huntsville (UAH) aerospace systems engineering graduate student says it's time to get active about reducing the debris field before we reach a tipping point beyond which we may not be able to do much.

"Debris is the hot topic that nobody wants to touch," says Tom Percy. Percy is the primary author with his advisor, UAH Mechanical & Aerospace Engineering professor Dr. D. Brian Landrum, of a paper that outlines methods and policies that could be employed to mitigate space debris.

"I saw a need in the space community, with my systems engineering background, to walk people through the thought processes of how you apply a systems engineering approach to policy questions," Percy says. "How do we bring the discussion to a subset of solutions we can ultimately implement?"

In early April, according to news reports, the International Space Station (ISS) had to change position to avoid a space debris field of parts from an old Ariane 5 rocket launched by the European Space Agency that came within 1,000 feet of the station. It was the second time in three weeks ISS had to sidestep space junk.

Everything that gets shot into low Earth orbits eventually becomes junk -- even, one day, ISS itself. It's just a matter of time.

Time is also a factor that can work against proper disposal of satellites nearing the end of their lives. Satellites now in orbit have been designed to carry a bit more fuel in their tanks for use when they get old, to propel them into an orbit where they will re-enter the atmosphere and burn up within 25 years or so.

But because the current standards for being a good space neighbor by taking out your garbage are guidelines rather than mandates, there's nothing in place now to prevent the owner of a communications satellite from using that last bit of fuel to reboost its orbit and add more years to its longevity.

Size matters

That's one way Percy says we get large space debris from dead satellites, along with spent rocket stages and panels and other big parts that come off in flight, or when space junk collides with other space junk or orbiting working satellites. In 2009, the Iridium 33 and Cosmos 2251 satellites hit in the first accidental hypervelocity collision between two intact artificial satellites in Earth orbit. Iridium was an operational communications satellite. Cosmos was Russian space junk and no longer actively controlled.

From the perspective of populated areas on Earth, big space junk is a worry.
"What we're really concerned about is the big stuff that comes in uncontrolled and breaks up in the atmosphere into big chunks," Percy says. Larger objects are more likely to have parts survive re-entry, posing a potential risk to people on the ground. Think Skylab, big parts of which were strewn across Australia, if it had landed in New York.

But the biggest worry for satellites operating in orbit comes from the smaller debris, the stuff that's 1 centimeter to 10 cm in size -- from marble to softball sized.

"We can't see that stuff from the ground, we can't see it with radar and we can't see it with satellites," Percy says. Yet small debris has the greatest potential to damage working satellites, rockets in flight or even the ISS.

The big stuff we have a pretty good handle on, as far as where it is, he says. In the U.S., the Dept. of Defense tracks it. If we know where it is, we can move to avoid running into it, Percy says. Because we can't see the smaller stuff, NASA predicts where it is but avoiding it is nearly impossible right now. Of course, tracking and removal are two very different things.

The Kessler Syndrome

In 1978, NASA scientist Donald J. Kessler proposed a scenario now known as the Kessler Syndrome or Kessler Effect, where the density of space junk reached a point that collisions between objects would cause a cascade that would generate further debris to promote added collisions, potentially rendering space exploration unfeasible for generations.

In his paper, Percy outlines policy initiatives and engineering solutions that could prevent that tipping point from being reached. The keystone issue is how to achieve a balance between commercial economic interests, practicality, regulation and global governmental cooperation, he says.

"What we're concentrating on now is the methods we can use to reduce space debris easier," Percy says. "The work I'm doing for my PhD is how to deal with the problem through design modifications or additions before a space vehicle is launched."

Working to equip future craft for their eventual removal could have a large impact, he says, because the size of the space community is growing quickly, from 16 nations two decades ago to 46 now. Getting relatively new and emerging spacefaring countries like Saudi Arabia and India onboard with debris control that starts at the design and launch phases will do much to reduce the future problem, according to Percy.

Engineering solutions for future spacecraft depend on type and size, as well as orbit. A deployable sail attached to a satellite could gradually slow it in low Earth orbit so it eventually burns up in the atmosphere. Or a small and light dedicated ion propulsion pack can nudge a craft into contact with the atmosphere.
"Implementing these engineering solutions on satellites before launch is becoming more critical in the burgeoning age of cube satellites, when scores of satellites can be launched from a single rocket," says Dr. Landrum.

Pre-launch engineered solutions will probably have to be coupled with some form of active debris removal system to clear older debris and avoid the Kessler Syndrome, Percy says. "We're investing some time and resources into active debris removal and how that can be accomplished now."

Government interface

It's the point where the technology interfaces with governments and policies that still has to be mapped out.

"The way the regulations are now, they are more like guidelines," Percy says. So should the U.S. work with entities like the United Nations, which has a committee working on space use, or unilaterally go ahead with its own efforts?

"One possibility is that, yeah, we just go ahead and do it and show that it can be done," says Percy. But then there's the question of who pays. In space, once a craft is launched it is the country that launched it that carries the responsibility for it and not any commercial entity that may have launched it. China and Russia are the biggest owners of space junk. Should the U.S. only concern itself with its own debris?

Despite these difficult questions yet to be answered, all of which are included in his paper, Percy says he's optimistic that a set of solutions will be in place one day.

"There are pockets of groups all over the world that are looking at active debris removal," he says. "I don't think we're ready yet to say here's the way to do it. I'm optimistic that we can do something about it because there are enough people who know about the problem and want to fix it. The more conversations we have about the problem of space debris, the better traction the issue will have."
‘Biggest tournament we’ve ever hosted’
Officials expect large economic impact from NCAA DII softball tournament

By: Trent Moore

Cullman — Heritage Park has hosted its fair share of mega-tournaments over the past few decades, but officials believe this weekend could be the biggest sporting event yet for the local sports complex.

The Cullman park will play host to the NCAA Division II Gulf South Conference Softball Championship, which is expected to generate $1-3 million in economic impact and attract up-to 6,000 people to the area. The tournament is set to run from Thursday-Saturday.

Waid Harbison, with the Cullman City Parks & Recreation, said teams and traveling fans have already booked up local hotels, and they anticipate heavy run off traffic to local restaurants and shops.

“This is the biggest tournament we’ve ever hosted, as far as the teams, though it should be up there as far as numbers, as well,” Harbison said. “We expect a lot of fans will travel for this one. It’ll be a really good thing for the city.”

Cecelia Smith, the Cullman Area Chamber of Commerce’s tourism director, said the event should prove a major regional draw to show a wide array of visitors what Cullman has to offer as a potential shopping destination, or weekend trip locale.

“The economic impact can obviously be seen throughout our hotels, restaurants, stores, gas stations and beyond,” she said. “It also gives us an opportunity to showcase Cullman and hopefully some of those people will come back for a vacation, or a long weekend. It’s a great event and a great thing for us to be able to host here.”

Though the tournament marks one of the most high-profile events in the park system’s history, Harbison said the city was actually approached by NCAA conference officials to host the tournament. The Gulf South Conference heard of Cullman after the parks department won the United States Specialty Sports Association’s (USSSA) facility of the year award in 2013, and reached out to see if they’d be interested in hosting.

If the weekend goes well, Harbison said the championship could quickly become a local staple within the next few years.

“That award was a huge, prestigious award for us, especially because we were up against large and small cities of all sizes,” he said. “It really opened the door, and they heard about us from there and asked us to host here in Cullman. They’ve had this conference championship at the same place the past 6-7 years, so if they like it here, it could stay in Cullman for years to come. We’re hoping the city responds well and think it’ll be a really good fit.”

The tournament will feature eight regional university squads, drawing from the Gulf South.
Conference’s southeastern footprint of Alabama, Florida, Mississippi and Tennessee.

The tournament will include teams from the University of Alabama Huntsville, the University of North Alabama, the University of West Alabama, the University of West Georgia, the University of West Florida, Delta State University, Christian Brothers University and Valdosta State University.

General admission tickets are $5 for students and $8 for adults. For those who do come out, Harbison said they should get to see some high quality match-ups.

“Obviously the public is welcome to attend, and there are several All-American athletes competing,” he said. “These are several of the top softball teams in the country. Anyone interested in sports should definitely check it out.”
State AG's office takes over ASU probe

The Associated Press

MONTGOMERY | The state Attorney General's office will take over an investigation into claims of questionable financial practices at Alabama State University.

The Montgomery Advertiser reported Sunday that Attorney General Luther Strange has recused himself from the investigation and has appointed District Attorney Chris McCool to serve as acting attorney general.

A spokeswoman for Gov. Robert Bentley said the governor isn't extending a contract for Forensic Strategic Solutions to continue its audit into the university, which has been ongoing for about 16 months.

Bentley ordered an audit on the university after its former president, Joseph Silver, claimed that the university was paying for contracts and didn't receive clear returns on the investments.

Silver received $685,000 in a mutual separation agreement with the university after roughly three months on the job.
ASU staff shakeup: Knight eliminated

The Associated Press

MONTGOMERY | The new president of Alabama State University shook up the campus' senior management Friday in moves that included ending the job of a state legislator.

The changes by President Gwendolyn Boyd included eliminating the position of executive vice president held by state Rep. John Knight, D-Montgomery, who was once one of the most influential members of the Alabama House.

Boyd said all the remaining vice presidents would now report to her under a new organizational chart that reduced the number of vice presidents from nine to five.

"We looked at about 20 universities and looked at the structure, and all of their vice presidents reported to the president," she said. "That will help us as we continue on."

Knight, whose tenure at the historically black school included being the lead plaintiff in a lawsuit over state funding and racial fairness, said he would continue supporting his alma mater.

"It's in good hands. I think that we will move forward," Knight said.

A new state law that prevents public employees from holding two state jobs would have prevented Knight from both working at the school and continuing to serve in the Legislature.

Alabama State has been going through changes since a former president alleged inappropriate dealings by some officials at the university, which has about 5,600 students.

Boyd took over as president in February.

Gov. Robert Bentley ordered an accounting review of the university and has given the preliminary finding to state and federal prosecutors for review.

The university filed suit claiming the report was intentionally false and part of a plan by Bentley's office to seize control of the school.

A final report on the review could be completed next month.
Holland takes step to help UWA heal

Sometimes doing the right thing is not easy. Sometimes it isn't individually rewarding. We imagine University of West Alabama President Richard Holland understands that well after his call for unity in the UWA community.

Holland received an unfavorable annual evaluation and stated publicly that the results had been tampered with. Admirers flocked to his support on social media.

In March, at a meeting attended by many of Holland's supporters, the university's board of trustees voted not to extend Holland's contract, placed him on paid leave and appointed special investigators to look into whether trustees and staff colluded to prejudice his annual evaluation.

Holland's numerous supporters have been up in arms since. That's not surprising, since the board chose to appoint as one of its investigators Drayton Pruitt, a former trustee who was implicated in the controversal dismissal of a previous president, Ed Roach.

Holland is urging the university community, including his supporters, to move beyond the current controversy.

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

Those who know Holland say he cares deeply for the institution of which he is a graduate. His statement bears that out.

"I do not wish to be a hindrance to the university moving forward," Holland said. "It is of utmost importance that every facet of the university community is focused on the future of the institution. ... 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."

While it might be tempting for Holland and his supporters to continue to fight to keep him in office, that simply isn't going to happen. The best way he can now serve UWA is to help unite its contentious factions and begin the process of healing its wounds.
Could on-campus football stadium be in Jags' future?

Tommy Hicks  thicks@al.com

Every day, at some point or some function, University of South Alabama director of athletics Joel Erdmann will be asked, "When is South Alabama going to build an on-campus football stadium?"

Usually, he smiles and says he's not sure. The Jaguars completed their fifth season last December, their first as a full Football Bowl Subdivision member, and play home games away from campus at Ladd-Pebbles Stadium, the city-owned facility that is home to the Reese's Senior Bowl and GoDaddy Bowl each year. Naturally, there is interest in South Alabama building a football stadium on campus, but there isn't a plan in place to make that a reality.

"I've been the AD here for four-and-a-half years and it unquestionably is the most prominent, frequent question that is asked and talked about, by far," Erdmann said. "I think it's fair to say, the status, where we are today, is this: Everybody has an interest and an attraction to an on-campus stadium. I don't think I can find someone who would say, 'No, I'd rather we not have one.'"

"But it is a place and time of being purely exploratory at best." No South Alabama official has closed the door on the matter. Nor have they swung open the door of serious negotiations, however. So the question continues to be asked, and the answer continues to be, "Maybe."

If that day arrives, it will be with the blessing of new university president Tony Waldrop, whose first day on the job was April 2.

"It's the single biggest question I've been asked," he said. "Would I prefer an on-campus stadium? Absolutely. We don't want a stadium at the expense of our main mission of educating students. But at Central Florida (his previous employer), I'm in the country to play its home games at an off-campus stadium. The list includes UAB, whose fans have called for the school to build an on-campus stadium or at least a stadium close to campus, allowing the departure from aging Legion Field. But despite the call from UAB fans for an on-campus stadium for the Blazers, there are no signs of any movement in that direction from the administration.

A popular joke on the USA campus is: Where would South Alabama build an on-campus stadium?

Answer: Right next to the statue of the person who donated $5 million.

Yet South Alabama isn't in an area with a lot of potential donors who could contribute $15 million, much less $50 million.
Tide wins third straight title, Wyatt claims medalist honors

"Bobby Wyatt was the medalist for the SEC Championships at 18-under 192, an Alabama and SEC Championship record. Wyatt finished the 54-hole tournament without making a bogey and recorded 18 birdies and 36 pars with rounds of 65, 61 and 66.

Combined reports

ST. SIMON'S ISLAND, Ga. | The top-ranked University of Alabama men's golf team won its third straight Southeastern Conference Championship and the fifth in school history Sunday with a 16-shot win on the par-70, 7,005-yard Seaside Course at the Sea Island Golf Club.

"I am very proud of how this team played with a lead today," Alabama coach Jay Seawell said. "LSU turned in an outstanding round, but I was just so pleased with how our guys responded to that challenge. It is also a big deal to sleep on a big lead last night and come out today and play like champions — to play Alabama golf."

The Crimson Tide carded a 12-under 288 for a school and SEC Championship-record 806 (34-under). LSU mounted a challenge in the final round, breaking UA's one-day old SEC record of 266 with a 283 (+7) on Sunday to finish second at 18-under 822.

Senior Bobby Wyatt continued his flawless play to secure SEC medalist honors at 18-under 192. It marked both an Alabama and SEC Championship record. Wyatt finished with-

ALABAMA INDIVIDUAL SCORES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Finish</th>
<th>Player</th>
<th>Score</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Bobby Wyatt</td>
<td>192-38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Robby Shelton</td>
<td>200-30</td>
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<tr>
<td>T9</td>
<td>Cory Whitsett</td>
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<td>T13</td>
<td>Trey Mullinax</td>
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<td>Tom Lovelady</td>
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SEC TOP TEAM SCORES

<table>
<thead>
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<th>State</th>
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<tr>
<td>Alabama</td>
<td>806</td>
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<tr>
<td>LSU</td>
<td>822</td>
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<td>Auburn</td>
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<td>Georgia</td>
<td>833</td>
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<tr>
<td>South Carolina</td>
<td>838</td>
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out making a bogey and had 18 birdies and 36 pars with rounds of 65, 61 and 66.

"Bobby was in great command of his game and his emotions today," Seawell said. "It is so difficult to play with a big lead and to come out with a bogey-free 66 is a big deal. I am so proud and happy for him to get his first win at the SEC Championship."

It was the first medalist honor for the Mobile native after five-career runner-up finishes and 17 top-five showings.

"It is a great feeling to get the win today, and a great feeling to win our..."
The University of Alabama golf team shot 34-under-par at the SEC Championship, 16 shots ahead of second-place LSU.

RUNAWAY

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1C

third straight SEC title as a team," Wyatt said. "I have had a lot of close calls (individually) before and those disappointment have helped make me the player I am today. I would not change a thing about my career, and those close calls have definitely made me a better player."

Freshman Robby Shelton also carded a 4-under 66 on Sunday to finish in third place for his seventh top-five finish in 10 events this year. Shelton played the first 54 holes without a bogey before recording a five on the par-4 18th hole Sunday.

Senior Cory Whitsett posted a top-10 finish with a final round, bogey-free 67 (3-under) that left him tied for ninth. Trey Mullinax shot 69 Sunday for the Tide’s final counting score. He finished tied for 13th. Tom Lovelady shot 73 in the final round to finish tied for 43rd.

Alabama’s 806 broke the school scoring mark of 810 set at the 2007 Jerry Pate National Intercollegiate at the Old Overton Golf Club in Vestavia Hills. The 810 also set the SEC Championship scoring record, breaking Georgia’s 2006 total of 826.

Both the Alabama men’s and women’s golf teams will learn their NCAA Regional Championship destinations today.
Tide No. 2 overall seed for NCAA Tournament

By Aaron Suttles
Sports Writer

What has already been a season for the ages for the University of Alabama women's tennis team added another historic footnote Tuesday afternoon.
Coach Jenny Mainz and her Crimson Tide (22-4) received the No. 2 overall seed for the NCAA Tournament during the selection show. UA hosts the four-team Tuscaloosa Regional beginning May 9.

"It's incredibly exciting," Mainz said. "This obviously is the first time and making program history. It's thrilling to be in this position."

Georgia, which edged Alabama for the Southeastern Conference Tournament title, is the No. 1 seed. UA topped the Bulldogs, 4-3, in the regular season matchup and claimed the regular season SEC title with a 12-1 league record. It was the program's first SEC title and its first time to appear in the SEC Tournament.

Members of the University of Alabama women's tennis team celebrate after hearing the team received the No. 2 overall seed for the NCAA Tournament.
NO. 2
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1C

championship match.

"We get to host another NCAA regional here in Tuscaloosa and play in front of our home crowd. I'm proud of the team and it's great for them to be recognized for their accomplishments and for their banner season."

Alabama hosts Jackson State, which received the Southwestern Athletic Conference automatic bid. It is the Tigers' first NCAA Tournament since 2009.

It is the 13th overall NCAA tournament appearance for the Crimson Tide and the 11th under the direction of Mainz in her 17th season as head coach.

"We're excited, but we realize it's 0-0," Mainz said. "Post-season is a new season, and we all know anything can happen."

With so much energy and excitement around the program, Mainz said the goal is to keep the team loose.

"You have to keep it fun, you have to keep it exciting, you have to keep them motivated," Mainz said. "At this point of the season, they're playing good tennis. I think we've gained a lot of momentum throughout the course of the season.

"I think you have to find ways and create ways to make it really fun but at the same time challenging and really pushing them and bringing out the best in them. Just fine-tuning things and keep them real confident is the key. We've just got to keep them hungry and motivated."

Arizona State (18-7) faces Princeton (18-5) in the other first-round game, the Sun Devils' 27th consecutive NCAA tournament trip. It is Princeton's first time in the tournament since 2010 and the fifth in program history.

Tickets are $5 for all ages and $3 for UA students. First- and second-round tickets are available at RollTide.com or by calling the Alabama Ticket Office at 1-877-843-3849.

Reach Aaron Suttles at aaron@tidesports.com or at 205-722-0229.
 SARAH & SUZANNE

Film examines the rivalry that has fueled two championship gymnastics programs

By Aaron Suttles
Sports Writer

It's almost as if they came straight out of central casting. In a lot of ways, they did.
Sarah Patterson in white. Suzanne Yoculan in black.
The two most dominant coaches in college gymnastics were polar opposites in many ways, but were more alike than they let on.

During a quarter-century of head-to-head competition, they combined for 14 national championships and 21 Southeastern Conference titles.

In "SEC Storied: Sarah & Suzanne," which airs tonight on ESPNU at 6, director Joie Jacoby brings viewers a look back at the rivalry that fueled two championship-level programs and the sport of college gymnastics for more than two decades.
The film makes it clear they were "two fearless women 275 miles apart building powerhouses on very different philosophical foundations."

Despite radically different approaches, Patterson and Yoculan, both from the northeast (Patterson from New York, Yoculan from Pennsylvania), shared a burning desire to market their respective programs and win at the highest level. They succeeded wildly at both.

"Years ago, there weren't fans for college gymnastics, and I do really feel like one of the best outcomes that came from this rivalry is that Suzanne and I worked really hard to..."
FILM
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1C

To promote this sport," Patterson said.

Georgia packed 10,000 in Stegeman Coliseum one year only to see Alabama put more than 15,000 into Coleman Coliseum in 1997.

The University of Alabama vs. Georgia contests helped soar the popularity of college gymnastics in the Deep South, an area defined by its love of football. But it was the personal, sometimes heated, rivalry between Patterson and Yoculan that made the Crimson Tide vs. the Gym Dogs a must-watch.

The Tuscaloosa News' Executive Sports Editor Tommy Deas covered Alabama gymnastics during that time and was interviewed for the documentary.

"It was an interesting time," Deas said. "Sarah Patterson and Suzanne Yoculan put their sport on the map and filled arenas not only through the excellence of their programs, but also by introducing rivalry to a sport that most consider to be all about hugs and smiles. They made people who didn't even care about gymnastics care about the rivalry."

The film shows how each program took on the personality of its coach, Patterson's Alabama team as All-American girls and Yoculan's Georgia squad the Rebels.

"Suzanne started coaching at Georgia after Sarah Patterson had already kind of established Alabama," former sports writer Ray Melick said. "When she gets to Georgia, she said, 'We're athletes, we're not out here to make friends, we're out to win championships.' The attitude was just win, whatever it takes.

"I think Suzanne had to do that in a sense just to create a difference in the programs because Alabama had already established themselves."

The wide-ranging hour-long film documents Patterson and Yoculan from their hirings, to each building their programs, to Yoculan's retirement after the 2009 season, focusing heavily on the personal rivalry between the coaches.

Yoculan ended the home-and-home series that helped take both programs to heights unseen following the 2003 season after a disagreement with Patterson. The film demonstrates the differences in the coaches — Yoculan brash and in-your-face, and Patterson more reserved and measured.

"(It was) unique," Patterson said. "While you're the biggest rivals, you also know that it's you working with the other person to continue to build things. I think there's just an unspoken thing during that time. It's a rivalry. You have to say that you have a lot of respect."

Both women helped grow the sport in the southeast, and the influence of the rivalry remains. Patterson sees it when Alabama travels to Auburn or Florida.

"I think it was paramount not to just women's gymnastics but to women's sports."

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SEC sticks to eight-game league schedule

Alabama-Tennessee rivalry will continue

The Associated Press

BIRMINGHAM | The Southeastern Conference has decided to stick with its current football scheduling format of eight league games and a permanent non-divisional rival.

The conference’s presidents and chancellors approved the so-called 6-1-1 format Sunday at a special meeting in Atlanta. SEC teams will continue to play each of their six division rivals, plus one permanent crossover rivalry game and another non-divisional opponent that will rotate.

The one change to format will affect non-conference scheduling. Starting in 2016, all SEC teams will be required to play at least one game against a team from one of the other Big 5 conferences — the Atlantic Coast Conference, Big Ten, Pac-12 and Big 12. But even that rule shouldn’t change much. SEC schools routinely play at least one team from those conferences per season.

This season Mississippi, Mississippi State,

SEC PERMANENT
NON-DIVISION OPPONENTS

- Alabama (West) vs. Tennessee (East)
- Arkansas (West) vs. Missouri (East)
- Auburn (West) vs. Georgia (East)
- LSU (West) vs. Florida (East)
- Ole Miss (West) vs. Vanderbilt (East)
- Miss. State (West) vs. Kentucky (East)
- Texas A&M (West) vs. So. Carolina (East)

Texas A&M and Vanderbilt do not play non-conference games against another Big 5 school. Only Arkansas, Texas A&M and Kentucky did not play a Big 5 nonconference game last year. The Wildcats’ main in-state rival, Louisville, joins the ACC this season.

The SEC had been considering adding a ninth conference game and doing away with permanent inter-division opponents such as Alabama-Tennessee and LSU-Florida.

See SEC | 3C

Alabama receiver Amari Cooper carries the ball against Tennessee in the first quarter in last season’s game on Oct. 26, 2013. The SEC voted that Tennessee and Alabama will be permanent non-divisional opponents.
"Critical to maintaining this format is the nonconference opponent factor which gives us the added strength-of-schedule we were seeking while allowing continued scheduling flexibility for institutional preferences, and acknowledges that many of our institutions already play these opponents," Commissioner Mike Slive said in a statement.

"The concept of strength-of-schedule is based on an entire 12-game schedule, a combination of both conference games together with nonconference games. Given the strength of our conference schedule supplemented by at least one major nonconference game, our teams will boast of a strong resume of opponents each and every year."

Alabama coach Nick Saban was one of the few vocal proponents of moving to a nine-game conference schedule, the way the Pac-12 and Big 12 have and the Big Ten is going to. Otherwise there was little support from athletic directors for adding another conference game.

The permanent crossover rivalries have also been a point of consternation for some in the conference. LSU has been the most vocal opponent. The Tigers have Florida as their permanent rival. Their West Division rival, Alabama, has Tennessee, which has been down for much of the last decade.

"The announcement from our conference office regarding future football scheduling assures that the Tennessee-Alabama game, one of college football’s most historic rivalries, will continue on an annual basis moving forward," Tennessee athletic director Dave Hart said in a statement. "Chancellor Cheek and I have strongly and consistently advocated that this rivalry be preserved regardless of any other outcomes resulting from conversations about football scheduling."
Launch for SEC Network picking up steam

By Aaron Suttles  
Sports Writer

BIRMINGHAM | Roughly four months before the launch of the SEC Network, two major distributors are already on board, and commissioner Mike Slive is thrilled.

How many more providers hop on board before August 14 is just one detail in how the conference's joint venture with ESPN will change how fans in the southeast watch SEC sports.

The fact that AT&T U-verse and Dish Network reached agreements to carry the network so far in advance reveals just how popular the SEC is. It's also a likely indicator that other providers won't be able to hold out for long, especially as the launch date approaches and football season nears.

It's not yet a full court press from ESPN and the SEC, but in football parlance, it's the equivalent of a two-minute, hurry-up offense.

Fourteen commercials promoting the SEC Network, one for each school in the league, debuted earlier this week. The commercials, part of a marketing campaign by ESPN, relied heavily on schools' traditions, including a Paul W. "Bear" Bryant-narrated montage for Alabama.

The SEC is also encouraging fans to visit getsecnetwork.com to urge their respective providers to carry the network.

"To have two of the 10 largest distributors on board is really encouraging, so we like where we are," ESPN senior vice president of programming Justin Connolly said. "At the same time we have some work to do, and that's one of the primary focuses of what we're doing between now and launch. Any other network would be ecstatic to have this level of distribution and this level of commitment this far out in front of its launch. You can't help but be encouraged by it, but at the same time we don't take anything for granted and we're going to keep hammering away to make sure we get as many distributors on board prior to launch as possible."

The SEC Network marks a change for fans not only in television viewing habits, but also digital.

Alabama fans accustomed to watching live programming of home sporting events on Tide TV will no longer have that option after the network launches. However, UA has plans to produce 40 to 70 live home ESPN-quality sporting events over the SEC Network digital platforms.

See NETWORK | 7C
And Tide TV plans to house a library of on demand games.

Much of the details are still being worked out, UA
director of Crimson Tide Productions Justin Brant
said.

“ESPN actually owns the rights to all live events now,”
Brant said. “Tide TV will shift its focus a little bit. It
will still remain, but it will be more on demand type stuff.
We’re still working on who owns the rights to what. We
do a lot of things under the cloak of Tide TV now. The
coaches interviews and press conferences...those

Brant said Alabama is contracted to produce 40 digital
events, all of which will look and sound like an ESPN pro-
gram, complete with ESPN graphics, etc., and that number
could rise to as many as 70.

To help with the workload, Crimson Tide Productions
partnered with Alabama’s telecommunication and film
department.

“We’ve already started training on that stuff
with the students,” Brant
said. “It’s a great partnership.”

Overall, the goal for the
first year of the SEC Network is to broadcast more
than 1,000 live exclusive
events, including 45 football
games, 160 basketball
games, 75 baseball games
and 50 softball games.

The network’s first foot-
ball game features Texas A&M at South Carolina on
Thursday, Aug. 28.

Before that, work will con-
tinue to sell the product.

“We’re absolutely ecstatic
(with where we currently are),” Slive said. “We would
love to be fully distributed by
launch on the 14th of Au-
gust. Whether we are or aren’t, we’re really excited
about the fact that the net-
work will be available to ev-
everybody. Within the first
month, every one of our in-
stitutions will be on the net-
work.”

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on@tidesports.com or at 205-
722-0229.
About time the NCAA recognized UAB, Troy, USA aren’t Alabama and Auburn

Mark Emmert is an easy target. He’s not really the root of all evil in intercollegiate athletics, but he does happen to be the NCAA president as the association’s outdated notion of amateurism is under attack like never before.

Emmert hasn’t done himself any favors with his recent media tour. He comes across as straddling the fence, always an uncomfortable position, between favoring real change in the way the NCAA does business and defending a system that can’t be completely defended.

When it comes to making his case, Emmert could take a lesson from Mike Slive. Unlike Emmert, who has to appear to represent all 300-plus Division I schools, the SEC commissioner is able to focus his energy and expertise on 14 institutions that don’t have much in common with the vast majority of their Division I brethren.

When Emmert uses the phrase “competitive balance” in trying to defend the inability of athletes such as Johnny Manziel to profit from the use of their likeness, as he did recently on “The Dan Patrick Show,” he appears to be stubbornly clinging to a time when coaches didn’t make $5 million a year and up, conferences didn’t have their own television networks and the NCAA president himself didn’t make $1.7 million a year, in part to make sure his labor force didn’t earn what it’s worth.

$5 million a year and up, conferences didn’t have their own television networks and the NCAA president himself didn’t make $1.7 million a year, in part to make sure his labor force didn’t earn what it’s worth.

Slive’s job is easier. For some time, he’s been smart enough to recognize that competitive balance is a fallacy. UAB isn’t Alabama, Troy and South Alabama aren’t Auburn and it’s likely that the Blazers, Trojans and Jaguars will never bridge that Grand Canyon in terms of resources, facilities and the ability to give back more to their athletes.

In his own recent media appearances, Slive has reinforced the point that the NCAA would be much better off in putting the athletes first rather than the schools they work for and represent.

The next step in that process came Thursday as the NCAA Division I Board of Directors endorsed a package of proposals that will give the big boys in the five power conferences more power to govern themselves, which was expected to happen.

The package will give schools in the ACC, Big Ten, Big 12, Pac-12 and SEC the power to do such common-sense things as provide the full cost of attendance and pay for family members to attend postseason events and recruiting trips.

If Alabama and Auburn can afford those things, they’ll be able to do them. Your guess? If UAB, South Alabama and Troy can’t, they won’t have to. Even if the Blazers, Jags and Trojans can’t compete financially, they still can compete on the field. One example: UAB split its two baseball games this season with nationally ranked Alabama. Another example: South Alabama took two of three in a baseball series at Arkansas.

The new governance structure won’t solve all of the NCAA’s problems. In an interesting bit of timing, the vote of Northwestern football players on whether to unionize comes Friday. But putting an end to the ridiculous idea that the NCAA can level the playing field in the name of “competitive balance” is a step in the right direction.

Emmert doesn’t get credit for anything these days, but even he’s on board with this move.
A time of uneasiness

AD Bill Battle had anxious two weeks over Saban contract

By Aaron Suttles
Sports Writer

It was an anxiety-ridden two weeks for Bill Battle.
The first-year University of Alabama athletic director wanted to lock head football coach Nick Saban into a contract extension as swirling Saban-to-Texas rumors and false reports made the rounds and onto the desk of Battle's second-floor office at the Mal Moore Building.

Battle wanted a deal done before Alabama's annual rivalry game with Auburn, which was on Nov. 30. The laser-focused Saban wanted nothing to do with contract discussions in the middle of the season. It was a gut-wrenching two weeks until the two sides got together and a contract extension was agreed upon in principle on Dec. 13.

Battle, who sat down with The Tuscaloosa News on Wednesday afternoon for a wide-ranging discussion, shared his uneasiness during that time.

"I went to Nick before the Auburn game and said, 'Look, we want to get this done,'" Battle said. "He had six years left on his contract, but we wanted to reward him for the great job that he's done over the last three or four years, and really since he's been here, but especially the last three or four years. So he said, 'I don't like to talk about all this stuff. Talk to Jimmy (Sexton, Saban's agent). I talked to Jimmy and wanted to get it done before the Auburn game."

(Saban) was thinking about Auburn, which is what he should've been thinking about. Then he was thinking about the bowl game. Then he was thinking about recruiting. Jimmy said, 'I just can't get him.' So he wasn't worried about it. I wasn't worried about it — well, I was worried about it, I'll tell you that. He told me he wasn't going anywhere and (Saban's wife) Terry told me she wasn't going anywhere. I believed that, but I kept reading what everybody else was reading. I won't say that I wasn't nervous about it."

The agreement ended the almost-daily speculation that Saban was headed for the Texas head coaching job. The Tuscaloosa News reported the contract extension was worth between $7 million and $7.5 million, up from nearly $5.4 million.

See Battle | 5C

See next page
BATTLE
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1C

The new contract makes Saban one of the highest-paid coaches in all of football, pro or college. According to Forbes.com, only Sean Payton (New Orleans Saints), Bill Belichick (New England Patriots), Jeff Fisher (St. Louis Rams) and Andy Reid (Kansas City Chiefs) make $7 million or more.

“We are very pleased to have this agreement completed,” Saban said at the time. “Terry and our family are very happy in Tuscaloosa. It has become home to us. This agreement allows us to continue to build on the tremendous success that we have enjoyed to this point — successes that have transcended the football field. We are excited about the future and the University of Alabama is where I plan to end my coaching career.”

Between that time and now, four and a half months, the contract still hasn’t made its way before the UA board of trustees. That’s not out of the ordinary in these types of negotiations, especially considering a head coach’s responsibilities. In the immediate aftermath of the contract agreement, Saban was locked into Sugar Bowl preparation against Oklahoma. Following that was a hectic, seemingly non-stop recruiting period for the 2014 class, followed by more recruiting for the 2015 class.

After that, Saban was into spring practice, which recently concluded, and now he’s on the speaking circuit, including multiple stops on the Crimson Caravan tour.

It’s easy to see how a back-and-forth negotiation could get held up.

“Nick is probably the most focused and most intense guy I’ve ever been around,” Battle said. “He loves to coach, and he loves to recruit and he doesn’t like to think about other stuff and get distracted.”

Reach Aaron Suttles at aaron@tidesports.com or at 205-722-0229.
Colleges wrestle with 'trigger warnings'

By Lisa Leff
The Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO | It seemed like a modest proposal, or so thought Bailey Loverin, a literature major at the University of California, Santa Barbara. What if professors were prodded to give students a written or oral heads-up before covering graphic material that could cause flashbacks in those who had been sexually assaulted, survived war or suffered other traumas?

The idea proved popular with Loverin's classmates. Student government leaders at UCSB endorsed it. Faculty at other schools, editors and online pundits had a different reaction, calling it "silly," "antithetical to college life" and reflective of "a wider cultural hypersensitivity to harm."

"What I have heard from a lot of people who don't fully understand the issue is, 'Life is life. You are going to get your feelings hurt and you should just suck it up and meet it head-on,'" Loverin, 19, said. "But a girl just raped a month ago and sitting in a classroom for the first time again isn't ready to face that head-on."

The uproar over her "Resolution to Mandate Warnings for Triggering Content in Academic Settings" has called public attention to the use on college campuses of "trigger warnings," a grassroots phenomenon that had spread quietly from the Internet to the Ivory Tower.

This year, the University of Michigan, Bryn Mawr College in Pennsylvania, Oberlin in Ohio, Rutgers in New Jersey, Scripps in California and Wellesley in Massachusetts all have fielded requests from students seeking more thoughtful treatment of potentially troubling readings, films, lectures and works of art.

Trigger warnings are advisories often written in bold type and affixed to a post, tweet, YouTube video or increasingly, a class syllabus. Long a feature of feminist websites and originally used to warn rape and abuse survivors, they are designed to give people who might be negatively affected a chance to opt out.

The topics students are asking to be cautioned about cover a broad swath of human suffering.

At Michigan, speakers at an English Department event on bias said trigger warnings were needed for racially offensive book passages. The UCSB student resolution suggests they are appropriate for portrayals and discussions involving "rape, sexual assault, abuse, self-injurious behavior, suicide, graphic violence, pornography, kidnapping, and graphic depictions of gore."

"Classrooms have always been spaces where difficult, traumatic stuff got dealt with," said Angus Johnston, an associate professor at Hostos Community College in the Bronx, N.Y., and historian of student activism. "What's different now is, partly as a result of this new ethos in the online world of trigger warnings, you are seeing people being willing to assert themselves and say, 'My emotional well-being does matter.'"

Laurie Essig, an associate professor at Vermont's Middlebury College, first heard about trigger warnings in the college context five years ago, following a discussion about eating disorders in her Sociology of Gender course. To illustrate her points, Essig showed pictures of fashion models and images taken from pro-anorexia websites.

Two students took her to task, telling Essig, 'Oh, you should have given a trigger warning for people with eating disorders, they can't see images like that.'
While she has colleagues who do provide trigger warnings, Essig finds them "ridiculous" and refuses to do so.

"I'm treating college students like the adults they are, and institutions increasingly treat college students like medicalized children," she said.

Filmmaker and writer Aishah Shahidah Simmons, a rape survivor who teaches at Temple University in Philadelphia, said she is careful to tell students on the first day of class and in her syllabus that "we are getting ready to delve into some really difficult, painful information here," such as sexual violence and police brutality.

Simmons also gives them lists of resources for emotional support and has arranged private viewings for students who are afraid to watch a film in class. But she worries that trigger warnings, a term she does not use, could stifle free speech, if taken too far.

"Sometimes, I think you can get triggered by trigger warnings," she said.

Already, the demands have led to head-scratching and in some cases, concerns about censorship.

In February, after the Wellesley museum installed a life-like sculpture on campus of a man sleepwalking in his underwear, a student started an online petition to have it moved indoors because it had become "a source of apprehension, fear, and triggering thoughts regarding sexual assault."

The same month, a columnist for the student newspaper at Rutgers wrote that professors should employ "trauma trigger warnings" as a compromise that would protect both academic freedom and "individuals suffering from anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder and obsessive-compulsive disorder — among many others."

Among the works suitable for noticing, the English major wrote, was "The Great Gatsby" ("possesses a variety of scenes that reference gory, abusive and misogynistic violence").

A task force of faculty, administrators and students charged with updating Oberlin's sexual offense policy included a detailed section on trigger warnings in an online faculty resource guide. Under the sub-heading "Understand triggers, avoid unnecessary triggers, and provide trigger warnings," instructors were advised to be mindful of sexual misconduct, but also "racism, classism, sexism, heterosexism, cissexism, ableism, and other issues of privilege and oppression."

Political science professor Marc Bleecher was among the Oberlin professors who objected to the guide's "impervious voice" and "massive list of -isms," worrying they could lead to discipline or legal action. "It would have a very chilling effect on what I say in class and on the syllabus," Bleecher said.

The task force has since removed the disputed section and plans to rewrite it with less "emphatic-ness," said Meredith Raimondo, an associate dean who oversaw the committee.

So far, no schools have required trigger warnings. The executive council of the Academic Senate at UC Santa Barbara issued a statement Thursday noting many faculty members "already use some kind of notification when difficult material will be covered in a course."

The council said it would work with students to address their concerns, adding the "overall goal is to foster a climate of inquiry that allows students to learn, and faculty to teach, as freely and productively as possible."