May 30, 2013

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Bonner hopes to impact UA campuses, state economics

By Katherine Owen  
Production Editor

Following an announcement on May 23 about his plans to resign from his congressional office to take a position with The University of Alabama System, U.S. Rep. Jošiah “Jo” Bonner, R-Ala., said he has a wealth of ideas for his new position but first wants to learn from those already in the system’s office.

Starting August 16, Bonner will assume the position of vice chancellor of government relations and economic development with the UA system.

Kellee Reinhardt, vice chancellor for system relations, said the position was established from the outgrowth and reorganization of the government relations branch of the system under Bill Jones, the recently retired director of the government relations initiative. Bonner’s official salary is unknown but will be determined closer to his start date, Reinhardt said.

“First of all, I’m going to look to Dr. Robert Witt [Chancellor of the UA system] and the other people in the system’s office for guidance,” Bonner said. “And I want to touch base with Bill Jones. He has been the director of the government relations branch for many years and did a great job with that. He’ll have a wealth of knowledge about that aspect of this job.”

Bonner said he has already discussed the potential of his position with Witt and said he sees economic development playing a much larger role than before with the government relations branch.

“What made this so attractive was, in addition to this opportunity to work for this system,” Bonner said, “it is also exciting to see economic...”

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development become an enhanced part of this system."

He said each campus of the UA system - Tuscaloosa, Birmingham and Huntsville - has something valuable to offer, and it is his hope to figure out how to tie those together to enhance business in the state.

"Dr. Witt was telling me his vision," Bonner said, "and he was talking about a much more enhanced role for government relations to play and that the UA system could play. When you think about the unique nature of our system, all three universities have programs that overlap, but they also all [have] some programs that they are really good at."

Reinhart said focusing on the strengths of the three campuses to benefit state economies was part of the intended role of Bonner’s new position.

"By expanding the government relations position to formally include economic development, our goal is to harness the diverse strengths of the three campuses for the economic betterment of the state and nation," Reinhart said. "By helping our state prosper economically, we are increasing the state's ability to financially support higher education."

Bonner also cited the impact government relations could have on individual campus growth for UA system schools.

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Bonner to strengthen government relations

Bonner from Page 1

There has been remarkable growth," he said. "That didn't happen by accident. Working with state government, Robert Witt was able to secure Bryce complex as part of a new campus for the University. That was a long time in coming. Other governors and presidents worked on that. But it was Witt and former Gov. Bob Riley that made that happen. You can't do that without strong partnership in state level.

Reinhart said the system hopes Bonner's experience will bring strength to the government relations branch and eventually a positive impact on the state's economics.

Bonner, who is the brother of current UA President Judy Bonner, will be returning to his alma mater with the position, having graduated from the university in 1982 with an undergraduate degree in journalism and attended law school.

As native and resident of south Alabama, Bonner was first elected in 2003 to represent Alabama's 1st Congressional District, which includes Baldwin, Clarke, Escambia, Mobile, Monroe and Washington counties. In 2012, he ran unopposed in the general election and was re-elected to his sixth term serving the largely conservative Gulf Coast-area communities.

"Congressman Bonner is a native son of Alabama with extensive experience in diverse areas ranging from public policy and legislative matters to industrial recruitment and job creation," Reinhart said. "A solid foundation is in place, and we look forward to working with Jo Bonner to expand the system's economic impact on Alabama and leverage resources to maximum advantage."

As a congressman, Jo Bonner served on both the House Committee on Appropriations and House Committee on Standards of Official Conduct, also known as the Ethics Committee. His website states he is a staunch defender of taxpayer money and played a role in bringing the assembly plant for aircraft manufacturer Airbus to Alabama in 2012.

Wednesday, May 29, 2013
1ST CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

Candidates line up to replace Bonner

His departure could reshape political map

George Talbot
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U.S. Rep. Jo Bonner's announcement that he will resign from Congress on Aug. 15 wasn't a surprise just to his constituents in Alabama's 1st Congressional District.

It marked a tectonic shift that could reshape the south Alabama political map.

Bonner's decision to take a job at the University of Alabama System created an open seat that immediately drew interest from dozens of potential candidates.

Here's a look at candidates who have confirmed their interest:

- Bradley Byrne, a former state Senator and lawyer from Mobile who made an unsuccessful bid for governor in 2010.
- State Sen. Trip Pittman, R-Montrose
- State Sen. Bill Hightower, R-Mobile
- State Rep. Chad Fincher, R-Semmes
- State Rep. Randy Davis, R-Daphne
- Mobile County Sheriff Sam Cochran
- Baldwin County Commissioner Tucker Dorsey
- Quin Hillyer, conservative columnist from Mobile.
- Dean Young, Orange Beach businessman and 2012 congressional candidate
- Mobile County Commissioner Connie Hudson
- Mobile County Circuit Judge Ben Brooks
- Baldwin County Circuit Judge Robert Wilters
- Jessica James, Mobile real estate agent and former candidate for Alabama State School Board.
Cautious, yet ready

In a press conference in Mobile, Ala., on May 23 amid circulating rumors, U.S. Rep. Joeseph "Jo" Bonner, R-Ala., announced his decision to step down from his congressional duties to assume the newly established position of vice chancellor for government relations and economic development for the University of Alabama System.

Beyond the fancy title, we are not sure what this position will entail, and frankly, it doesn't seem like the University does either.

UA system spokeswoman Kellee Reinhardt stated the position will incorporate harnessing "the diverse strengths of the three campuses for the economic betterment of the state and nation," which will, in turn, increase "the state's ability to financially support higher education." However, the actual responsibilities of the position remain unclear.

If the University's statements are taken at face value, it seems like Bonner just left a stable position in which he made $174,000 per year to draft government decisions in order to take a position in which he makes a still-undetermined salary to hope that the government makes the right decisions.

We can assume the new salary will be a bit higher than his previous. Bonner's predecessor Bill Jones, the former director of the government relations branch of the UA system, made $222,487 in 2012.

However, Bonner's position comes after an expansion and redevelopment of this old branch, and Bonner will be declared a vice chancellor. The four current vice chancellors' average salary is $287,375.

Still, coincidental concerns should not cloud the position's potential. There is a dire need on this campus for strengthening the ties of higher education with government and assisting students with tuition costs. And in spite of all the uncertainty and potential nepotism surrounding the position, we are in support of Bonner's selection. When we look at his background, it is clear he is a perfect fit for the position.

For five terms spanning 10 years, Bonner has represented the traditionally conservative Gulf Coast communities of Alabama's 1st Congressional District. He stood up against increasing taxes in Congress and was key to bringing the economic catalyst of an aircraft manufacturer Airbus to Alabama last year. He was so popular in his district that he ran unopposed last year into his sixth term, which he is only leaving behind for the UA system.

If anyone can innovate the blank canvas of a position of vice chancellor for government relations and economic development, it is Jo Bonner.

However, we must ensure that he fulfills the greatest possibilities of this position. If he will be lobbying to the state, we should see a decrease in tuition based off an increase in state funding. We should see an expansion in opportunities for our campuses and their students. We should see a greater University.

Jo Bonner, you will be held accountable for this position.
Bentley looks at options for state boards

The Associated Press

An aide to Gov. Robert Bentley says the administration will continue to explore its options after lawmakers adjourned Monday without acting on 70 nominees to various state boards.

Jennifer Ardis, a spokeswoman in the governor's office, said the administration is worried that some boards may not have enough qualified members to do business. Many of the boards, however, allow sitting members to continue serving until their replacement are confirmed.

Bentley sidestepped the Legislature this week by reappointing three of his choices for the Alabama State University's board of trustees. He made the recess appointments so that Jacqueline Brooks, Larry Thornton and Robert Gilpin can serve now, rather than leave three empty seats on the board.

The trio will be up for confirmation again when lawmakers convene for their 2014 session.
Justice Dept. asks about new law

Kim Chandler
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State education officials were contacted at least twice by the U.S. Department of Justice with questions regarding the new Alabama Accountability Act, according to State Superintendent of Education Tommy Bice.

The inquiries were "preliminary" and focused on potential impact on local desegregation orders, he said.

No communications have occurred since the Legislature approved the final version of the law this week, he added.

In its early inquiries, Bice said the department was particularly interested in language in the law that says schools don't have to accept students trying to transfer out of "failing" public schools.

"That raised a huge red flag at the Justice Department," he said.

Some school systems sought the language, saying they were already at capacity and worried about being forced to take a flood of transferring students. Lawmakers opposed to the bill questioned if the language could be used to exclude poor and minority children.

Representatives for Gov. Robert Bentley and Senate President Pro Tem Del Marsh, R-Anniston, said they knew of no contacts by federal officials concerning the new school-choice law.
Alabamians fall short on economic security

The academic year is drawing to a close, and students across Alabama are crossing their fingers that those final report cards turn out the way they hope. But another report card was issued this month, and Alabama didn’t fare too well. In fact, of the 50 states ranked in a new Economic Security Scorecard, Alabama came in dead last with a score of D+. Although Mississippi, Tennessee and Utah tied us for that D+, their cumulative scores on the 80 public policies earned them a higher ranking.

The scorecard, produced by the national research and advocacy organization Wider Opportunities for Women, is the first report that grades state policies on how well they promote the financial well-being of its residents, from preschoolers to workers and retirees. The Scorecard accounts for the basic elements of any family’s economic security: income, job quality, education and training, public supports, and savings and asset building.

The Scorecard finds that while politicians may say that economic recovery is their priority, lawmakers in Montgomery are far from having a strategy to promote economic security for families. Alabama earned a grade of F for failing to have a state minimum wage law, for failing to provide earned income tax credits for low income working families, for failing to invest in our Housing Trust Fund to create housing opportunities to low income and vulnerable populations, and for failing to provide child and dependent care tax credits for working families.

Among the fastest growing industries in Alabama’s economy are home health care, food service and retail. With average hourly wages of around $10, working families are left with the nearly impossible task of meeting increasing costs for housing and quality child care. The growth of low-wage jobs is also compounded by three decades of stagnant wages, funding cuts to education and public supports and sky-high growth in the costs of basic living expenses.

No wonder middle class families feel like the floor is crumbling beneath them. Our state and our economy can’t move forward if Alabama families are unable to afford safe housing and transportation, weather a period of unemployment or health emergencies, or save for their or their children’s futures.

Alabamians and our leaders have the choice and the power to make different decisions to build a different economy. Government incentives can be a great tool to encourage investments in Alabama, but without concurrent investments in our people we run a risk of always playing catch up, and always being at the bottom of rankings. The true engine of economic growth is an inclusive and rising middle class. We need public policies that support the middle class, and those that encourage the accumulation of wealth rather than allowing it to be stripped away by predatory lending practices. We need a tax structure that doesn’t continue to place the heaviest burden on those who have the least. We need to invest in programs that encourage and allow full participation in the workforce.

We use to say “thank God for Mississippi,” assuming that as poorly as we did, our neighbors to the west did worse. We no longer can say that — but we don’t always have to be dead last in how we treat our fellow citizens. A state that focuses on offering opportunities and hope to its people will reap the benefits of such decisions, and in doing that, we will have report card that we can be proud of.

Ron Gilbert is the Executive Director of the Community Action Association of Alabama, a network of local, nonprofit organizations that focus on issues related to poverty in their communities and on providing opportunities for economic stability to low and moderate-income Alabamians and their families. Readers can email him at rgilbert@caaalabama.org.
Neighbors offer cash reward for killer's capture

Police seek tips in Kate Ragsdale's February slaying at The Highlands

By Stephanie Taylor
Staff Writer

Kate Ragsdale's friends and neighbors have pledged a $15,000 reward for anyone who helps catch her killer. Residents of The Highlands announced the reward at a news conference held in the neighborhood Wednesday morning. The reward stands at $20,000 when combined with $5,000 offered by Gov. Robert Bentley in March.

A neighbor found Ragsdale, 73, dead at her home in The Highlands in February. An autopsy revealed that she died from sharp-force trauma.

Investigators have been reluctant to reveal information about the crime scene or possible suspects, but they said Wednesday that they are making progress.

"We're getting good information," said Sgt. Dale Phillips, Tuscaloosa County Metro Homicide Unit commander. "We're starting to be able to put some of the pieces of the puzzle together, and we feel like we're gaining on the person who did this."

Eleanor Street, whose husband found Ragsdale on Feb. 24, said the tragedy has brought neighbors closer together. They have met several times to talk about their friend, about security in the neighborhood and how they can assist with the case. They hung fliers with a photo of Ragsdale and reward information in the nearby area of DCH Regional Medical Center and Alberta.

Street hopes that the photo of the well-loved friend and community member along with the reward information will encourage people to call with tips, no matter how insignificant the information may seem.

"We hope that anyone who knows anything, even slightly suspicious, will call. Anyone who may have seen her the previous week, saw something out here or saw her,"

Kate Ragsdale was found dead in her home in February.
REWARD

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some place," she said. "I don't think any information is too small."

Elizabeth Aversa knew Ragsdale as a colleague at the University of Alabama, as a friend and a dog-walking companion.

"So many people in this community cared for Kate Ragsdale. It's so senseless that this would happen to anyone, especially such a fine member of this community," she said. "We just want to get this situation solved so that we have some answers."

In April, the University of Alabama announced the establishment of an endowed scholarship to honor Ragsdale, a longtime employee who retired in 2006 as planning officer for university libraries. She volunteered for several public and civic organizations, including West Alabama AIDS Outreach and the Tuscaloosa Public Library.

Phillips didn't release further information about the case but stressed that it hasn't gone cold.

"This case has not fallen by the wayside, it is very much a priority," he said. "We're making good progress, and we're confident that we will reach a resolution soon."

He said investigators are working with the profile created by retired FBI profiler Charlie Dorsey.

Dorsey's analysis determined that the killer was likely young and lived close to Ragsdale's home. He said the killer was probably familiar with the home and exhibited an "extreme lack of criminal sophistication."

Phillips said Wednesday that Ragsdale likely knew the killer, who has likely exhibited changes in behavior, personality and routine.

"We believe there are people with information that we need to receive, and we encourage them to come forward," he said. "We follow up on every tip, no matter what it is."

Anyone with information can call Tuscaloosa County CrimeStoppers at 205-752-STOP (7867), the homicide unit at 205-349-0518 or Tuscaloosa Police at 205-349-2121.

Reach Stephanie Taylor at stephanie.taylor@tuscaloosa news.com or 205-722-0210.
IMMORTALIZED IN BRONZE
Patrick O'Sullivan, senior technician for the University of Alabama's Department of Art and Art History, works on cleaning up the rough edges, or chasing, a bronze bust of Alabama football coach Nick Saban on Monday. The original clay bust was sculpted by Jeremy Davis, who also sculpted the Saban statue that now stands at the Walk of Champions in front of Bryant-Denny Stadium. Molds were made from the clay bust and used to pour the bronze version on Saturday. Once O'Sullivan finishes chasing the bust, it will be treated with a patina and placed in the Mal Moore Athletic Facility with the other bronze busts on display.
To the next level

UA business school dean has plans to improve college and community

By Patrick Rupinski
Business Editor

J. Michael Hardin is an ordained Baptist minister with a mathematics-related Ph.D., but his forte is business. He doesn't run a company, but he leads an organization that turns out the men and women who will.

Hardin, 57, succeeded Barry Mason as dean of the University of Alabama's business school two years ago. He had been an associate dean under Mason, who headed UA's Culverhouse College of Commerce and Business Administration for almost 23 years and also served as an interim president for UA for almost a year.

During Mason's tenure, the business school enrollment and faculty increased and new facilities were added. Culverhouse's faculty and students also got involved in projects off campus. When he stepped down as dean, Mason was lauded for his work in improving Alabama and Tuscaloosa's business environment.

Whoever succeeded him had a tough act to follow.

Hardin had worked closely with Mason since 2001, first as associate dean for research and then as senior associate dean, a sort of chief operating officer who was responsible for the day-to-day operations of the business school.

That might have made him a logical choice to succeed Mason. But before he got the job, Hardin had to lay out his plans to take the business school to the next level.

A main goal was to make UA's business school one of the country's top public university business schools, he said during an interview at his office in Alston Hall last week.

Other goals included increasing entrepreneurship, training students jointly in business and other nationally needed disciplines, applying the knowledge learned in the classroom in the community and industry and making sure the business school's graduates not only have the knowledge to do the job but the skills to land the job.

U.S. News & World Report, whose ranking of colleges and universities is one of the most cited, this year ranked UA's business school as 29th among public universities for its undergraduate program and 20th for its graduate program.

That's good, but Hardin said he wants to see it continue to improve in the rankings.

"(UA football coach) Nick Saban tells recruits that he turns out players for the NFL. I want to say that Culverhouse turns out the players for the NFL of the business world."

J. Michael Hardin, dean of the University of Alabama's Culverhouse College of Commerce and Business Administration

"(UA football coach) Nick Saban tells recruits that he turns out players for the NFL. I want to say that Culverhouse turns out the players for the NFL of the business world."

"I also want them (Culverhouse graduates) to have the skills to land the job."

The U.S. News' ranking is considered by prospective students, employers hiring graduates and alumni whose financial and mentoring support is needed, he said.

"I also want them (Culverhouse graduates) to have the skills to land the job."

Sunday, May 26, 2013

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graduates) to stay in Alabama and help create new jobs," Hardin said.

One way he hopes to do that is through The Edge, a business incubator that the business school helped start in September.

The Edge, is a downtown facility that helps budding entrepreneurs to get their new businesses through their infancy and grow to the point where they can get out on their own. It provides space, shared facilities and equipment and mentoring.

Another relatively young Culverhouse program wedded business with students in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM), disciplines critically needed by U.S. businesses and industry.

Students interested in these fields and nursing can apply to UA's STEM program—a five-year honors-like program that offers a bachelor's degree in one of the selected fields and a master's in business administration. Students begin working on the MBA part of the program as upperclassmen.

The program limits enrollment and is highly selective, but Hardin said it has attracted top-ranked academic graduating high school students from across the country.

UA started its STEM program with 60 students three years ago and more than doubled the enrollment in the ensuing classes. Its fourth freshman class will start in August, and by its fifth year, STEM will have about 700 students enrolled the program.

Both the MBA training and the Edge allow business students to learn outside the traditional classroom. That's something Culverhouse and other business schools across the country are doing more frequently, he said.

Part of UA's plan Hardin calls "Rochester II."

It takes its name from Rochester, a radiator plant in Tuscaloosa that was going to file bankruptcy years ago when Mason sent faculty and students into the plant to study its operations. Although the plant ultimately closed, the UA recommendations helped keep it open for a few more years.

Hardin said "Rochester II" will emulate that approach. It will allow students and faculty to go into businesses that want help, study their operations and recommend changes.

"Companies today want people with critical thinking skills," he said of the type of student the business school wants to graduate. "How do you apply your knowledge? How do you solve a problem? That is the value-added" worker that employers want.

Hardin, a Mobile native who spent part of his youth in the Florida panhandle, earned a Ph.D. in 1986 from UA in applied statistics, a discipline that is in the business school. He taught at the University of West Florida, Florida State, Mississippi State and UAB before joining the UA faculty in 2001.

He also earned a divinity degree and is a Southern Baptist minister. He does not pastor a church but has been a guest preacher at local churches and while at UAB, he presided at some of his students' weddings.

Being a minister and a dean of a major business school (UA had 7,118 undergraduates and graduate students last year and accounted for about a third of UA's latest graduating class) might be an unusual combination, but Hardin said the two disciplines go well together.

Part of the training in divinity school is in leadership, he said. And part of a minister's work is in building a consensus within a congregation. A dean must do the same with the faculty, he said.

"And like a Southern Baptist minister, you can get voted out if they don't like the job you are doing," he quipped.

In the corporate world, CEOs set the objectives and the staff executes the plan, he said. The academic world is different; leadership requires that you build a consensus.

Hardin, an avid reader whose office is lined with bookshelves, says a book he likes to refer to often is "The Fifth Discipline — The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization" by Peter Senge. The copy on his shelf is marked with tabs and his handwritten notes in the margins.

But he said a recent book he enjoyed was "A. Lincoln," by Ronald C. White Jr., and one of his favorite books was the late historian William Manchester's "The Glory and the Dream: A Narrative History of America, 1932-1972."

Both books have offered perspectives on leadership, he said.

As to his free time, Hardin said he reads a lot about Alabama history and enjoys traveling.

"Family also is very important to me," he said.

He and his wife have a daughter who is a senior at UA majoring in advertising and a son who is in his third year of medical school at UAB.
UA fan files complaint over football tickets

Says public officials shouldn’t be able to buy without joining Tide Pride

Jon Solomon
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A longtime University of Alabama booster said Friday he is filing an ethics complaint against state public officials for purchasing Crimson Tide football tickets without paying extra as Tide Pride members.

The Alabama Ethics Commission, without confirming or denying the complaint, says the issue is out of its hands.

Fred Palmer, a 76-year-old Tuscaloosa man who says he’s an original Tide Pride member, argues that because the University of Alabama all season tickets are sold through Tide Pride except for students, faculty and staff, public officials are receiving free booster-club membership.

"It's not fair for the people that can't get tickets," Palmer said. "The legislators work for us. They're no better than we are. There are 28,000 people on a waiting list who can't join Tide Pride unless they pay $25,000 per seat to jump the line, and 100 legislators get the tickets."

At one time, public officials could receive football tickets for free. That changed under a new state ethics law, which allows officials to purchase tickets at face-value prices, but they don't have to make the Tide Pride donations required for the chance to buy.

"It's not an ethics issue," said Jim Sumner, director of the Alabama Ethics Commission. "The commission couldn't do anything even if they wanted to. This is an issue for the universities to determine. If they want public officials to purchase tickets outside the booster program, that is not an issue for the commission."

Palmer, who provided al.com with a copy of his complaint, acknowledged he’s not anticipating a favorable ruling.

"The ethics law about paying face value may apply to other sporting events," Palmer said, "but it doesn't apply to Alabama football because it says you have to be a member of Tide Pride to buy tickets."

Palmer said he pays $2,200 each for two club-level seats in the South Zone. He said he was able to buy BCS and SEC championship tickets last season, but his son could not.

"Even Auburn fans got BCS tickets," Palmer said, alluding to tickets bought by Sen. Jabo Waggoner, who is an Auburn fan. "It used to be that a father could take a son to a football game. It's gotten to the point where you can't do that, yet people who haven't paid a penny into Tide Pride can?"

Palmer corresponded with Alabama President Judy Bonner, who replied in April by saying that "based on our understanding of the state ethics laws, we believe that we are in compliance with those laws."
Ol’ Colony seeks upgrades

Improvements could help UA host golf tournaments

By Jason Morton
Staff Writer

TUSCALOOSA | The most recent version of a plan to upgrade Tuscaloosa County Park and Recreation Authority facilities includes a $500,000 allocation for the Ol’ Colony Golf Complex.

The public golf course, which opened in 2000, needs new greens and other improvements, according to PARA and Ol’ Colony’s board of governors.

The 7,041-yard course, built on 592 acres near Munny Sokol Park at a cost of $8 million, is home to the University of Alabama golf program, which has a practice facility there but does not host matches or tournaments.

The Ol’ Colony allocation, if approved by the Tuscaloosa City Council and Tuscaloosa County Commission as part of the proposed facilities upgrades, is expected to be combined with a $375,000 contribution from UA. The money would be used to renovate all 18 greens, converting the current dwarf Bermuda grass to ultra-dwarf Bermuda grass, improve some of the course’s sand-filled bunkers and extend tee boxes to lengthen nine holes.

Once the improvements are completed, the course will satisfy requirements of the National Collegiate Athletic Association and could enable the UA men’s and women’s golf teams to host tournaments, possibly including Southeastern Conference championships, golf officials said.

The County Commission approved the latest version of the parks plan last week. The City Council is expected to vote on the plan Tuesday.

When the park upgrades were proposed about eight months ago, they were expected to cost $12.1 million over five years, with the City Council and County Commission sharing in the expense. The latest version, approved by the commission last week, has since grown to $20.2 million spread over four years, including $4.3 million in projects for areas outside the city limits that would be funded solely by the County Commission.

The council might amend the plan further before voting on it.

Jerry Plott, the former Tuscaloosa City Council president who has served as

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UPGRADES

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chairman of the Ol’ Colony board of governors for the past decade, said the most critical element of the Ol’ Colony work is the greens.

He and others familiar with the management of golfing facilities said the life of a green is about 10 years. After that, the grass loses its consistency and uniformity, making for a rough and bumpy putting surface.

“It’s going to start affecting the number of people who play out there,” Plott said of the condition of the greens.

In recent months, UA officials approached the Ol’ Colony board to request the green upgrades and other course improvements and offered to pay half of the $750,000 cost.

That was enough for Ol’ Colony board members to ask for the work to be added to the multi-year capital improvement plan for the Park and Recreation Authority, which manages the facility.

“If the university is offering to pay half of that, then we’re crazy not to take advantage of it,” Plott said.

The remainder of the $500,000 allocation from the city and county — $250,000 — would go to PARA to offset revenue lost from having to close the golf course. PARA will shut down the course (the driving range will not be affected) while the greens are renovated and the other improvements are completed.

Gary Minor, executive director of PARA, said he hopes the approximately 10 weeks worth of work can get underway by June 18. That would enable Ol’ Colony to reopen in time for Labor Day weekend, one of the busiest each year.

In fiscal 2012, Ol’ Colony brought in $299,525 in golf course revenues from June to August. Revenues from the pro shop and concessions added another $39,071 during that span.

The complex’s main source of income is annual memberships, which range from $500 to $1,500 for non-students, and greens fees for individual rounds, which total $45 on weekdays and $50 on weekends.

The greens fee was $25 for weekdays and $31 for weekends when the course opened on Dec. 10, 2000.

Minor said the $125,000 is needed because PARA uses some of the proceeds from Ol’ Colony to help pay expenses unrelated to the golf complex, even though the annual revenue that Ol’ Colony brings in isn’t enough for the facility to break even, much less turn a profit.

In fact, Ol’ Colony has lost money each year since its opening. From fiscal 2003 through fiscal 2012, it lost $2.5 million on revenues of $14.3 million.

The feasibility study that justified the construction of the complex said it would become profitable by 2004. Minor said he expects that to happen eventually.

“We do expect it to break even in the near future,” Minor said. “Golf is heavily reliant on the economy and weather. It is something that people can cut out to save money when the economy is bad…

“Most people do not understand that almost all Park and Recreation programs and facilities are subsidized to some extent. The return on your investment with parks and recreation is increased quality of life — that is the purpose of investing in facilities and programs for the public.”

Reach Jason Morton at jason.morton@tuscaloosanews.com or 205-722-0200.
Bailey may be considered for New Mexico State provost

Former University of Alabama President Guy Bailey could be considered for the provost job at New Mexico State University, according to a Las Cruces Sun-News report.

The newspaper reported Wednesday that the New Mexico State Faculty Senate on June 6 will consider allowing the president-designate to waive usual search procedures if he hires one of the other four presidential candidates as the top academic administrator.

Garrey Carruthers was chosen as New Mexico State’s president on May 6. He was selected over Bailey, David Ashley, former president of the University of Nevada, Las Vegas; Elsa Murano, former Texas A&M University president; and Daniel Howard, University of Colorado Denver dean.

Bailey, a former president at Texas Tech University in Lubbock, resigned as UA’s president on Oct. 31, 2012, 58 days after he started his duties.

Bailey remains a tenured employee at UA and is on paid leave at an annual salary of more than $500,000.
UAB dental school No. 1 in research funding

Mike Oliver
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The $12.5 million given to the UAB School of Dentistry by the primary federal sponsor of dental research is tops in the nation for 2012.

Riding a huge $67 million, multi-year grant award last year, the dentistry school went from No. 15 in funding to No. 1 in money received by the National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Researcher, the dental arm of the National Institutes of Health, according to a UAB news release.

"These rankings illustrate UAB's and the school's leadership position in dental research," said Michael Reddy, dean of the school. "We have some of the top minds in dental research in the United States and the world at UAB, and this is a testament to our hard work and dedication to the nation's oral health."

UAB announced last year it was receiving a seven-year, $67 million grant from the National Dental Practice-Based Research Network, which consolidates the institute's three regional research networks into a nationally coordinated effort to research best practices in dental care. The effort received $9.9 million in 2012.
UAB's Movi goes beyond wheelchair

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Move over wheelchair, make room for the Movi.

The Movi is a new patient transport chair invented because a University of Alabama at Birmingham hospital executive saw a need to better control injuries occurring when patients were being moved in and out of wheelchairs.

So the hospital executive hired a designer, expressed his concerns, and the Movi was invented.

The Movi's key feature is its motorized ability to lift a patient up for easier and safer exit and entry from the chair.

Although made for hospital use, its industrial designer, Lloyd Cooper, founder of Push Product Design, sees a future in the home market as well.

One day recently, Cooper was at the Mountain Brook house of David Higgins, a new owner of the Movi, to check out its home-use.

See MOVI, Page 8A
potential. David’s son, John, recently purchased the $3,995 Movi for his 82-year-old dad, who has been diagnosed with a brain tumor and is weak from rounds of radiation and chemotherapy.

On this day, dad was going to be driven to a doctor’s appointment. Using the Movi, John pushed his dad to the car in the driveway. John opened his passenger car door, pushed a button on the Movi to begin the slow lift of the seat. Once partially upright, his father pulled his 5-foot-4-inch, 240-pound frame into the car with little strength exerted—and no caregiver lifting, pushing and pulling.

“It makes it really easy to pop out of the chair,” John Higgins said.

Wheelchair-related Injuries

The idea to reinvent the wheelchair came out of a serious problem with wheelchair-related injuries of both hospital staff and patients, Cooper said. It’s a nationwide problem that insurance companies have declined to cover.

“Over the last few years, insurance quit paying for slip-and-fall injuries in hospitals because it has become the hospital’s responsibility,” Cooper said. Insurers call such injuries “hospital-acquired conditions.”

That concerned Dr. Will Ferniani, CEO of UAB Health System.

“There are a lot of issues with a wheelchair in a hospital,” Ferniani said. “There’s no storage capacity. There are problems with the footrests. And they tend to get stolen. But the most important thing is that staff and patients get hurt. They hurt backs and muscles. Ever try to get anybody out of wheelchair? It’s hard.”

So Ferniani hired Cooper to build a safer transport chair.

Cooper, who has an industrial design and mechanical engineering background, took Ferniani’s concerns to heart.

In addition to the patient lift, he built seven cubic feet of storage into the chair. He built footrests that lay flat on the ground to eliminate falls. The Movi also has an IV pole and support for an oxygen tank.

Missing feature

“Traditionally, the wheelchair doesn’t have one feature the Movi has,” Ferniani said. “The wheelchair can be self-propelled either with a small motor or by the rider’s hands pushing its large wheels. In order to move, the Movi needs someone to push, which in a hospital is readily available. In homes, many people in need of wheelchairs will have a spouse or caretaker who can fulfill those duties,” Cooper said.

The Movi is already being used at UAB Hospital and VA Medical Center in Birmingham. The Movi is being built in northern Alabama and will be marketed nationwide.

Cooper said he was inspired in designing Movi because of his experience with his own father.

“My dad was 87, and he had fallen, breaking his hips,” Cooper said.

He saw his dad struggle to get comfortable, sitting at a 90-degree angle and could only do it for a short time before slumping forward.

With a control button, the Movi reclines so that it nearly replicates the angle of a reclining beach lounge chair.

“My father loves it,” John Higgins said. “He reclines it all the way down to take his naps in it.”

Meanwhile, his father’s traditional wheelchair sits unused in the closet.
‘Moore has been unlucky’

Researcher on Oklahoma tornado says all the ingredients were there
Warm, humid air from the Gulf of Mexico combines with dry air from the Rockies, generating swirling winds that can spawn massive thunderstorms — and twisters — when conditions are right. Oklahoma sits squarely in a region that has earned the nickname Tornado Alley.

Meteorologists in the National Weather Service's forecast office in Norman upgraded Monday's storm from an EF-4 to an EF-5 intensity rating — the highest severity a tornado can achieve on the Enhanced Fujita Scale, which rates tornado strength by assessing the damage a twister inflicts.

**Perfect sense**

Scientists sifting through the tornado's wreckage Tuesday said it made perfect sense that a killer storm would emerge in this part of the Plains at this time of year.

Bluestein called Moore's string of bad luck "remarkable." Early readings of radar collected in the area also painted a picture of a particularly devastating storm, researchers said.

**UAH scientist**

Kevin Knupp, an atmospheric scientist at the University of Alabama in Huntsville, used radar to watch the tornado develop in real time from his office.

Observing the signal with a graduate student, Knupp estimated that the twister spawned debris across a path two miles wide. He said another dissipating storm in the area may have caused a surge in momentum in low-level air which, in turn, could have fed the circulation of the powerful twister.

Tanimachi, who specializes in using radar to build computer simulations of severe storms, said that the Newcastle-Moore tornado, as the weather service refers to it, intensified unusually rapidly. On Monday, she was stationed about five miles south of the tornado's eventual path when radar signals indicated that a super-cell thunderstorm was beginning to develop. Scanning the storm every 60 to 90 seconds and paying attention to details like the size of water droplets, she was able to tell that it was still in an early stage and was "ingesting moist air," which is a common fuel source for a tornado.

Tanimachi said she was surprised by the speed with which the tornado emerged. "It went from being a benign-looking blip to a super cell in 10 to 15 minutes," she said. "All the ingredients were there at the right time." Tanimachi took a video of the tornado out her window, and later posted it to YouTube.
Engineer pushes environmental approach in processes

By: Heather R. Smith

Words like green and sustainability are often used to refer to recycling, taking better care of the Earth, and new or alternative forms of energy, such as solar- or wind-power.

Army engineer Gregory Harris would say it's much more than that and is working to make that point to the Army and to manufacturers involved in developing the latest military technology.

Harris takes a systems engineering approach to sustainability, which he said includes not just energy, the environment, production and the product, but also sustainability in the work force, technology and product lifecycle.

"When people think of 'green' they think of the environment and energy," Harris said, "but it's much, much more."

Harris is an engineer in the U.S. Army Research, Development and Engineering Command's aviation and missile center. He is part of the Manufacturing Science and Technology Division, Engineering Directorate of the Aviation and Missile Research Development and Engineering Center where he supports sustainability, supply chain management, model-based enterprise and manufacturing readiness initiatives.

Before joining AMRDEC, Harris was director of the Center for Management and Economic Research and the Manufacturing Extension Partnership Center at the University of Alabama-Huntsville. It was in this role that Harris first started exploring the idea of sustainability.

"The key," Harris said, "is to integrate sustainability into everything you're doing; both the product and the process."

He recently completed coursework in Purdue University's Green Enterprise Development Workforce Training Program to become credentialed as a Green Manufacturing Specialist.

Developed by the Society of Manufacturing Engineers and Purdue University, the program provides training in the latest green manufacturing practices and ideas through a series of in-depth training modules. After completing 56 hours of classroom instruction and a comprehensive final exam, students have a thorough understanding of the many topics that comprise sustainable manufacturing.

The program, he said, encourages manufacturers to change their way of thinking to actively look for ways to incorporate more sustainable, environmentally friendly improvements that have a positive effect on the bottom line.

As an engineer and a Green Manufacturing Specialist, Harris plays a vital role in AMRDEC providing education for his fellow Army employees and their business partners about integrating
green practices into every facet of the manufacturing process.

"We need to be educating and providing assistance for improving sustainability," Harris said. "If you get people to actually think about it, sustainability starts to make sense.

Most of the time, it's just making people aware, then they start to realize there's more going into the trash bin than just trash. Sustainability is not just a good idea or the right thing to do, it makes financial sense because we are limiting waste and reducing costs."

Harris brings a wealth of education and experience with him to his current position. He has a bachelor's degree in industrial engineering from Auburn University, a master's from St. Edwards University and a doctorate in industrial and systems engineering from UAH. His expertise in this area stems from more than 30 years experience as an industrial engineer, quality engineer, operations manager, plant manager, and consultant in operations and supply chain.

Along with his work at the AMRDEC, Harris is adjunct professor in the College of Business Administration and a member of the graduate faculty in the College of Engineering at UAH. He teaches courses in Supply Chain Management, Transportation and Logistics, and Production and Inventory Control. Harris also teaches systems engineering as an adjunct assistant professor at Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University's Redstone campus.
Shelton names interim leader

Interim president will start June 1

By Ken Roberts
City Editor

TUSCALOOSA | Shelton State Community College's new interim president will start work June 1, according to a news release from the school.

Joan Yvette Davis, a graduate of the University of Alabama School of Law who grew up in Tuscaloosa, comes to Shelton State from the Alabama Technology Network, which is a part of the Alabama Community College System and the Manufacturing Extension Partnership.

She previously served as interim chancellor of the Alabama Community College System.

Her appointment as Shelton's interim president was announced May 24 at a meeting of the college faculty and staff by Mark Heinrich, chancellor of the Alabama Community College System. Heinrich served as Shelton State's president from 2008-12.

Davis replaces Steve Fair, who was Shelton State's interim president for nine months. Fair will return to his duties as dean of technical services, according to the news release.

Davis joined the community college system in 2002 as general counsel and vice chancellor for legal and human resources. Before that she practiced law for 20 years. Her law experience includes private practice.

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SHELTON

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as well as government and higher education cases in Alabama, Georgia and Florida.

The Macon, Ga., native moved to Tuscaloosa at the age of four. The news release states that she's a product of the Tuscaloosa City School System and earned a bachelor of arts degree in English and history from Bennett College in Greensboro, N.C.
Auburn gets $1 million for cyber security program

AUBURN | Auburn University will get $1 million in state money for its new cyber security program. The university says it will use the money to expand research, education and workforce development programs in cyber security.

Professor Bob Norton told AL.com that the effort is essential because of the growing threat that computer-based attacks pose to economic infrastructure and commerce.

One part of the Auburn program works to educate technology professionals that can help businesses secure their data. Auburn's cyber security center wants to do contract work for government agencies and private businesses.

Researchers also will monitor social-networking and news sites to track potential threats around the world.
How old were Toomer's oaks?

Not as old as people believed

Evan Belanger
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Auburn University reported this week that counts of annual growth rings show the iconic Toomer's Corner oaks were 83 to 85 years old.

That makes them significantly younger than the 130-year age popularly believed before the trees' removal on April 23.

Professor of Horticulture Gary Keever and Associate Professor of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences Brian Via independently counted 81 annual growth rings on a cross-section of the wood.

A split in the wood made determining their exact age impossible.

"The center one-inch section of the trunk was split and not clearly delineated," Keever said Tuesday. "This growth most likely occurred over two to four years, making the trees 83 to 85 years old."

The count supports Keever's earlier assessment, based on photographic evidence, that showed the oaks were planted in 1937 and were eight to 12 feet tall at the time.

The university is looking for ways to publicly display the wood from the oaks, including the cross-section used to age the trees.

Keepsakes made from the oaks are being sold by several manufacturers licensed by the university.
Blazers, Townsend working on contract extension

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Long before UAB head softball coach Marla Townsend led the Blazers to the best season in school history, Athletics Director Brian Mackin was working on a contract to lock her in for more years.

Townsend and head baseball coach Brian Shoop had their contracts extended through 2016, pending approval by the Board of Trustees.

The contracts have gone through the compensation committee and full details should be released after BOT approval, which Mackin hopes will happen in June meeting.

For Townsend, work continues to finalize her extension. UAB finished up a 40-19 season, making a Super Regional for the first time and losing a pair of one-run games at No. 2 Florida over the weekend. The 40 wins were a school record and the Blazers won their first Conference USA regular season title.

Mackin said that he started talking extension with Townsend before this season.

Her contract was slated to expire after the season. She has been the only coach in UAB’s 14 years of competition.

“I’m very pleased with what she’s done even before this great run through the regional,” Mackin said. “I want to make sure we acknowledge that she has done a great job as our only softball coach. What she’s done the last four years, getting them to a regional every year, now what is basically the Sweet 16, that’s phenomenal.

“We want to do everything we possibly can to continue the run. Her student-athletes are so bought in to what she’s teaching them. One of the biggest reasons we’ve improved is not only because of the move to the on-campus facility, but

UAB coach Marla Townsend led the Blazers to a school-record 40 wins and the Conference USA title.

(Jeff Roberts/jroberts@al.com)
also because they're buying in to what she is teaching them.

Shoop's contract was extended two years through the 2016 season. It was set to run out after 2014. UAB (23-36) struggled with injuries this year, only being able to have 19 active players for the Conference USA Tournament when teams can carry up to 27 players.

UAB reached the NCAA Regionals in 2012. The Blazers lose four seniors off this year's team and next week's Major League Baseball amateur draft will be a key for 2014. Fall signee Tim Anderson, a shortstop from East Central (Miss.) Community College, is a sure bet to be drafted high enough to sign professionally, but UAB will be crossing fingers on several other key signees as well.

"We know Brian Shoop is one of the best coaches in America," Mackn said.

"They had unbelievably bad luck with injuries this year. We're working with the Barons to play some games in Regions Field and that will really help our baseball recruiting."

Townsend's softball team came close to advancing to the Women's College World Series, falling to No. 2 Florida in two one-run games. UAB dropped the opener 4-3 on Saturday before falling 1-0 on Sunday.

UAB says goodbye to several key seniors, all of whom played in an NCAA regional throughout their careers.

Pitcher/infielder Lauren Webster, starting third baseman Kate Armstrong, starting outfielders Whitney Fletcher and Chandler Orr, starting catcher Anna Kimbrell and key reserve Hailey Glyn will move on.
COLLEGE BASEBALL ROUNDPUP

UAB ends season today; Samford done

Memphis 6, UAB 5

At Houston, UAB (22-36) stranded a season-high 16 base runners in the loss, as the Blazers have been mathematically eliminated from C-USA Championship contention. They will face fifth seed UCF to round out pool play tonight at 7 in what will be the final game of the 2013 season.

In a rematch of the 2012 C-USA Championship title game, Memphis (35-23) quickly jumped on UAB starter Turner Lee (1-3). The Tigers pushed across four runs in the top of the first off three hits, including a two-run double by Drew Griffin to own a commanding lead early on.

Memphis assured itself of a chance to play for a spot in the Conference USA title game on Sunday. The Tigers face No. 1 seed Rice on Saturday at 11 a.m. A year ago, UAB upset Memphis to win the tournament and advance to the NCAA Tournament.

The Blazers outhit the Tigers 12 to 11, but stranded a base runner in every inning.

Appalachian State 2, Samford 1

At Greenville, S.C., Will Callaway’s two-out RBI single in the sixth inning proved to be the difference as No. 5 seed Appalachian State downed No. 8 seed Samford 2-1 in an elimination game Thursday in the Southern Conference Baseball Championship.

Due to Wednesday’s severe weather in the area, the matchup was moved to Latham Stadium on the campus of Furman University.

Appalachian State (29-23) advances to face either Western Carolina or The Citadel today at 3 p.m., while Samford ends its season at 27-30 overall.
Crimson Tide’s season over; UAB has to win two games today

Tennessee 5, Alabama 3

In Knoxville, Tenn., Alabama’s bid to repeat as college softball’s national champion came to an end Saturday.

After racing out to a 3-0 lead, the Crimson Tide saw its 2013 season halted in a 5-3 loss to Tennessee in Game 2 of a best-of-three Super Regional series. Alabama lost Game 1 on Friday, 3-2.

It’s the first time since 2010 that Alabama (45-15) has failed to qualify for the eight-team Women’s College World Series. Tennessee (49-10) advances to its third WCWS in the past four years.

The Crimson Tide brought the tying runner to the plate in its final at-bats, but Molly Fichtner’s strikeout put an official end to Alabama’s title defense.

Alabama got to Tennessee pitcher by Renfroe early, plating two runs in the first inning and one more in the second to take a 3-0 lead.

Kayla Braud and Haylie McCleney set the table for Fichtner in the first inning, as the Crimson Tide catcher drove in the two speedsters with an RBI single. With the bases loaded in the second, Tennessee center fielder Tory Lewis dropped McCleney’s shallow flyball, allowing Danae Flays to extend the Crimson Tide’s advantage to three runs.

Starting in the third, the Lady Vols went to work against Jackie Traina, one of the team’s heroes in last year’s title run. UT scored one run in the third, two in the fourth and one more in the fifth to take a lead it would not relinquish.

Madison Shipman’s sacrifice fly put Tennessee on the board in a third inning that could have been much worse for Alabama. With one out and runners on first and second, Traina induced Cheyanne Tarango to ground into a double play.

Another Alabama defensive play minimized the damage in the fourth, as McCleney threw out pinch-runner Jennifer Burroughs at home plate following Raven champagne’s bases-loaded single to prevent the Lady Vols from taking the lead.

Ellen Renfroe worked the final two innings for Tennessee.

Traina went 5 1/3 innings in her eighth loss of the season. She struck out one, walked three and allowed eight hits.

Florida 4, UAB 3

At Gainesville, Fla., No. 2 Florida scored two runs in the bottom of the seventh to take a 4-3 win over UAB in the first game of a best-of-3 Super Regional on Saturday.

The teams play Game 2 today at 11 a.m. on ESPN. UAB will need to win to force a third game to advance to the College Softball World Series in Oklahoma City.

UAB (40-18) went ahead 3-2 in the top of the seventh on Kristen McGrath’s 2-out RBI single.

The Gators (56-7) came back with a bases loaded hit-by-pitch to tie the game and an RBI single to left to walk off with the win. UAB reliever Leigh Streetman hit Taylor Schwarz with a pitch and Briana Little was hit by a pitch to force the tying run.

After a strikeout, Katie Medina singled to left for the go-ahead run.

Streetman (13-8) came on in relief of starter Lannah Campbell in the sixth and escaped a bases-loaded, no-out situation with two strikeouts. Campbell struck out eight in the start.

UAB led 1-0 in the second when Megan McGrath reached on a fielding error, scoring pinch-runner Kelly Brit.

Florida tied it in the third. UAB went ahead 2-1 in the fifth on a two-out RBI single by Whitney Fletcher, but Florida’s Kelsey Horton was hit by a pitch with the bases loaded to force in a run.

Hannah Rogers (32-5) pitched a complete game for Florida to get the win.

Streetman (13-8) took the loss, throwing 1 1/3 innings and striking out three.

al.com reports
END OF THE LINE

Crimson Tide swept by Lady Vols, won't get chance to defend its national title

By Tommy Deas
Executive Sports Editor

KNOXVILLE, TENN. | The University of Alabama softball team got the start it wanted Saturday, but then saw its season come to a disappointing finish.

The defending national champion Crimson Tide jumped out to an early lead on Tennessee in the NCAA Knoxville Super Regional, but watched the Lady Vols rally for a 5-3 victory at Sherri Parker Lee Stadium.

Alabama, which came into the day needing to beat Tennessee twice after dropping Friday's opener in the best-of-three series, ended its season at 45-15 and short of its goal of returning to the Women's College World Series in Oklahoma City to defend its title.

"Obviously anything less than Oklahoma, that's obviously not what we're striving for," Alabama infielder Kaila Hunt said. "I hate it for our seniors. We don't want them to go out this way."

Alabama got two runs in the first inning, with outfielder Kayla Braud and Haylie McCleney leading off with back-to-back singles. Catcher Molly Fichtner drove them both home with a single to left to put UA ahead 2-0. The Crimson Tide extended its lead to 3-0 in the second after loading the bases with the help of a Tennessee error. The run scored when center fielder Tory Lewis dropped a routine pop fly, but UA failed to get anything else out of the situation.

That turned out to be the end of Alabama's offensive production, and Tennessee began to fight back. The Lady Vols got a run in the third inning on a sacrifice fly and two more to tie it in the fourth on another sacrifice fly and a Raven Chavanne RBI single.

"I don't think we necessarily lost the momentum," Hunt said. "They..."

SEE END 17C
just kind of chipped away at it, and we didn't score more runs."

Yet another sac fly, off the bat of Kat Dotson in the fifth, put Tennessee ahead 4-3.

Then things got bizarre. Tennessee ace Ivy Renfroe seemed to have things in hand going into the fifth inning, and then she lost her grip. Literally.

Renfroe walked Braud to lead off the inning, with three of the four balls bouncing far in front of the plate. Renfroe threw two more balls to McClency, both of them also in the dirt far in front of the target.

Tennessee took her out of the game, in mid-count, but didn't turn to Ivy's sister, Ellen Renfroe, instead going to seldom-used Cheyenne Tarango, who hadn't pitched in more than a month.

"I really don't know what happened to Ivy, which it has never happened before, but she said her timing was off," UT co-head coach Ralph Weekly said. "I guess if your timing is off and your release point, we had to get her out of there. And we had not warmed up Ellen at that point, but we had warmed up (Tarango)."

McClency got a walk to give Alabama its two fastest runners on first and second with no outs, but Hunt and Fichtner both popped up on off-speed pitches. Courtney Conley hit a line drive toward left field, but shortstop Madison Shipman snagged it for the third out.

"She was just throwing that changeup so many times, and it would just float in," Fichtner said. "Obviously, as hitters we have to make that adjustment quicker."

Said UA head coach Patrick Murphy, "That changeup, it floats in there about 30 miles an hour and it looks like a watermelon, and sometimes that happens."

Alabama didn't get another chance to solve Tarango. Ellen Renfroe pitched the last two innings for the save.

The Lady Vols got an insurance run off of UA reliever Leslie Jury, who replaced Alabama ace Jackie Traina in the sixth.

The Crimson Tide loses; only Braud and Conley from its end-of-the-season starting lineup. UA is hopeful these lessons learned this season from a team that had to replace six seniors off the national championship squad will pay dividends next year.

"We got to play a lot of young kids, a lot of new people," Murphy said. "And like you saw in this game, they were in the tough situation, and they are going to be better for it next year."

"There's so many things we can do better, eliminate a lot of the walks and eliminate the silly errors. That was going through my head partway through the game, some of the things we really could improve on."

Tennessee (49-10) will open-play Thursday in the World Series, against Florida or UAB. Florida won Saturday's super regional opener 4-3.

Reach Tommy Deas at tommy@tidesports.com or at 205-722-0224.
Braud Senior CLASS winner

By Tommy Deas  
Executive Sports Editor

TUSCALOOSA | Kayla Braud, a four-time All-Southeastern Conference selection at the University of Alabama, has been selected as the 2013 Senior CLASS Award winner for NCAA Division I softball.

The award is presented across 10 sports and recognizes achievement in community, character, classroom and competition. Braud was chosen by a vote of softball coaches, national softball media and fans. The award’s name is an acronym for celebrating loyalty and achievement for staying in school.

Braud is the second Alabama softball player to win the award, following Charlotte Morgan, who won in 2010.

“I was so excited when I heard,” Braud said. “I feel really honored. There are so many people, great athletes and individuals, up for the award. It’s a big honor for me. I am very, very excited and humbled.”

Braud was also named first-team All-American by the National Fastpitch Coaches Association for the third time in her career, and was joined by three teammates, infielder Kaila Hunt was honored as a second-team All-American, as was freshman outfielder Haylie McCleney. Junior pitcher Jackie Traina was named to the third team.

A native of Eugene, Ore., Braud has earned Academic All-America and National Fastpitch Coaches Association Scholar-Athlete honors. She carried a 3.7 grade-point average as a public relations major and was on the dean’s list for her entire career.

She finished her senior season with a .471 batting average to finish as the school’s all-time leader with a career .438 average. She also finished her career ranked second in UA history in on-base percentage (.512), runs (271), hits (344) and stolen bases (182).

Braud’s public service works include assisting in relief efforts after the 2011 tornado and participation in Read Across America, the Friends of Jaclyn Foundation, Walk for Autism and the Autism Society of America’s Light It Blue campaign.

“It was a really good experience to be able to take my role as a softball player and put it to better use,” Braud said.

Said UA coach Patrick Murphy, “Kayla Braud is one of those kids who comes along once in a coach’s lifetime. She did everything right on and off the field. ... She was one of the best leaders we have had in our program and willed this year’s team to 45 wins. Her legacy will be one to emulate for years to come.”

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ALABAMA WOMEN’S BASKETBALL

New coach Curry completes staff hires

Combined reports

TUSCALOOSA | University of Alabama women's basketball coach Kristy Curry has finalized her staff, announcing the addition of her husband, Kelly Curry, along with Terry Nooner and Shereka Wright as assistant coaches and Grant Fausset as director of operations.

"We have assembled a staff here that complements each other well," Kristy Curry said. “I speak on behalf of the group when I say we are all really excited about getting to work and building this program up to where we all want it to be.”

Kelly Curry, Wright and Fausset all served with Kristy Curry at Texas Tech for the past seven seasons, while Nooner joins the group after spending the last year as an assistant at Kansas.

While at Texas Tech, Kelly Curry was the defensive coordinator and was also responsible for working with post players, scheduling, recruiting and scouting.

Nooner, a former guard and team captain for the Jayhawk men's basketball team from 1997-2000, helped the women's basketball team to one of its most successful seasons as Kansas finished with a 20-14 overall record in 2012-13 while advancing to the fourth NCAA Sweet 16 in program history.

Wright, who began her coaching career at Texas Tech, was responsible for the perimeter players, recruiting, scouting, academics and equipment, and will add recruiting coordinator duties at Alabama.

Fausset has overseen the daily organization of Kristy Curry's programs for the past six seasons and served as video coordinator one season before that.
Universities Team With Online Course Provider

By: Tamar Lewin

Coursera, the California company that offers free college classes online, is forming partnerships with 10 large public university systems and public flagship universities to create courses that students can take for credit, either fully online or with classroom sessions.

The move could open online classes to 1.25 million students at public institutions across the United States, and could help increase graduation rates by making introductory and required classes — often a bottleneck because of high demand — more widely available.

Joining Coursera will be the State University of New York system, the Tennessee Board of Regents and the University of Tennessee systems, the University of Colorado system, the University of Houston system, the University of Kentucky, the University of Nebraska, the University of New Mexico, the University System of Georgia and West Virginia University.

Some systems plan to blend online materials with faculty-led classroom sessions. Others will offer credit to students who take the courses online followed by a proctored exam on campus.

Some will use existing Coursera materials developed by faculties at elite universities, but others expect that their own faculties will develop materials for the Coursera platform, making them available at campuses systemwide and beyond.

Faculty members will be able to customize existing courses, adding their own lessons and refinements, the company said.

Coursera’s fees will vary, depending on the size of the class. For a large course, universities would pay about $8 a student to use the Coursera platform. In addition, for use of content developed at a different university, Coursera would charge $30 to $60 per student per course.

At SUNY, which has 468,000 students at 64 campuses, the Coursera partnership is tied to Chancellor Nancy L. Zimpher’s announcement this year of Open SUNY, an online effort to enroll 100,000 new students and make it possible for a quarter of them to earn a degree in three years.

Students could take courses at any campus, or at other universities on the Coursera platform, toward a degree at their home campus. Dr. Zimpher said it would be some time before a decision about how many of the system’s online offerings, and which ones, would use the Coursera platform.

Houston Davis, the chief academic officer of the University System of Georgia, with 314,000 students, said that while the system would start with just a handful of Coursera courses next fall, he hoped a full menu of general education courses — the gateway classes usually taken in a student’s first two years — would eventually be available online through Coursera, for sharing by all the campuses.

See next page
“As I’ve told the faculty, we’re not outsourcing content delivery or casting students to the winds,” he said. “But there are thousands and thousands of students in Georgia with a high school diploma, or some college but no degree, and we need to explore new ways to reach them.”

The partnerships represent a new direction for Coursera, and for the “massive open online courses,” known as MOOCs, that have galvanized higher education over the last year, as millions of students worldwide registered for free classes that carried no credit.

“Our first year, we were enamored with the possibilities of scale in MOOCs,” said Daphne Koller, one of the two Stanford computer science professors who founded Coursera. “Now we are thinking about how to use the materials on campus to move along the completion agenda and other challenges facing the largest public university systems.”

Initially, Coursera recruited as partners only the elite research universities in the Association of American Universities. Now the company is eager to work with a broader range of institutions, to see how its materials can help more students complete their degrees.

Other leading online providers, too, have begun projects with public universities: edX, the nonprofit collaboration founded by Harvard and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, has teamed with the University of Texas and some California State University campuses, and Udacity, another Stanford spinoff, with San Jose State University.

Some faculty resistance has emerged recently against using online materials, even if they are blended with classroom work. This week, 58 Harvard professors wrote a letter seeking the creation of a new committee to consider the ethical issues related to edX and its impact on higher education.

Both Dr. Koller and university officials involved in the new partnerships said that they had no intention of undercutting faculty control over course content and that the provision allowing faculties to customize online materials or put their own courses onto the Coursera platform was critical to the project’s success.

“We hope this will help public universities do more with the less they’re getting in state support,” Dr. Koller said.

William G. Bowen, the former Princeton president and founding chairman of Ithaka, a nonprofit organization that studies online education, sees promise in the arrangement.

“We have encouraged Coursera to work with the large state university systems, and the large state university systems to work with Coursera, because that’s where the numbers are, and that’s where there are the biggest issues in terms of cost, completion and access,” said Dr. Bowen. “It’s still exploratory, but this partnership has the potential to make real headway in dealing with those issues.”
The Kansas City Star

KANSAS CITY, Mo. | Five years ago, Nick Moeder and his friends counted themselves lucky. In the dark heart of the Great Recession, they were starting college rather than trying to start a career.

"All the reports were that there were no jobs for anyone," said Moeder, a fifth-year senior who will graduate from Kansas State University this month. "We were thinking maybe things will be better by the time we graduate."

But the national conversation during his college years has been a grim one, all about soaring tuition bills, college loan debt and a dearth of jobs.

Think of Moeder and his peers as Gen R — the Recession Generation. They first set foot on campus at the height of the worst economic downturn in more than 70 years. Now they're graduating after years of watching the economy stagger and slide before starting a slow rebound.

The experience, for many, not only shaped their choices during college but also recalibrated their attitudes and outlook.

The consequences of graduating in a downturn are long-lasting, said Emily Rauscher, a University of Kansas sociology professor. They include lower earnings, a slower climb up the occupational ladder and a widening gap between the least- and most-successful grads.

At 16.1 percent, the April unemployment rate for workers younger than 25 was slightly more than twice the overall average. Among recent college graduates, 53 percent are underemployed or don't have a job.

Rauscher said when she talks with students about their future, they are keenly aware that they face a greater possibility of ending up in "failure-to-launch mode," unemployed or underemployed and back in the bedroom they decorated in high school.

William Black, an economics professor at the University of Missouri-Kansas City, said that recession or not, a college education is still associated with benefits in life: "Less likely to end up on the negative side of the criminal justice system. Less likely to have bad health, have children before marriage, have a marriage end in divorce."

But he also said that students who have waded through the recession are likely to graduate more worried about debt, jobs and Social Security.

"It's their generation that is going to get screwed," Black said.

Moeder, a 22-year-old finance and accounting major, said fear that the bottom could fall out of the economy again at any time drives some 2013 graduates to "be more conservative about investments, about savings."