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Bentley says he plans to call special session

Governor wants state education budget used for offering economic incentives

The Associated Press

CHATOM | Alabama Gov. Robert Bentley said Wednesday he plans to call a special session of the Legislature to use money from the state's education budget to pay for economic incentives to lure new companies.

Bentley made the remarks Wednesday at a workforce development summit in Washington County, al.com reported. He said the special session would come after the election in November.

The governor said the state is short on money to draw manufacturers and other large employers. That money usually comes from the General Fund budget, which pays for non-education government agencies. But Bentley said the Education Trust Fund is the main beneficiary of the taxes generated by new businesses.

"Who pays for the incentives? It's not education, but they benefit from it totally. ... You ought to eat what you kill," he said.

Lawmakers haven't been enthusiastic about the idea of a special session. Senate President Pro Tem Del Marsh, R-Anniston, said he opposes it.

"I think we've got so many challenges with the budget that I'm going to be very resistant to offer any kind of economic incentive packages," he said. "I'm not on board."

But others were more positive about it.

Sen. Arthur Orr of Decatur, who chairs the Senate's General Fund budget committee, said the state relies too much on borrowing money by selling bonds to fund economic incentives and needs to look at other options.

"The idea of issuing debt to fund

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Economic development certainly in my opinion is not the best way to support economic development," Orr said. "There are better ways to achieve that goal."

Orr said he's talked with Alabama Secretary of Commerce Greg Canfield about alternatives but wasn't aware of specific proposals.

House Speaker Mike Hubbard of Auburn said in a statement that private sector job creation and a pro-business environment are priorities for the Republican majority. But he said he hasn't seen a proposal and said it wouldn't be wise to call a special session without involving legislative leaders.

House Minority Leader Craig Ford, D-Gadsden, was more firm in his opposition to the idea.

"This is how it begins: Raiding the education budget for tax incentives for out-of-state corporations," he said in an email. "The next step will be combining the budgets so they can pay for prisons with our children's education funds."

Bentley is looking at many options for economic development incentives, press secretary Yasamie August said.

"Calling a special session on economic development is one of many options that may be necessary to help Alabama continue to compete with other states to bring jobs to the state," she said in an email. "The Governor will work with the Legislative Leadership before calling a special session."

The state should have about $150 million a year to pursue large projects, Bentley told attendees at the Delta Regional Authority conference. The money should come from a budget stabilization fund, not the Education Trust Fund itself, he said.

The governor said his office is still working on the specifics of a proposal and declined to discuss details.

"We don't have any final proposal on that," he said, later adding, "We will not do anything to hurt the Education Trust Fund."
Elmore County leaders appointed to workforce council

By: Neil Probst

Two Elmore County business leaders were recently appointed to a council that aims to help improve relationships between education and business in Alabama and better prepare graduates for jobs.

Gov. Robert Bentley placed Chuck DiLaura, president of Neptune Technology Group in Tallassee, and Kasey Myers, general manager of GKN Aerospace Alabama Fuel Systems, also in Tallassee, on the 28-member Alabama Workforce Council at the beginning of July, according to a news release from the Elmore County Economic Development Authority.

The council will offer advice to the state school board, the chancellor of the state community college system, the superintendent of the state’s education department and the presidents of the state’s four-year colleges and universities, the release stated.

“The Alabama Workforce Council is a world-class representation of many of the state’s top business and industry leaders and will be vitally important to building and maintaining high-quality partnerships between industry, education and workforce training institutions,” Bentley stated in the release.

Both Myers and DiLaura feel the council is greatly needed and that it will benefit young people seeking jobs.

Myers, a 1993 Wetumpka High School graduate and class valedictorian, said one thing the council will work on is encouraging new ways of thinking among young people, such as making multiples.

“It’s a type of thinking that teaches children how to make multiple, complex items the same way every time,” Myers said.

DiLaura, a Montgomery resident since 2001, said he is excited to be on the council.
“I think the timing is good that we take a look at the synergy between what the kids are learning in school and the needs of business and industry,” he said.

DiLaura said businesses like Neptune go through a process to seek qualified people and look for candidates. If schools can make adjustments in curriculum to better match what companies are looking for, students coming out of high school or college will be more prepared and qualified for these positions, he said.

Myers echoed DiLaura’s feelings.

“It is an honor to be appointed to this body and to be able to support the community in this way. Hopefully we can help improve future employment opportunities for young people and also meet the skills needs of businesses at the same time,” he said.
Stimpson: No timeline on Airbus suppliers

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Attracting Airbus suppliers to Mobile is a process without immediate answers and can be frustrating at times, Mobile Mayor Sandy Stimpson said. But trips to the 2014 Farnborough International Airshow near London are a necessity, the mayor said, in getting access to potential suppliers while meeting with others in the aerospace industry.

"This is part of the process we have to participate in," Stimpson said during a news conference at his office in Government Plaza. "We have to tell our story."

Stimpson said there is no timeline on when an Airbus supplier might announce coming to Mobile ahead of the opening of Airbus’ $600 million North American assembly plant for the A320 family of commercial planes at the Mobile Aeroplex at Brookley.
STIMPSON

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The 1,000-worker plant will produce the jets beginning in 2015, with delivery occurring in early 2016.

But the mayor said he believes suppliers will come. The last major aerospace industry supplier to open a facility in Mobile was Safran Engineering in April 2013.

"It's a longer process any of us hopes for," Stimpson said.

DETAILS

Airbus ended the show with 496 order commitments at a value of more than $75.3 billion. That total included 369 commitments for the A320 family of aircraft, which will be assembled in Mobile. Rival Boeing announced commitments for 269 aircraft worth $40.2 billion.

Q: Will there be more suppliers coming to Mobile?
A: Yes. It's a longer process any of us hopes for. But the increase in activity will be directly related to the increase of production at this facility. If Airbus goes from making four planes a month to making eight planes a month, you are likely to have multiple vendors coming here at that time. Also, if you are likely to have some other kind of plane (being produced at the Mobile plant), it really ramps up the number of vendors (that need to relocate). That's why it's absolutely crucial Mobile does a good job at workforce development and community relations. Everything the city, county and state can do to make this effort successful will play into an increase of jobs. From the city's perspective, and really the state and county, it's about an increase in jobs.

Q: Will you continue to meet with those who you met at the air show to encourage them to come to Mobile or does your work just stop after the air show?
A: It absolutely does not stop. There will be ongoing communications between the Mobile Airport Authority, the Mobile Area Chamber of Commerce and ... the city will engage. We are following ... the Chamber of Commerce is quarterbacking. Right behind them is the Airport Authority.

Q: How do you know you are offering a better deal (to potential suppliers) than Pensacola or Pascagoula?
A: There was never the competition brought up that maybe another city is offering a better deal. When it comes down to economic incentives, the state really takes the lead on that. The state has the greatest ability to make advancements with incentives. The county and the city follow suit. We are not in the leading edge of that conversation. It's the Chamber or the Airport Authority with the state.

Q: Gov. Robert Bentley announced in London that GE Aviation will relocate a facility to Auburn. Have you met with the governor's office and asked whether the Mobile area should be the priority location for aerospace industries in the state?
A: I think there is a certain amount of emphasis on Mobile. But if you are the governor, you would be looking at the state as a whole. Depending on the needs of the specific company, you would say ... because of Huntsville's his-

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tory of missile defense, you might want to look (at locating in north Alabama). We can’t control it. But it’s important for the city (of Mobile) be calling on GE also. We have to tell our story.

Q: Is there disappointment in suppliers locating to north Alabama and not affecting south Alabama?
A: It is disappointing to us. We’d like to have all of it. But the reality is if you are a supplier in the aerospace industry today... Boeing is located just north of Charleston, S.C. Mobile is located in the lower end of Alabama. If you are supplying both of them, you need to consider where is the best place to locate. If you are a Boeing supplier, you know where you need to be. If you are predominantly an Airbus supplier, you know where you are going to be.

Q: Has the city done enough with the infrastructure near Brookley to bring everything needed to attract suppliers?
A: We are not aware of anything the city needs to do at this time. We have a 70-year-old facility that needs upgrading. We have some buildings with bones as solid as a rock. But there is obviously work that needs to go on there (aka, windows replaced, improved roads). We would find a pathway needed to fix those facilities (if suppliers wanted to relocate to Brookley).

Q: How many meetings did you attend (while at the air show)?
A: I personally attended 10 meetings. When you go to these social functions, you meet 10 or more people you didn’t intend to meet. It would be difficult to say how many companies I interacted with.

Q: Did any of that involve cold calling?
A: I did not make any cold calls. I think it was important for the Chamber when they have (U.S. Rep.) Bradley Byrne, (U.S. Sen.) Jeff Sessions and myself in tow (to meet with company executives). We had the opportunity—George Talbot (the mayor’s spokesman), Congressman Byrne, Senator Sessions and myself to sit down with (Airbus Group Chairman) Tom Enders, (Airbus Americas Chairman) Allan McArtor and (Airbus Americas President) Barry Eccleston. Airbus had the biggest presence at the air show. For those three executives to sit down and have lunch with us, there is nothing anyone else wouldn’t do to have that kind of audience. For them to be able to express themselves and for us to get to know one another on a personal basis... it’s imperative for us to be out there to do that. We met with the new president and CEO of ST Aerospace. It was the first time for me to meet with them and for Congressman Byrne to meet with them. Our competition is out there. They are doing the same thing.

Q: What kind of update can you give us about the Airbus project in Mobile?
A: I think the conversation really is focused around the first quarter of 2016. If there is any shifting in the timeline, it’s not more than a month, maybe two months. There is a lot that needs to be done before having an airplane take off. They are still on schedule and on cost.

Q: Why was the Alabama delegation considered as one of the more impressive during the trip?
A: I had two European companies whose (executives) told me that they felt that Alabama knows how to do it. There is no other state with both United States senators, the governor and mayors from four cities (who were in attendance). We had others participate, like the Port Authority. It sends a message of teamwork that is going on in the state.

Q: Were there any suppliers you met with that we’d recognize?
A: I don’t think you’d recognize any of them. We met with Safran, and they are here on-site (at Brookley).

Q: Are you planning to go to Paris (to tour the Airbus facility in Toulouse)?
A: I will go to Toulouse with the University of South Alabama in October. It will obviously be directed at Airbus and more directed toward Airbus research and development with more of a connection to (USA). It’s very important to the aerospace companies to understand access to post-secondary education. They are talking about workforce development and wanted to know what kind of engineering school you have. There is an ongoing dialogue for that.

Q: Will Airbus be willing to invest in a training school in Mobile?
A: They are very interested in the (Alabama Industrial Development Training) school here. We’ll have to see how that evolves. It’s hugely important to have that type of training close to the facilities backed up by post-secondary institutions.
At Farnborough, Alabama universities play role in aerospace talks

LONDON, England – Team Alabama’s secret weapon at the Farnborough International Airshow is the state’s education community, which has played a strong supporting role in efforts to recruit new aerospace investment and jobs at the industry’s global trade event.

Representatives from the University of Alabama, UAH, and Auburn University participated in rounds of company meetings on Monday and Tuesday, as did Dr. Mark Heinrich, chancellor of the Alabama Community College System, which is deeply involved in workforce development programs.

Their participation signals the need by aerospace companies such as Boeing, Sikorsky and United Technologies for research partnerships, engineering talent and workforce training, according to Alabama Commerce Secretary Greg Canfield.

Alabama’s universities already are engaged in many partnerships with aerospace firms. A group from Auburn University’s engineering school attended a Tuesday air show announcement by GE Aviation that it would launch an additive manufacturing operation at its Auburn facility, the first time a jet engine component will be mass produced using 3-D printing technology.

GE Aviation and Auburn have already been working together, and after Tuesday’s ceremony, the university team presented GE Aviation executive Colleen Athans with an Auburn pin that she attached to her lapel.

UNIVERSITY COOPERATION

Dr. Chuck Karr, dean of the University of Alabama’s School of Engineering, said the state’s universities are united in efforts to support aerospace companies in the state.

“I have never seen the universities within the state have as good a working relationship as they have right now,” said Dr. Karr, who is in Farnborough with the UA team. “Within the University of Alabama, we have our sister institutions in the UA System, and we work closely with them – but we have also worked really hard with Auburn and South Alabama.

“An example of that is when we were recruiting Airbus, all of the universities banded together to put a good foot forward,” Dr. Karr said.

Dr. Ray Vaughn, vice president for research at UAH, said he came to Farnborough for talks aimed at expanding the university’s many partnerships with aerospace companies. One example: UAH and aerospace firms including Boeing Co., Dynetics, General Dynamics, Lockheed Martin, Raytheon and Northrop Grumman currently are working to establish two cooperative research centers on campus.

Dr. Vaughn has close ties to Boeing and hopes to plug into the company’s new technology and research center in Huntsville. Vaughn said a group of Boeing representatives recently spent a day

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with UAH officials to discuss topics including cyber-security, modeling, engineering, simulation and other technical areas.

“The next step is to engage in projects, and we are moving in that direction now,” Dr. Vaughn said. “We have found a number of areas we can make a contribution in, and we can work shoulder to shoulder with their engineers. We’re very excited about that opportunity.”

UAH can be nimble when aerospace firms call. When UAV Solutions, a designer and manufacturer of unmanned systems, needed quick altitude testing of an unmanned aerial vehicle engine, UAH’s Rotorcraft Systems Engineering and Simulation Center and its Propulsion Research Center (PRC) answered the call in around three weeks.

The UAH team tested the performance of a hydrocarbon-powered UAV engine a vacuum chamber at pressure equivalent altitudes up to 20,000 feet. “UAH coordinated with UAV Solutions to develop an appropriate test plan and verify appropriate facility instrumentation and operation,” the PRC’s Dr. David Lineberry said recently.

SUPPORTING GROWTH

Karr and the UA team at the Farnborough Airshow said they believe Alabama’s universities will be called upon even more to assist the state’s growing aerospace sector with Airbus establishing a $600 A320 Family Assembly Line at Mobile Aeroplexand as existing companies expand.

“Eventually you will see an aerospace network that is as well developed as the automotive network in the state,” said Dr. Sam Addy, director of UA’s Center for Business and Economic Research.

Dr. Carl Pinkert, UA’s vice president for research, said university partnerships with aerospace companies will help these companies find success in Alabama while also stimulating the creation of research centers – and the high-paying jobs that they produce.

“We want to bring in the research, engineering, design jobs,” Pinkert said.
Airbus closes gap in orders war with Boeing

Kelli Dugan | kdugan@al.com

Airbus still lags Boeing in year-to-date aircraft orders, but the 2014 Farnborough International Airshow where it secured commitments and firm orders for 496 aircraft worth more than $75 billion helped the Toulouse, France-based planemaker close the gap considerably.

Airbus entered the global aerospace trade show and exposition near London Monday trailing its U.S. arch rival in the orders race by 290 net planes, with 289 orders to Boeing’s 499 after deliveries and cancellations were considered.

By Thursday, however, Boeing’s lead shrank to less than 150 orders after securing new deals for only 201 aircraft worth about $40 billion during the show.

Current totals show Airbus with 648 orders to Boeing’s 783.

John Leahy, Airbus’ chief operating officer for customers, said in a prepared statement the company’s performance in recent days signals long-term growth and stability.

“The orders and commitments we’ve received at this record-breaking Farnborough for both the A330neo and A320neo families are together an unequivocally resounding endorsement for these most cost-efficient aircraft,” Leahy said. “For both our single-aisle and widebody categories, the high representation of lessors — widely regarded as the global ‘barometer’ of the industry — is indicative of the long-term confidence in the capacity needs for sustainable growth for the airlines in the years ahead,” he said.

Specifically, the deals inked at Farnborough include purchase orders for 358 planes totaling $38.4 billion at current list prices plus memoranda of understanding for another 138 aircraft valued at $36.9 billion.

Airbus is currently building its first A320 assembly line on U.S. soil at Mobile Aeroplex, expected to figure prominently in the company’s ability to efficiently fill the mounting backlog for the popular single-aisle aircraft. The $600 million facility is slated to come online in 2015, deliver its first Mobile-assembled aircraft in April 2016 and employ about 1,000 people when it reaches full annual production of 40 to 50 aircraft by 2018.

Boeing, meanwhile, scored its biggest deal Wednesday with Qatar Airways for 50 of its long-haul passenger 777X aircraft and the option to double the order.

Boeing issued the following statement Thursday morning: “Customers demonstrated their strong confidence in the family of Boeing commercial products, announcing orders and commitments for 201 Boeing airplanes valued at more than $40.2 billion at list prices.”

Farnborough officials confirmed total orders and commitments from all participants through Wednesday night totaled 800 aircraft valued at $113 billion, plus commitments for more than 1,300 engines worth an estimated $26 billion.
Chamber names workforce development director

Staff report

The Chamber of Commerce of West Alabama has named a director of workforce development.

LeNa' Powe will fill the position effective Aug. 15 and will serve as the chamber's primary liaison to the state's Region 3 Workforce Development Council and West Alabama Works, of which the chamber is the managing and fiscal agent.

Powe also will provide information and assistance with workforce training in a seven-county area and will be responsible for building alliances and coordinating workforce issues with local training providers, employment agencies, other chambers of commerce, area industrial development boards, education officials and elected leaders, according to a statement from the Tuscaloosa-based chamber.

The chamber said Powe was selected because of her strong leadership and experience in workforce development, education and public policy.

"Ensuring that we have an adequately prepared workforce has become of critical importance to business and industry leaders throughout this entire region," said Chamber President and CEO Jim Page. "It has long been a top priority for the chamber's board of directors, investors and local workforce development officials.

"The vision, experience and energy that LeNa' will bring to this effort on a full-time, daily basis will allow us to continue to put words into action. We are very proud to add someone of her caliber to an already outstanding team of professionals."

Powe most recently worked for the Birmingham City Council as a community liaison and external community affairs representative and helped start the Birmingham Live campaign to increase workforce development partnerships and opportunities in Birmingham.

Before that, Powe was with the Birmingham Business Alliance as an education and workforce development project manager where she was responsible for marketing and managing workforce events. She also had oversight of workforce and student recruitment efforts, and coordinated educational outreach initiatives and partnerships.

While with the alliance, she also developed its Talent Recruitment Newsletter, managed its Talent Recruitment Project and supported several workforce development projects.

She started with the alliance as a project manager for minority and small business development for the organization.

Powe is a native of Birmingham and earned bachelor's and master's degrees from the University of Alabama. She served as Miss Tuscaloosa 2007 and was a nominee for a USA Today All-American Team, second runner-up for the 2009 Miss Alabama Community Service Award and recipient of 2013 Girl Scouts of North-Central Alabama Role Model Award.
Alabama tries to land big prize

Birmingham eyed for Democratic convention in 2016

By Jay Reeves
The Associated Press

BIRMINGHAM | Already on the upswing with a revitalized downtown and a trendy feel, Birmingham is trying to land its biggest prize in years: The 2016 Democratic National Convention.

And leaders of Alabama's struggling Democratic Party say they're barely involved in the courtship.

Officials with the Democratic National Committee will arrive in Alabama's largest city today for a two-day visit to assess whether Birmingham would be a suitable location for the massive gathering.

Aside from meeting with area promoters to discuss logistical needs such as hotels and arena space, the national representatives will be wooed at a public "pitch party" planned for tonight at a downtown concert venue.

A separate, private party is planned at the city's year-old minor league baseball park.

The chairman of the Jefferson County Democratic Party, Richard Mauk, said city officials made the bid for the convention and are in charge of the visit, and he's had virtually no involvement.

"I don't know much about it other than I've been invited to parties and I'm going to stand there and shake hands," Mauk said. "The city is totally in charge of it. It is their invitation."

The longtime vice chairman of the Alabama Democratic Party, Joe Reed, said he also isn't involved and doesn't even know the schedule for the visit.

April Odom, a spokeswoman for Mayor William Bell, said the city has a nondisclosure agreement with the national party and can't comment.

The Democratic National Committee earlier this month said Birmingham was the first of six cities that would receive visits as the party considers potential sites for its national convention in two years. The others were Cleveland and Columbus in Ohio, a key swing state; New York; Philadelphia; and Phoenix.

The Republican Party has since selected Cleveland to play host for its 2016 convention, eliminating that

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DEM

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The city from the Democratic list because of an exclusivity requirement. Democrats plan to name their choice for 2016 by late this year or early 2015.

Reed, who has attended every Democratic convention since 1968, said Birmingham compares favorably to Charlotte, North Carolina, the site of the 2012 Democratic convention. Charlotte is much larger than Birmingham, but Reed said Birmingham still has plenty of facilities to play host.

"The question is whether the Democratic Party would come to the South again so soon," said Reed.

Alabama hasn't voted for a Democratic presidential candidate since Jimmy Carter in 1976 and its Statehouse is controlled by Republicans, so the Democratic National Committee doesn't have any reason to reward the state. Realistically, staging the convention in Birmingham won't turn a red state to blue, Reed said.

"On the other hand, if it's intended to try to placate the state and move forward toward a future date we do have a possibility," Reed said.

Birmingham has drawn national attention in recent months for a downtown renewal that includes the new baseball park, excellent restaurants, a new entertainment area and a new Westin Hotel near the city's main convention arena.

Mike Gunn, vice president of convention sales for the Birmingham Convention and Visitors Bureau, said the metro area has around 18,000 hotel rooms and the convention would need only around 12,000 based on past national party events. Plenty of meeting space is available between hotels and the Birmingham-Jefferson Convention Complex, which includes a 19,000-seat arena, he said.
Science and Engineering Services plans $70 million expansion, creation of 450 jobs

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The Rocket City is known for its engineering, research and design work, but a $70 million expansion announcement by Science and Engineering Services in Jetplex Industrial Park is another testament to the area's growing advanced manufacturing sector.

That was the message Huntsville's Director of Urban Development Shane Davis had about the SES news this week out of the Farnborough International Airshow in England.

SES, which provides maintenance, repair and overhaul services to the aviation community, plans to create 450 jobs at its 1.2 million-square-foot Dunlop Boulevard plant over the next five years.

In an interview at City Hall, Davis touted Huntsville's successful year so far on the economic development front. In February, Remington Outdoor said it would create 2,000 jobs with a new gun plant in Huntsville, while Verizon Wireless plans to hire 300 at its Call Center in Cummings Research Park.

SES's expansion will almost double its local workforce, Davis said. The company currently employs about 750 workers in Huntsville.

"For any company to compete globally, no matter where you're at in the U.S., you've got to have the workforce," Davis said. "I think Huntsville's focus on STEM technology, K-12, having infrastructure in place and having that focus on providing customers the tools to be successful helps."
EXPANSION
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The expansion project is set to begin immediately and will include the addition of hangar bays, office space, aircraft parking spaces, a parking lot and a helipad to support military and commercial customers. Davis said construction will take place over three phases.

The state of Alabama is providing $500,000 in discretionary incentives, while the city of Huntsville is offering $1.3 million in public infrastructure upgrades toward the project. Assistant Secretary of Commerce Linda Swann said Tennessee Valley Authority has agreed to provide a $550,000 Valley Advantage grant, while AIDT will deliver pre-employment training and recruitment services, which have a cash-value of $1.8 million.

Davis said Huntsville Utilities will complete drainage improvements on Dunlop Boulevard and create a new access point off Wall Triana Highway to the backside of SES. The work is expected to begin this fall and last approximately six months.

Jobs, Jobs, Jobs

Ralph Pallotta, chief operating officer of SES, declined to reveal how much the jobs will pay, but he said they will be full-time, offer benefits and will cover “the whole gamut of aviation specialties.” Office workers, technical writers, illustrators and program managers will also be in demand.

The company is looking for employees with a “two-year technical college or vocational background … to a four-year aerospace degree,” according to Davis. He said a good electrician or mechanic with a vocational certificate will be able to apply for some of the jobs.

Harrison Diamond, business relations officer for the city of Huntsville, said Alabama Industrial Development Training will provide more details about training in the coming months. For now, Pallotta said prospective workers should check the SES website for more information.

“If you’re thinking about trying to get a job with a Remington or now an SES, and you’re in transition, I do encourage people to take a look at the two-year schools we have,” said Diamond, referring to Calhoun Community College and JF Drake State Technical College. “These are good touch-labor jobs, and you can make a very good living doing these types of jobs because it’s very important for our economy.”

Based in Columbia, Md., SES works with helicopters, airplanes, unmanned aerial vehicles and ground combat systems. The company operates other facilities on Pulaski Pike in Huntsville and in PAX River Naval Air Station, Md. and Warner Robins, Ga.

Aviation growth in Huntsville

The announcement goes back about 18 to 24 months with the city, Davis said. SES, which has been quietly expanding in Huntsville over the past few years, mainly works with the DOD, Department of Homeland Security and other international governments.

John Southard, director of Cummings Research Park and project manager for the Chamber, said SES’s presence in Huntsville traces back to the 1995 Base Realignment and Closure, which brought Army aviation to Redstone Arsenal.

The company opened its first facility on Pulaski Pike in the late 1990s and later moved into the old Goodyear Dunlop tire plant near Huntsville International Airport, which closed in 2003. Southard said the SES expansion represents “their growth, but it also mirrors the aviation growth in Huntsville.”

“This expansion highlights the very reason they’re considered an industry leader in that area,” he said. “The area and the scope of work they’re doing is important to the economy here and shows the different type of work we can do here, that maybe people didn’t know we were capable of doing.”
McKendrick pushes for building up tech program
Superintendent seeks help from steering committee

By Jamon Smith
Staff Writer

When plans for the Tuscaloosa City Schools' Tuscaloosa Career and Technology Academy were being laid out, the vision for the school included a goal of it becoming the best career-technical school in the South.

People would flock to TCTA from miles around to see what career-technical education executed at standard-setting levels looks like.

Superintendent Paul McKendrick said that vision has not quite come to fruition yet but that it's time it did.

"TCTA just completed its first year, and we need to get to the point of planning what this program's going to do for us," McKendrick said at a school board meeting this week. "I mean no disrespect to anyone, but everyone passes by this building and says it's a very pretty building, and it is, but the goal is to get programs that people talk more about than the building.

"We need to get to the point of making the building and making the program stronger. The challenge that we have for us as educators is just that, we're educators. When you look at this building, it's not about training educators or training teachers. It's about training people for the business world and to go into the workforce."

McKendrick asked the board to consider allowing him to create a steering committee composed of mainly business leaders and a few educators, that could assist them in developing a vision, a strategic plan and programs for TCTA, as well as establishing partnerships with community organizations and businesses so that they don't remain "status quo."

He said before TCTA opened, see TCTA | 7A
The Tuscaloosa News  
Monday, July 21, 2014

TCTA
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school officials held conversations with the West Alabama Chamber of Commerce about what fields had the most job openings and what would be the job needs of the future. They said they obtained that information so they could know what kind of programs they needed to develop at TCTA. But what they forgot to ask the chamber was how to create those programs.

"Case in point, with the auto industry I keep hearing a lot about persons in logistics," he said. "We know logistics as the mechanism that's getting something done. ... Whether it's the auto industry or any other industry, we don't have an inkling of an idea about what kind of program we could put together for that.

"There are other fields out there that we don't know how to do. And because of that, that's what need for the improvement of (TCTA)."

Board chairman Lee Garrison said he was in favor of putting together a steering committee to help further develop TCTA's programs. But he said that in addition to business leaders, he'd like to see Tuscaloosa County Schools Superintendent Elizabeth Swiford and representatives from the University of Alabama, Stillman College and Shelton State Community College on the steering committee.

Garrison also recommended that board member Norman Crow, who's on the governor's workforce development task force, be on the steering committee.

Crow said he'd be glad to help grow TCTA, and he already had a few ideas on how they could go about taking the next steps.

"One of the things I'd like to happen with a committee like this is that we don't go out and reinvent the wheel, which is good," Crow said. "Because the data that will probably drive this will come from West Alabama Works, which is Region 3 workforce development for this total region right here.

"What happened, as I understand it, is there were surveys sent out to businesses all over this area and the surveys come back and say, 'These are the needs that we're going to have over the next five, or next three years, or whatever they are,' and hopefully that information will be communicated back to places like us, to say this is what we need to see in programming, in planning, in curriculum. Then as a system we can even say 'Here's how we put this together to meet the needs of our children and the future workforce.'"

Crow said that with a facility like TCTA, they have a golden opportunity to take advantage of programs like dual college enrollment, partnerships with Shelby State and workforce development grants that can help them pay for TCTA's programs.

"I do think that this board has been very proactive, including the superintendent here, but I think now it's time to take the next step and make sure that we are maximizing what we have invested," Crow said. "I want everybody to be excited about that. It's a great time for the city schools."

Tucker said her interest in TCTA's future is to connect the workforce with the community, which is evident there's a need for since the job fair that was held at TCTA last month helped more than 200 people gain employment.

"The important thing is that when we connect the community and education together, that's the time when things begin to change," she said.

Tucker said she also wants TCTA to be open year-round and in the afternoons so it can become a community center where programs like adult GED classes can take place.
State unemployment rate climbs as national rate drops

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Alabama's unemployment rate is trending in the wrong direction. The state's official rate remained elevated at 6.8 percent in June, and before seasonal adjustment the June rate was 7.1 percent, according to the state's Department of Labor.

The last time Alabama's official unemployment rate was above 7 percent was in the fall of 2012. Since reaching a low of 6.1 percent in January, the jobless rate has risen nearly a full percentage point. At the same time, the nationwide unemployment rate has fallen from 6.6 percent to 6.3 percent.

According to the report, 10,000 fewer Alabamians were employed in June 2014 than in the same month a year earlier, after seasonal adjustments. The state measures unemployment in two ways: it asks residents whether they are working, and it asks businesses how many workers they employ. These numbers might differ if, for example, a resident employed part-time gained a second part-time job.

Alabama lost an estimated 3,500 jobs from May to June, according to the latest report.

The bulk of those losses came from the public sector. Despite local governments adding 1,300 jobs, state government shed nearly 4,000 positions for a net loss of 2,600 jobs in Alabama government.

But Alabama's private sector is shrinking, too. Employment there shrank by about 1,000 jobs from May to June, according to the report.

The construction, financial activities and education and health services industries each shed jobs from May to June. Construction employment remains below 80,000 jobs; at its peak, Alabama's construction industry employed more than 110,000 people.
Jobless rate increases in June

Alabama is the only state that experienced a year-to-year rise in unemployment

By Patrick Rupinski
Business Editor

Tuscaloosa County's unemployment rate rose more than 1 percent in June, according to figures released by the state on Friday.

The increase was due to a loss of jobs at a time when more people were entering the workforce to look for work, said University of Alabama economist Ahmad Ijaz.

Tuscaloosa County's unemployment rate hit 6.8 percent in June, up from 5.6 in May and higher than June 2013's 5.5 percent.

Unemployment in the three-county Tuscaloosa metro area, which also includes Greene and Hale counties, jumped from 5.9 percent to 7.2 percent in June.

The Tuscaloosa metro area lost 500 jobs from May to June in the services sector, including the government sector, said Ijaz, associate director and director of economic forecasting at UA's Center for Business and Economic Research. But he noted for the 12 months ending in June, the three-county metro area added a total of about 3,500 jobs.

During the 12 months, the largest increase was the leisure and hospitality sector, Ijaz said. Most of those jobs were in food services, which does not help the economy as much as job creation in other industries.

"As long as we continue to add low-wage, temporary and part-time jobs, the economic growth will continue to remain sluggish. This is not just a Tuscaloosa problem but a nationwide phenomenon. Almost 30 percent of the jobs added in U.S. since the end of the recession are temporary jobs," Ijaz said.

Alabama's June unemployment rate was 6.8 percent, unchanged from May but higher than the 6.5 percent in June 2013. The U.S. Department of Labor said Friday that Alabama was the only state whose unemployment rate was higher than it was a year earlier.

Shelby County continued to have the state's lowest unemployment rate at 5 percent, followed by Baldwin and Cullman counties at 5.7 percent and Lee and Cherokee Counties at 5.9 percent.

Wilcox County had the state's highest unemployment rate at 17.2 percent, followed by Perry County at 14.8 percent and Dallas County at 14.3 percent. Twelve of the state's 67 counties had unemployment rates in the double digits in June, including three of the 10 counties in central West Alabama— Greene, Sumter and Perry.
Northport to consider $14M bond issue

Would pay for improvements including road work, new fire station, tech upgrades

By Lydia Seabol Avant
Staff writer

The Northport City Council will likely vote on a $14 million bond issue Monday to pay for city improvements already under way. The projects include the widening of Mitt Lary Road, a new communications system for the police and fire departments and the construction of a new fire station No. 2, already under construction. Earlier this year the City Council voted to allow City Administrator Scott Collins to proceed with the projects, using the city’s $10 million in reserves until the city went forward with a bond issue.

"The fire station No. 2 on Highway 69 was there 40 years, been needing replacing for a long time," said Northport Mayor Bobby Herndon.

The former fire station was torn down in May to make way for the new station and a playground that will border the site.

"The Mitt Lary project is also much needed, because traffic is at a standstill sometimes with bottlenecks, and with the police communication system, Northport has been lagging behind being able to..."
COUNCIL

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communicate due to outdated equipment," Herndon said.
The projects will all have a positive impact, he said.
"It's going to be a big plus," Herndon said. "I'm very appreciative to the council for having us in a financial situation where we can have such projects and have a plan to repay it."

Although the city had hoped to get the bond in the spring, it was delayed a couple months so that the city could get a better estimate on the Mitt Lary project, Collins said.

In addition to the $14 million in new debt, the City Council will also determine whether to refinance approximately $2 million left over from a 2004 bond issue, Collins said.

In 2004, the city did not have a bond rating, but due to low interest rates and the city's positive bond rating of AA+, refinancing will save the city in interest.

Northport is about $39.9 million in debt. That includes $10.9 million in the general fund budget and $29 million in the water and sewer fund. Without any new debt, both the general fund and water/sewer fund debt are projected to be paid off by 2029, Collins said.

The new $14 million bond issue, if approved, would be paid off in 30 years, by 2044.

If the City Council approves the bond issue, the general fund debt service will equate to about 9.2 percent of the general fund budget. The debt payments for the city's water and sewer fund is approximately 29 percent.

"The generally acceptable guideline is that debt service should be less than 20 percent of your operating budget," Collins said. "Less than 10 percent is preferred."

No new debt has been added to the water and sewer fund since 2007.

If the new bond issue is approved, the city will be a total of $53.9 million in debt. That's slightly more than in 2005, when Northport had a total of $47 million in debt.

The Northport City Council will meet at 6 p.m. Monday at the Northport City Hall.
One man’s trash...

Researchers hope to turn shrimp shells into useful products

By Ed Enoch
Staff Writer

University of Alabama chemist Robin Rogers imagines a future where shrimp shells could become more than a smelly seafood byproduct.

"I believe in what I would call a chitin economy. I personally believe, if properly developed, the material you can develop from chitin and the markets you could sell them in would make the shrimp shell worth more than the meat,” said Rogers, an owner and founder of 525 Solutions, a startup company housed in UA’s Alabama Innovation and Mentoring of Entrepreneurs center on campus.

The company, which is exploring a host of applications for chitin extracted from the shells, received roughly $1.5 million from U.S. Department of Energy to fund its research of a chitin-based absorbent material for use in a process to extract uranium from the ocean. The company previously proved the concept of using the chitin-based material for the application.

Gabriela Gurau, a chemist and CEO of the UA-based company, See Grant | 4B

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said the company is in the process of signing the contract for the grant.

"In our proposal, there is no way we as a small company can compete with terrestrial mining," said Rogers, a Robert Ramsay Chair of Chemistry at UA and director of UA's Center for Green Manufacturing. "We are not going to be a mining company. What we are going to do is develop chitin that is lower cost because we have other uses for the material."

The company is also exploring biomedical and other applications. The company received a National Science Foundation grant in 2012 for its work on a new chitin-based bandage.

The grant from the Department of Energy's Small Business Innovation Research and Small Business Technology Transfer program will enable the company to scale up the process and test the economic feasibility of using the chitin-based absorbent material as a cost-effective and environmentally friendly alternative to plastics for the extraction of uranium from seawater.

The company is collaborating with a researcher at the University of Texas at Austin studying the cost effectiveness of the process and Jonathan Bonner of civil and environmental engineering firm CFM Group of Tuscaloosa.

"There are a lot of engineering problems to be solved," Gurau said.

The current small-scale process may not work on a larger scale, she added.

The company's work begins with dried shrimp shells from the Gulf Coast Agricultural and Seafood Co Op in Bayou La Batre. The shells are ground to a consistency similar to a fine table salt, said Julia Shamshina, the company's chief technology officer.

The chemists dissolve the shells in a solution of ionic liquids heated with a microwave apparatus in the AIME Center. The ionic liquids are efficient solvents that mostly leave the proteins, lipids and chitin polymers that make up the shells intact, Shamshina said.

The researchers use a desktop electrospinning apparatus in Shelby Hall to create nanoparticles from the chitin harvested from the solution of shells and ionic liquids.
"Essentially, electro-spinning is a process where you apply high voltage, as much as 30,000 volts," Shamshina said.

The amber, slightly viscous solution is extruded from needles suspended above a water bath with a charged plate below the tank. Shamshina said the chitin reforms into nano-fibers in the water while the other molecules remain in solution. The fibers, which appear similar to spider's silk but finer, form mats in a couple of hours, Gurau said.

The plan is to scale the process up from 3 liters to 20 liters, Gurau said.

As part of the scale-up, the company plans to combine the operations so the process to dissolve the shells and spin the mats would be continuous, Shamshina said.

"This is essentially to determine its economic feasibility," Shamshina said.

The most expensive part of the process so far, considering their source material is a byproduct of the state's seafood industry, is the ionic liquid, according to Gurau. The hope is the solvent can be recaptured for future use.

The researchers behind the company see the process as a potential boon for the seafood industry, noting the seafood processors currently are either paying to store or dispose of the shells as a waste by-product or processing the material and attempting to sell it as fertilizer.

"The whole concept was and still is you can take a waste product from the co-op in Bayou la Batre and make a high-value material from it," Rogers said.

If the second phase is successful, it would lay the groundwork for a push to build a pilot plant with the help of investors, Gurau said.

The DOE project began a few years ago following a successful field test by Japanese researchers in the late 1990s to capture the uranium that naturally occurs in seawater, Rogers said. The project was exploring oceanic uranium as an alternative to terrestrial mining of the element to fuel nuclear power plants.

The concentration of uranium is incredibly low in the ocean, but the low concentration is offset by the vast volume, Rogers said. Field tests by Japanese researchers collected a kilogram of uranium using absorbent materials submerged in the ocean for six months.

Rogers and his colleagues believe the chitin-based material being explored by the startup could offer a more cost-effective and environmentally-friendly absorbent material for the process.

"We have a very strong polymer that comes from the oceans and one that the oceans know how to degrade when it gets free," Rogers said. "I would rather have tons of chitin because chitin breaks down. If it gets free, it easily biodegrades."
Bridge work timed to avoid football

University Boulevard span to be replaced when 2014 season ends

By Jason Morton
Staff Writer

A construction contract to replace the University Boulevard Bridge over Kicker Road in Alberta is expected to be awarded next month, but officials said University of Alabama football fans should not be affected.

Brad Darden, pre-construction engineer for the Alabama Department of Transportation's Fifth Division, which includes Tuscaloosa, said the timing of the project will allow the bridge to remain in place throughout the Crimson Tide's 2014 football season.

"The bridge should not be removed before the last Alabama home game," Darden said. "Also, we have been coordinating with the University of Alabama and the city of Tuscaloosa on the traffic control issues for this project.

Alabama's final game against Auburn University is Nov. 29. Utility relocation and other work will be performed until then.

Traffic rumbles over the University Boulevard Bridge in Alberta.
Replacing the span will cost $6.8 million and take about a year.
BRIDGE
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In conjunction with this, the Tuscaloosa City Council last week approved a one-time fee payment to Kansas City Southern Railway to facilitate a water line relocation for the bridge replacement work. Earlier this year, the panel signed off on a $347,075 utility relocation contract with Southern Civil Contracting.

"We expect the majority of this work to be complete around the time of the letting," Darden said.

Once the contract is awarded in late August, it will likely take the contractor between 60 and 90 days to begin work. It takes that long to handle the administrative side of the project, such as the processing of the contracts and securing of surety bonds, Darden said.

Construction should take about a year to complete, officials have said.

The $6.8 million project — $5 million of which is earmarked for construction — will replace the aging bridge linking Alberta and portions of east Tuscaloosa with downtown Tuscaloosa and the University of Alabama campus.

The bridge replacement project, originally slated to be completed by now, was delayed by the tornado that struck Tuscaloosa about four months after a plan for the bridge was unveiled in January 2011.

The delay also resulted in a redesign and extended the construction timetable.

Once work begins, ALDOT will post two lengthy detours around the project to accommodate northbound and southbound traffic.

Motorists heading north will be directed to McFarland Boulevard, then to Skyland Boulevard and then back to University Boulevard in Cottondale.

Southbound motorists will be directed to Skyland Boulevard from Cottondale to McFarland Boulevard and then back to University Boulevard near DCH Regional Medical Center.

Access to Alberta will be through 15th Street, 25th Avenue and Helen Keller Boulevard via Jack Warner Parkway.

When the bridge project was originally unveiled in January 2011, ALDOT officials said the construction would be timed to begin and end outside of the college football season.

But the destructive tornado that struck four months later affected some areas in the bridge replacement plan.

As a result, retaining walls that were proposed as a means to eliminate the need for rights-of-way while reducing underground utility relocation have been eliminated.

Now, there will be grassed slopes on the northeast, southeast and southwest ends of the bridge. The only retaining wall will be the one near the new Bryce Hospital.

The new bridge will have 11-to-12-foot lanes with a 10-foot sidewalk on the north side and a 5-foot sidewalk on the south side.

Plans also call for resurfacing University Boulevard between Seventh Avenue East and 21st Avenue East on both sides of the bridge, which crosses over Kicker Road and a portion of railroad tracks owned by Alabama Southern Railroad.

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STILL HERE

Nick Saban begins his eighth season at Alabama, making him the longest-tenured Crimson Tide football coach since Paul ‘Bear’ Bryant

By Aaron Suttles
Sports Writer

HOOVER | In five years he’ll be gone.

Remember back in January 2007 when that was a popular refrain across the college football landscape?

At the time it was understandable, even if misguided, thought. Up until then, Nick Saban had never stayed at one job, as an assistant or a head coach, more than five years.

So it stood to reason the nomadic Saban would be gone from Tuscaloosa and the University of Alabama in a similar time frame.

Only it never happened.

Year five came and Saban led UA to a national championship. Year six produced SEC and national titles and year seven saw an 11-game win streak.

In fact, Saban is still strong going into his eighth season at Alabama. And as soon as he leads Alabama onto the Georgia Dome field Aug. 30 for the 2014 season opener against West Virginia, he will become the longest-tenured Crimson Tide head football coach since the late Paul W. “Bear” Bryant.

That’s right, no coach since Bryant has lasted as long as Saban. In order that’s Ray Perkins (four seasons, 1983-86), Bill Curry (three seasons, 1987-89), Gene Stallings (seven seasons, 1990-1996), Mike DuBose (four seasons, 1997-2000), Dennis Franchione (two seasons, 2001-02), Mike Price (never coached a game, 2003), and Mike Shula (four seasons, 2003-06).

What made the ever-wandering Saban stick with Alabama? That’s a complex question. But broken down to its simplest form Saban found a long-term home in Tuscaloosa because he won big, avoided scandals, and there were no “dream” jobs for him to chase. The UA administration stayed out of his way and gave him full control of the program, and he found a working relationship with the powerful boosters.

That may sound simple enough, but as the seven coaches before him proved, it isn’t.

Curry won an SEC title, but his inability to beat Auburn sank him.

SEE SABAN | 4C
SABAN
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DuBose also won a conference championship, but a 24-23 record did him in. Shula also never beat Auburn, and although he put together a magical season in 2005 it wasn't enough to overcome three other sub-par campaigns.

Saban has more than won big at Alabama: two SEC championships, three national titles, six straight 10-win seasons and a college football-best 72 wins in the last six seasons.

DuBose found NCAA trouble and Price had behavioral issues. Saban has stayed scandal-free.

Perkins and Stallings had run-ins with their respective administrations, while Saban’s tenure has been smooth sailing with presidents Robert Witt and Judy Bonner and athletic directors Mal Moore and Bill Battle.

Saban also isn’t chasing the dream of coaching in the National Football League anymore as he did when he left LSU for the Miami Dolphins after five seasons. He also isn’t interested in leaving Tuscaloosa to start over. As he said after agreeing to his latest contract extension, “I’m just too damn old to start over somewhere else.”

He was asked again at SEC Media Days about Texas’ pursuit of him after last season, and again the 62-year-old coach said what he’s been saying since last year.

“I’m very happy at Alabama,” he said. “Miss Terry (his wife) is very happy at Alabama. We certainly enjoy the challenges that we have there, the friends that we have established here. This is where we just choose to, you know, end our career someday.”

“It wasn’t anything about any other place, it was just about where we are and what we want to try to do with the rest of our career.”

In a league where coaching careers can be short, Saban ranks fifth in current tenure. Georgia’s Mark Richt and Missouri’s Gary Pinkel both head into their 14th seasons. LSU’s Les Miles and South Carolina’s Steve Spurrier are in their 10th seasons at their respective schools. Spurrier also spent 12 seasons at Florida.

When a coach wins big enough to stay as long as he’d like at an SEC school, it’s almost assured another program will come calling.

“I’m going into my 14th season at Georgia. I think that happens for two reasons,” Richt said. “Obviously you have to win enough games to stick around. But the other thing is you have to choose to stay.

“When I was at Florida State (as the offensive coordinator), I had many opportunities to go. Even at Georgia, I’ve had opportunities to leave. But I chose to stay. I chose to stay at Georgia before I even came to Athens. When I accepted the job, my goal was that this would be the last stop for me because there’s no greater place than Athens, Ga. There’s no greater program than the University of Georgia in my mind, for me.”

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Ron Higgins has covered the SEC for 35 years. He said Alabama and Saban have been a perfect marriage.

"You have to have cooperation from the administration to really do anything you want to do, whether it's the budget or how many people to hire," Higgins said. "They've said, 'Do what you need to do to win. Build the system you need to win.' He's got that support. Because Nick's built the infrastructure of that program like an NFL team. It is the state of Alabama's NFL team."

Higgins said Saban has been the one to stick at Alabama when others couldn't because he's strong enough to deal with the outside pressures.

"You would have thought Alabama would have found somebody a little more stable quicker than they did, but Nick was absolutely the right guy for that job," he said. "You have to win there. You have to let everybody know that you're the boss. Because everybody in that state thinks they're a football expert. That's part of the DNA in Alabama. All the fans think they know football. All the football writers think they know football."

"The coach at Alabama has to be strong enough to do it his way. And they've won because he's done it his way."

Reach Aaron Suttles at aaron@tidesports.com or at 205-722-0229.
At a Football Powerhouse, Her Teams Rolled, Too

Sarah Patterson Steps Down as Alabama Women’s Gymnastics Coach

By: Marc Tracy

Tuscaloosa, Ala. — The women’s gymnastics coach at Alabama, Sarah Patterson, used to run into Pat Summitt, the storied former women’s basketball coach at Tennessee, at Southeastern Conference events.

Patterson recalled Summitt telling her that when it came to women’s sports, coaching and recruiting were not sufficient. Marketing and promotion — putting fans in the stands, claiming column inches in the newspapers — are also part of the coach’s job description.

“I took it as a mission throughout my career,” Patterson said.

She badgered local reporters. She handed out stickers after men’s basketball games. She called in to Paul Finebaum’s radio show, the SEC’s water cooler, and identified herself as “Sarah from Tuscaloosa,” making sure to mention that tickets for the weekend’s meet were still available. Last season, the team bought doughnuts and chicken sandwiches for the student section.

In the early days, 50 spectators made up a good showing. In 1997, the team sold out the 15,000-plus-capacity Coleman Coliseum. Ticket scalpers lurked outside the gym. In 2010, home meets averaged more than 12,000 fans. It helped that the team had become one of the best in the nation.

At a news conference Tuesday, Patterson, 58, announced that she was stepping down after her orthopedist said she needed two knee replacements and could not coach for at least a year.

Just like that, her 36-year tenure as a head coach, which began when she was 22, was over.

“We have pursued excellence, we have pursued championships,” Patterson said at the news conference, “but more than anything, we’ve pursued making the world a better place by sending these women out.”

The SEC commissioner, Michael Slive, said Wednesday that Patterson had been a role model for female athletes at Alabama and across the conference.

“She has been a trailblazer for women’s sports,” he said, adding, “When you think about Pat Summitt, Sarah Patterson is in the same place as Pat Summitt.”

Women’s gymnastics, which begins in January each season, is not typically a showcase sport on a college campus. For one thing, it has been an oligarchy: Until 2013, only four universities — Alabama, Utah, Georgia and U.C.L.A. — had won titles since the N.C.A.A. started holding championship competitions in 1982. For another, as of one year ago, there were only 63 Division I programs, according to USA Gymnastics.

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College football and basketball are viewed as preparatory for the subsequent level of competition, but many college gymnasts have completed the high-profile international stage of their careers by the time they matriculate. For instance, a recent Alabama standout, Terin Humphrey, won a silver medal at the 2004 Olympics before competing in college.

Finebaum, a prominent SEC figure in his own right, said he was so impressed by Patterson that about 15 years ago, he campaigned for her to be named Alabama’s athletic director.

“She is one of the most important figures in Alabama history,” he said in an interview Wednesday.

Athletic Director Bill Battle, referring to Bear Bryant and Nick Saban, said, “She’s done for Alabama gymnastics what Coach Bryant and Coach Saban have done for football.”

In 1978, Patterson became what turned out to be the last coach hired by Bryant, who, in addition to being a legendary football coach, was Alabama’s athletic director at the time. Only the program’s first winning record, in her first year, Patterson said, prevented the gymnastics program from being shut down.

On Tuesday, Patterson wore a black-and-white blouse with a houndstooth pattern recalling Bryant’s ever-present hat. Her husband, David, donned a houndstooth blazer.

David Patterson, 55, is also stepping down as a longtime assistant. Although he became a volunteer many years ago, he was originally hired as an assistant soon after his wife started the job. At the time, he was an undergraduate diver, and they did not have a romantic relationship.

“We both said we would never do this without the other one,” Sarah Patterson said. At the news conference, several members of Patterson’s team, on campus for summer classes, sat near the front, teary-eyed.

“To be able to have them both in the gym together, see how they interact and work together, inspires all of us,” said the senior Kayla Williams, an all-American and team captain, who in 2009 was the world vault champion.

Patterson said she opted for a “seamless transition,” rather than sit out a year and subject the team to instability and put it at a recruiting disadvantage. Battle named the assistant Dana Duckworth, a former all-American under Patterson, as her successor. Patterson will remain a special assistant to the athletic director, the university said, and will also join the N.C.A.A.’s gymnastics committee.

Patterson leaves behind an imposing record. Her teams won six national championships and eight SEC titles. She has the second-most coaching wins in the sport’s history, after Utah’s Greg Marsden. Her teams have qualified for the sport’s 12-team championship for all of its 32 years. Patterson won championships in four decades, including consecutive titles in 2011 and 2012. Her team won the SEC only a couple of months ago.

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Her resignation was greeted with bittersweet surprise around the sport.

“I was shocked,” Utah’s Marsden said. “I didn’t see this coming at all.”

He added: “It was never easy in the beginning because there was a lot of pushback to women’s sports. A lot of people thought it couldn’t be popular. Sarah has done a magnificent job of not only winning but also marketing the sport.”

In particular, Alabama’s intraconference rivalry with Georgia — and Patterson’s rivalry with the former Georgia coach Suzanne Yoculan — spawned increased regional and even national interest in the sport. “Sarah & Suzanne,” a documentary in ESPNU’s “SEC Storied” series broadcast this year, depicts a football-like atmosphere at women’s gymnastics meets: tailgating, cheers (and boos) and face-painted fans.

Finebaum said his most poignant memory of Patterson was when, soon after winning a title three years ago, she called in to his show to plead for volunteers and help after a deadly tornado had struck Tuscaloosa.

As for Patterson, besides her athletes, she seemed to feel her greatest legacy would be how women’s sports grew on one of the country’s most football-crazed campuses.

This accomplishment is personal in another way: Her younger daughter, who just graduated, was a catcher for Alabama’s softball team, which won the 2012 national title and lost to Florida in the championship series this year.

“Look at how it’s translated; look at Rhoads Stadium,” Patterson said of the softball park. “It’s sold out. You can’t even buy season tickets. Thank goodness I have mine — I purchased them years ago.”
Quizzing at Quinlan Castle? SRI considering $10 million conversion of Birmingham landmark

By: Michael Tomberlin

BIRMINGHAM, Alabama – Southern Research Institute is putting together a plan to invest up to $10 million to convert the Quinlan Castle into a mixed-use project that could be used to teach children and adults about science.

Art Tipton, chief executive of SRI, said no plans are ready to act on yet, but they have determined an investment of $7 million to $10 million could convert the "castle" into a mixed-use educational facility where the young and old could satisfy scientific curiosity. Tipton made the comments while speaking to the Rotary Club of Birmingham today.

SRI has owned the Birmingham landmark since purchasing it from the city in 2008 for $400,000. It has invested some money repairing the turrets and the roof and securing the building from the homeless who used to illegally live there.

It was built in 1927 as an apartment project with 72 apartments at 2026 Ninth Ave. South. Two doctors who partnered in the original construction were said to have been inspired by seeing castles in Europe during World War I.

The building has been vacant since the 1990s and the city took over the property in 1993 after the owner defaulted on a low-interest loan.

When it sold the building to SRI in 2008, the city stipulated SRI had 10 years to find an alternate use.

Tipton noted while speaking to the Rotary Club that SRI will celebrate its 75th Anniversary in 2016. He did not say the Quinlan Castle renovation would be part of that celebration, only saying SRI is planning to mark the anniversary in a notable way.

As part of his own research on the history of Southern Research, Tipton found where SRI used to hold open houses, attracting thousands of high school children and educators to learn and see things happening at the facility.
Tipton said starting this October, SRI will begin reaching out to high school students in the metro area to bring that kind of interaction back. He did not say what a renovated Quinlan Castle's role in that outreach might be in the future, but it would seem to fit with the plan Tipton said is on the table.

Efforts to reach Tipton after the meeting to elaborate were unsuccessful.

Tipton said he is always prepared to talk about SRI's pharmaceutical research or how it has seven anti-cancer drugs on the market or how 51 percent of its work is not even in the life sciences but in engineering projects like rockets and airplanes and energy.

"But the question I get asked most often is, 'What's going to happen with Quinlan Castle?,'" he said.
CONCERT CHOIR

The UAB Concert Choir entered the Interkultur World Choir Games in three categories last week in Riga, Latvia, and were awarded medals in all three, according to choir director Brian Kittredge.

Non-professional choirs from 60 nations competed in 29 categories at the competition, which began July 9. UAB took a gold medal in the Mixed Youth Choir category, and silver medals in the Sacred Music with Accompaniment and Spiritual categories. More than 80 jurors are hearing 450 choirs during the competition.

Kittredge said the choir "poured their hearts out on stage, and represented UAB with professionalism, dignity and pride. It is certainly a great day to be a Blazer!"

Before the competition, the choir sang in Prague and Berlin, and many of the choir members will continue on following the closing ceremonies to sing in Venice, Italy; Milan; Verona, Italy; Munich; and Munster, Germany.

Michael Huebner
UAH, RISE School of Huntsville strengthen ties in effort of 'inclusion'

By: Paul Gattis

Huntsville, Alabama – The University of Alabama in Huntsville plans to make a formal affiliation with the RISE School of Huntsville, UAH President Robert Altenkirch said today.

In a press conference on the UAH campus, Altenkirch said the university would recommend to the UA System Board of Trustees that the RISE School of Huntsville be placed under the UAH Department of Education.

It's the latest step in strengthening the relationship between UAH and the RISE school – a preschool program designed to have special needs children and typical children learning and playing side-by-side.

The plan is for the relationship between UAH and the RISE School of Huntsville to "mirror" the relationship between UA and RISE in Tuscaloosa, according to RISE of Huntsville co-founder Amanda Lee.

Amanda and her husband, Jerry, relocated to Tuscaloosa so their son, Jonathan, could attend the RISE school. The Lees could not find a preschool program in Huntsville that would integrate Jonathan – who was born with Down Syndrome -- with the typical students. Tuesday's announcement was made coincidentally on Jonathan's seventh birthday.

They returned to north Alabama and started the RISE School of Huntsville in January 2013. The school moved to the UAH campus in August 2013.

"We always wanted our school to model the original Tuscaloosa model," Amanda said. "We always wanted it to be a mirror of the original rise of Tuscaloosa. It has blown us away that it happened so quickly. We couldn't be more thrilled."

The RISE school currently accommodates students 18 months in age to 4 years, the Lees said. It has 22 students enrolled for month and is made up of four portable classrooms and a playground on the west side of the UAH campus. Altenkirch said the plan is to eventually move the school to a permanent structure on campus.

"The RISE school mission and vision fit well with UAH’s vision of a university where technology and human understanding converge with core values of inclusiveness and diversity and a goal to foster an environment of community service and engagement," Altenkirch said.

"A close affiliation with UAH will assist us in leveraging the knowledge and expertise of faculty and students, particularly from the UAH Department of Education and the College of Nursing as well as the College of Engineering through projects to assist students in their daily activities and enhance the educational experience of RISE school students."

See next page
Amanda Lee said the RISE school in Tuscaloosa blossomed with the assistance of Crimson Tide football. Former coach Gene Stallings had a special needs son and the Tuscaloosa school is named for him. Former coach Mike Shula also enrolled his typical children in the school, leading to the school now having a waiting list for children.

"It gives it more credibility and that's what I think this community needed to help it to see that some people were still trying to feel OK about RISE because we don't have that same name legacy that the one in Tuscaloosa has," Amanda said.

Jerry Lee spoke of the school in a historical reference.

"You just think about inclusion is the new civil rights," he said. "That's what it is. When we grew up, special needs kids weren't in our classrooms. We didn't invite them to birthdays and sleepovers."

He also pointed toward the playground.

"Look at the playground," he said. "You can't see who is special needs and who is typical."

Al.com
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Company works on tech to prevent hot-car deaths

VENTURI: CEO CHALLENGES EMPLOYEES TO DEVELOP SOLUTION.

Anna Claire Vollers
avollers@al.com

Mike Alvarez may be president and CEO of a high-tech aerospace company, but he's also a father. And a grandfather.

Last year Alvarez became disturbed by an increasing number of news stories about young children dying after being accidentally left in hot cars. He decided his company could do something about it, harnessing the technical and innovative capabilities of its employees.

Alvarez is CEO and president of Venturi, a Huntsville-based aerospace company with 40 employees that provides engineering and technical solutions for defense customers such as the Missile Defense Agency, the Army and Navy.

Alvarez has five grandchildren under age 8, and he couldn't stomach the thought of any family experiencing a preventable tragedy like forgetting a child in a hot car.

An average of 38 children die each year from heat-stroke after being left unattended in cars, according to KidsAndCars.org.

So last October, Alvarez launched the Venturi X Prize competition, which challenged employees to form teams (or work as individuals) to develop workable solutions to the problem of children being accidentally left in hot cars.

The idea was to find the best solution, create a prototype and take it all the way through the development process in order to eventually offer it on the commercial market.

Two teams and two individuals came forward to compete, and they submitted proposals for their ideas in February.

On April 1, each team presented its idea before a panel of outside experts that included a software sales professional, a patent attorney, a marketing professional and a senior representative of Kids and Cars, a nationwide organization that works to prevent tragedies involving children and vehicles.

The panel narrowed the field to two teams, and Venturi is pursuing both ideas through prototype stage. Alvarez will choose the winning idea by Dec. 31.

One team, called "Peyton's Charm," is targeting individual passenger cars. The hardware being developed by Ben Peyton and Shawn Estes will detect life in a car seat and communicate information to designated recipients at escalating levels.

A signal indicating a hazardous situation could go first to the driver, then to another parent or next of kin, then to a grandparent or other caregiver and ultimately to the authorities if the situation is not resolved.

"We've just starting a collaboration with the University of Alabama's mechanical engineering department where their students will perform testing and evaluation to advance the design," said Derek Johns, department manager at Venturi.

The partnership with the university will provide a team of seniors to work directly with the Venturi team to get the hardware and the monitoring/communication system to the prototype stage.

The other finalist team, comprising Tom Moon and Zach Bennett, calls its solution "Forget Me Naught." Their idea targets the daycare community.

"It detects life in the daycare vehicle, tracks vehicle exits and entries, and will have the same kind of escalating notification system (if a child is left behind): the driver first, then probably the daycare director, then the parents and ultimately the authorities if necessary," said Johns.

Saving lives

Venturi has not attempted a competition such as the X Prize before. It's a way for the company to diversify its capabilities while solving a troubling problem.

"I think Mike and goal for these projects is to save lives," said Steve Hatfield, who works in business development at Venturi. "He doesn't care if he makes a penny off of it."
Saahil Katyal, young entrepreneur in training, working to debut interactive textbook app in downtown office

By: Amethyst Holmes

Huntsville, Alabama – Saahil Katyal's prize for winning an entrepreneurial contest sponsored by the Village of Promise and Randolph School was getting to work on his business plan in a spot of his own downtown.

Katyal earned an office space at the Vertically Integrated Business Ecosystem (VIBE) and after working downtown for a little over a week, he's definitely gotten used to the more distinctive ambiance of the place rather than getting used to the bank office atmosphere he was prepared to work in.

"This was different than a traditional office space for sure," he said.

Katyal was awarded one of 10 VIBE seats sponsored by the College of Business Administration at the University of Alabama in Huntsville.

By cultivating his future college interests in economics, political science and computer science, the rising Randolph junior is designing a mobile app called Math Attack, an interactive textbook providing basic math fundamentals and mental math strategies for public and private school elementary school children.

With the help of fellow junior classmates Oliver Minton, Malcom West, and his younger brother, Sachin, Saahil is getting closer to introducing the apps in local classrooms.

"All three of them are very gifted computer-wise and graphic design-wise more than me so it would be good to surround myself with people like them and I knew they'd be willing to help," he said. "These three guys are primarily helping with the engineering of these individual strategies on the interactive textbook."

Mason West, Randolph's director of community learning, has been mentoring Katyal throughout his business process and continues to coordinate meetings between business leaders who specialize areas of law, branding and presentation.

"Saahil will let them know where he is and give him goals of where he needs to be. Then the second meeting will be a checkpoint and if he's met their requirements or their expectations, the hope is that he will present his idea to actual interested investors," West said.

Katyal said making and marketing an app seemed a bit overwhelming at first on top of customizing the program and making it as entertaining as possible.

"It seemed big. It's not just creating a textbook, I have to create a brand now. I actually have to have a business spreadsheet where I have to manage costs and stuff like that. But as broke it down, it seemed doable."

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Katyal is also benefiting from other mentors including Bob Thurber, George Smith, Kevin Webber, Martha Pullen, Dick Reeves, and John Whitman, UAH visiting assistant professor and the Innovation, Commercialization and Entrepreneurship (ICE) Lab.

"We could not have been more delighted that Saahil was the winner of the challenge. We're hoping that he can exemplify the value of a Vibe seat by being down here at the VIBE for the duration of the summer and achieving his objectives of writing a business plan around Math Attack," Whitman said.

Katyal says he hopes to have the app finished by this fall and put it on the market next year.

"It's going to be in these elementary schools for third through fifth graders, but also it will be available for anybody in the world to download for their own use," Katyal said.
Huntsville missile expertise could prove important in wake of Malaysia Air disaster

By: David Kumbroch

A local expert tells us when the disaster over Ukraine started to unfold, a few very important phones in Huntsville likely started to ring.

After all, Huntsville knows missiles. We help design surface-to-air systems.

We also host the Space and Missile Defense Conference, largely because of our Redstone Arsenal ties.

UAH Researcher and Missile Expert Steven Messervy notes, “You have both air defense and ground support weapons, so all those are managed here at Redstone. That has been the fact for many, many years, probably fifty years.”

We even have more than a few impressive missile relics, many stored at the Missile and Space Intelligence Center (MSIC).

Messervy explains, “They are the ones that categorize and work to help define and gather information on threat missiles.”

So when a jetliner went down in Ukraine, it’s fair to guess a few phones rang on the Arsenal.

Messervy goes as far as to say, “I’m sure there were.”

Obviously, questions abound, and Messervy says MSIC would have been key for figuring out a few of the first ones, “Probably they were asked, what’s the probability that this was this type of system or another type of system, etc.”

We asked the Defense Intelligence Agency, who runs MSIC, if we could get on the Arsenal to see some similar missile systems.

A spokesperson says the ball is not in their court right now for this issue, and they denied our request.”
UAH-invented smart pill bottle that reminds you when to take meds wins second US patent

By: Lucy Berry

Huntsville, Alabama – A smart pill bottle invented by a University of Alabama in Huntsville professor is gaining traction in the U.S. medical community.

New York-based AdhereTech and UAH were recently awarded a second patent for the smart pill bottle, which measures when a patient has taken their medication and wirelessly reminds users if they have missed a dose through an automated phone call or text message, as well as on-bottle blinking lights and chimes.

The product, which is already in use by patients, was designed to help people with diseases such as HIV, diabetes, cancer and hepatitis C. The technology can detect when the bottle has been opened and how much medication is left inside.

The bottle can also solicit feedback from patients via text or phone call if a user is not taking his or her medication as directed. Emil Jovanov, inventor and associate professor in UAH’s electrical and computer engineering department, said they learned about the patent a week ago.

"The second patent protects specific ideas in system implementation and alternative designs of the smart bottle," he said. "It is an important milestone in our commercialization efforts."

The pill bottle has garnered national attention and been featured in TIME Magazine, The Wall Street Journal, Fast Company, Bloomberg Businessweek, Wired and CNNMoney. A less expensive, smaller version of the device will be released by AdhereTech sometime next year.

The product is currently being tested in the Walter Reed National Military Medical Center and Cornell Medical School, according to Kannan Grant, director of UAH’s Office of Technology Commercialization.

"The results have been very good and that has led AdhereTech to secure a second round of financing," he said.

Joining Jovanov as inventors are Josh Stein, chief executive officer of AdhereTech, John Langhauser, AdhereTech’s chief technology officer, and Michael Morena, chief operations officer for AdhereTech.

AdhereTech works with pharmaceutical companies, pill bottle manufacturers and pharmacies to distribute high-cost specialty medication in its bottles. The new patent will help AdhereTech develop new health solutions for patients.

"... It helps to define the company’s scope and vision, as a growing connected medical device firm," said Stein. "In fact, we have more demand for our product than we can accommodate at the moment, so we are scaling up."

See next page
UAH can only take the smart pill bottle so far along the path of commercialization, which is why the university licensed its rights to the technology to AdhereTech.

Grant said UAH has been heavily involved in working with AdhereTech to improve the product, which gives the university more experience with technology commercialization.

"Now the faculty member can part that knowledge to the content he/she teaches to our young minds," he said. "Now there is a context to the content that is taught at UAH. Our students gain valuable knowledge when attending UAH. This is important."
History says NY no stranger to tornadoes

By: Chris Woodward

In his response this week to a deadly tornado in New York, Governor Andrew Cuomo said: "We don't get tornadoes in New York ... anyone will tell you that." But while twisters are rare in The Empire State, they do occur.

Four people were killed Tuesday by the tornado east of Syracuse. The local sheriff says the winds were so strong they picked up a house and dropped it on top of another more than 100 yards away.

In his response, Governor Andrew Cuomo said the tornado is part of an undeniable pattern of severe weather he's seen increasing in his time as governor. "We don't get tornadoes in New York, right? Anyone will tell you that. Well, we do now," he said.

OneNewsNow sought comment from Katharine Hayhoe, an atmospheric scientist in Texas. While Hayhoe thinks climate change is real, is happening, and is going to get worse, she says there's not enough evidence that tornadoes are the result of what she calls "climate change."

"We don't have a good enough and a long enough record to determine a statistically significant trend in tornado activity and/or frequency," Hayhoe responds in an email. "Before radar, really only the tornadoes that were seen were reported. And storm chasing was not a popular sport back in the 1950s!"

She adds: "The smaller-scale the phenomena, in terms of both time and space, the more challenging it is to relate to global-scale change. Tornadoes are very small in terms of both geographic extent and the amount of time they are on the ground (compared, for example, to a heat wave that lasts three weeks and covers six states). So tornadoes are VERY hard to study compared to other events like droughts, floods, heat waves, winter storms, hurricanes, etc."

Meanwhile, Hayhoe tells OneNewsNow that tornadoes are certainly more rare in New York than they are in Tornado Alley, but adds "they do occur." In fact, global-warming skeptic Dr. Roy Spencer, a meteorologist and principal scientist at the University of Alabama in Huntsville, notes that more than 400 tornadoes have occurred in New York since 1952.

As for the opinion that severe weather is the result of global warming or climate change, skeptic organizations such as Climate Depot have maintained that frequency and intensity of storms has been down.
Bentley asks 2 ASU trustees to resign

The Associated Press

MONTGOMERY | Gov. Robert Bentley has given two of the top trustees at Alabama State University until Thursday to resign.

Bentley emailed letters Tuesday to Chairman Elton Dean and Vice Chairman Marvin Wiggins, saying they need to resign for the best interests of the Montgomery university. Bentley, who serves as president of the Alabama State board by virtue of his office, did not say what he would do if they refuse, but he did note that state law calls for the removal of Alabama State trustees for financial conflicts of interest.

Bentley's letter came one day after the president of the school's Student Government Association called on the same two trustees to step down and one day after the president of the National Alumni Association voiced support for the students and new university President Gwendolyn Boyd, who has clashed with Dean.

Bentley's letter also follows a six-month warning from an accreditation agency that cited conflicts of interest by Dean and Wiggins because their relatives had financial dealings with the university.

Repeated calls to Dean for comment were not answered. Wiggins, a circuit judge, was in court in Selma and not immediately available for comment, his assistant said.

The university president said in a statement that she had seen the letters, but she did not take sides. Instead, she said that "we will respectfully continue to move forward as these issues are being resolved."

In the six-month warning given by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, it noted that in addition to the conflicts of interest, the university's financial standing had declined, with unrestricted net assets dropping by more than $10 million from 2012 to 2013. "ASU did not show care for its assets and how it managed its risks related to its financial resources," the accrediting agency said in a letter to the university president.

In Bentley's letters to the two trustees, he expressed disappointment that a proposal had been circulated among trustees, but not to him, that would provide for the removal of a trustee only for criminal acts and that would allow a committee chair to direct actions of the president.

"Out of deep concern for the future of ASU, the student body, its accreditation and financial standing, I am compelled to request your voluntary resignation as a member of the Board of Trustees of Alabama State University immediately. The deadline for response to this request is close of business, 5 p.m. Thursday, July 24, 2014," the governor wrote.
Tuition increases again, despite assets

Funds: $459 million endowment can’t be used as quick cash for operating expenses.

Sally Pearse, ericson@al.com

The University of South Alabama and an independent foundation that supports it have $459 million in assets, but that hasn’t stopped the school from raising tuition by about 40 percent since 2008.

The University of South Alabama’s endowment has risen to $139.9 million. The University of South Alabama Foundation, an independent entity that supports the university, has total net assets at $319.5 million.

Neither of these resources was available to university officials, however, as a way to avoid raising tuition for the fourth straight year, which USA’s Board of Trustees agreed to do at its June 6 meeting.

Why not? The answer lies in how the endowments were created and how people choose to give to the university. Although both are meant to grow the university’s assets, neither can be used as a quick-cash resource.

USA’s endowment

The university’s endowment, which was created in May 2000 and is under the direct control of the Board of Trustees, was built from donations and gifts, almost all of which were designated for a specific purpose, such as creating a scholarship.

“Most people, when they give a gift, they tell us how they want us to spend it,” said Stephen Simmons, USA’s vice president for financial affairs.

When the university receives unrestricted gifts, that money goes into the general fund and is used for operations, Simmons said. “It’s just not that much of it.”

If a wealthy donor had stepped up and asked to give enough money so that the university could avoid a tuition increase, that would have been great, Simmons said, but that’s not how giving usually works.

“Technically, if we got a gift of $3 million and the donor said, ‘I want this used instead of a tuition increase,’ I believe we'd cash that check,” he said. “That’s the trick to this is, what does the donor want? Typically people want their money to go into buildings or scholarships, something that’s long term.”

The USA Foundation

Similarly, the USA Foundation was not created with the idea of assisting the university with operating expenses and therefore keeping tuition down, said Maxey Roberts, the foundation’s managing director.

Asked if the foundation’s assets could be used to reduce tuition, she replied that its funds are not meant to be used to address all the needs of the university, “but to support specific activities and to enrich what the institution is able to do.”

The foundation’s support includes funding for the university’s hospitals, along with scholarships, faculty salaries and other programs, she said.

“The concept of an endowment foundation is that it not only supports the programs of today, but also to make sure that the funds exist over the long term, so that as needs arise over the years there are funds available to support those needs,” Roberts said. “The idea of a foundation is to provide continual support.”

Decisions and investments

USA’s endowment is governed under a spending policy similar to those of other universities, with the Board of Trustees’ oversight, Joe Busta, USA’s vice president for development and alumni relations, said.

“Every time a gift is made, a new account is created,” he said. For example, he said, if a donor gave $10,000 to create a scholarship, that money is invested and 5 percent of the earnings from that account are used to pay for the scholarship each year.

“It’s crucial how the funds are invested, Busta said, to ensure the endowment grows faster than the spending rate so it keeps up with inflation over time. But even in a good year, the proceeds can’t be shifted to the general fund to keep tuition down.

“Last year, we had a 14 or 15 percent total return on the endowment,” he said.

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The balance stayed in the endowment to make it bigger, so that the following year, the 5 percent would generate more money.

The USA Foundation, created in 1968, has a 21-member board of directors, two of whom are also members of the USA Board of Trustees — Steve Furr, the USA trustees' chair pro tempore, and Ken Simon, the trustees' vice president.

Over the past 10 years, from July 1, 2004, to June 30, 2014, the USA Foundation has given $138 million in contributions to the university and its hospitals, according to figures provided by Roberts. That includes $61 million for faculty support and $16.7 million in scholarships.

"What has happened over time, the university has come to us with specific programs and specific needs," Roberts said. The foundation's board evaluates each request with regard to its assets, she said.

For example, in recent years, the foundation made a commitment to fund 22 graduate assistantships and the board also agreed to give $12 million to help create the Mitchell Cancer Institute.

Also, in 2010, the foundation purchased a 327-acre site, part of the former Brookley Air Force Base, from the university to support USA's plan to expand USA Children's & Women's Hospital. The 195,000-square-foot, $72.6 million expansion was dedicated Sept. 12, 2013. To make the purchase, the foundation agreed to pay $20 million in annual $4 million installments.

But the board does not approve every request. In September 2013, when Furr asked the foundation to consider a $5 million contribution to the Mitchell-Moulton Scholarship Initiative, the foundation's investment and audit committee did not recommend making the commitment.

Furr had requested a $5 million pledge to fund the scholarship over a period of five years, at $1 million per year, which would have been matched, dollar for dollar, by Abe Mitchell. One of the reasons given for the decision was the foundation's Brookley obligation.

USA President Emeritus Gordon Moulton, after whom the scholarship was in part named, died Sept. 26, 2013, after a long battle with brain cancer.

"We missed a chance to honor him while he was alive," Furr told the board at its December 2013 meeting.

"I would ask you to reconsider (the scholarship) in light of how well we're doing these days. Scholarships are the lifeblood of the university."

Roberts said the investment and audit committee would continue to evaluate the Mitchell-Moulton request.

"With any request, the foundation board looks at what's available to provide funding at a particular time," she said.
JSU PRESIDENT

Jacksonville State University President Bill Meehan will be retiring next year.

The university's 11th president has served since July 1999, when he succeeded Harold McGee. Board of Trustees Chairman Jim Bennett said Meehan has been "an outstanding president" during his 15 years.

A longtime fixture on campus, Meehan held several offices prior to becoming president, including director of academic advisement, assistant vice president for academic affairs, associate vice president for academic and student affairs and acting vice president for institutional advancement.

Meehan said he is proud of the school's current standing. The average ACT score of incoming freshmen is up, there are more scholarships available, and the university has acquired land for future growth, he said.

"As of today, we received an A rating with a stable outlook from Standard and Poor's on our bond issue, a positive outlook on enrollment, our capital campaign is going well, and we have the upcoming reaffirmation of our SACSCOC accreditation, which is our best review in four cycles, or 40 years," he said.

William Thornton
Millet right to accent community relations

It is hard to call Peter Millet Stillman College's "new" president. He has been in that position for the better part of a full academic year, having stepped into the role in September 2013. But his status has now been solidified as permanent, and that allows him to make plans and begin to leave his own mark on the institution.

Under former president Ernest McNealey, Stillman experienced considerable physical growth and a rebirth of its athletic program. The latter helped get former students and alumni as well as members of the community back on campus and engaged with the school.

For all of McNealey's strengths, and they were not inconsequential, he was sorely lacking as an ambassador to the community. His predecessor, Cordell Wynn, worked tirelessly to raise Stillman's profile in the community, tap into new resources for the institution and build bridges to parts of the community that hadn't been involved with Stillman before. During McNealey's tenure, some of those bridges were neglected and are now in serious need of maintenance.

That's why we are glad to see Millet make community involvement one of his top priorities. Millet has plenty of ideas for Stillman. He mentioned establishing the college's first graduate program and establishing engineering and supply chain management programs. Those could be expensive and complicated undertakings.

But trying to reconnect with the community won't necessarily be all that expensive or complicated. And good will generates tangible results. On the other hand, fostering ill will is usually pointless and often costly.

Stillman has proved before that it can be a shining beacon to the west Tuscaloosa community that surrounds it. It is an important part of Tuscaloosa and Tuscaloosa County. Encouraging local residents to tap into the college's resources and sharing the time and talents of student and faculty will benefit both Stillman and the community.

Improving community relations and increasing service to the community is a common-sense move on Millet's part that we welcome.
Kiffin effect has been positive, so far

NICK SABAN was asked about everything from his crying grandchild to a $100 million offer from some entity defined as “Texas” (Was it the school? Rogue boosters? Rick Perry? George Strait?) at his SEC Media Days appearance in Hoover on Thursday. There were also a few football-related questions.

The range of topics was not essentially different than it has been in most of Saban’s other appearances. Mostly, it involved the expectation that Alabama must win every game — otherwise, how do Steve Spurrier’s strange comments have currency? — while also suspending every player that has had a hint of off-season trouble. In other words, the same old things.

Except when it came to assistant coaches.

Judging by the questions, there is overwhelming interest in Alabama’s new offensive coordinator. That came not just from the usual local suspects, deeply concerned with every minute detail of the Crimson Tide program, invested in every play call.

Curiosity came from all over. ESPN asked about it.

After all, the new face on the staff is Lane Kiffin.

He is certainly the most recognizable coaching face in the SEC outside of those who appeared on the podium, and is probably the most polarizing figure, at least in some parts of the SEC’s geographical footprint, on any staff in football.

Saban, however, had nothing but praise.

“So far, so good,” Saban said of Kiffin’s tenure in Tuscaloosa. “Our players have responded to him really well. We’ve had new energies, new ideas from him.

“Obviously, it’s a transition for him going from being a head coach back to being an assistant. I’ve done it. I was head coach at Toledo for one year before I went to the Cleveland Browns as a defensive coordinator, and it’s true for anybody, it’s not easy to go from being the boss to not being the boss. You’re not in charge. You don’t get to tell people when they get to go home anymore. But he has done a very good job for us.”

In fact, Kiffin has had an effect that you probably wouldn’t suspect.

“He’s been a calming influence,” Alabama wide receiver Amari Cooper said.

Cooper also noted that Kiffin “spread the ball around” more than his predecessor, Doug Nussmeier, did, although the junior wide receiver was also quick to

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HURT

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note “it’s not a new system, still Coach Saban’s offense.”

For UA fans, that is the main question about Kiffin. A few — well, more than a few — are still slightly skeptical about his tenures at Tennessee and USC, but if he succeeds in getting the football into the hands of the playmakers that Alabama has, Crimson Tide fans won’t care if his previous stops were with Nickelback and the KGB.

That attitude will not extend to Knoxville, where Kiffin will most assuredly not have a calming effect.

“We joke about it,” Saban said. “They don’t like me in Baton Rouge because I left, and they don’t like him in Knoxville because he left. He did a good job. They didn’t want him to leave. The one time we played them, we needed a blocked kick to beat them.”

Not all Tennessee fans will agree with that analysis, but Saban does have insight into emotion. The fact that he was hung in effigy when Alabama visited LSU in 2008 (his first return) contributes to that awareness.

“I went back to Baton Rouge. I survived and he will too — I hope.”

Reach Cecil Hurt at cecil@tidesports.com or 205-722-0225.
Alabama hot after landing three commitments

By: Andrew Bone

It was a busy time in Tuscaloosa last week with several football prospects on campus, a trio of new commitments, and more prospects are on the verge of announcing their college decision.

The top uncommitted prospects in the 2015 class on campus included CeCe Jefferson, a five-star defensive tackle from Baker County High School in Glen St. Mary, Fla.; Daron Payne, a five-star defensive tackle from Shades Valley High School; Jacques Patrick, a five-star running back from Timber Creek High School in Orlando, Fla., and Kendall Sheffield, a Rivals100 cornerback from Fort Bend Marshall High School in Missouri City, Texas.

“ать got a good feel for the place,” Patrick told Rivals.com. “I got a good feel for Lane Kiffin. Nick Saban sat me down for an hour and talked about his plan for me. He showed me the running back situation and their plan for me. It’s a great opportunity.”

Alabama extended a few new scholarship offers to rising seniors, including Jordan Whitehead, a four-star cornerback from Central Valley High School in Monroe, Pa., and Lawrence Cager, a three-star wide receiver from Calvert Hall High School in Towson, Md.

“I went to Alabama with the mind set to get an offer,” Cager said. “I wanted to prove to them I am one of the best. Coach (Billy) Napier and Coach Kiffin said they loved me. Coach (Nick) Saban said he loved how I used my body. He said he would really love to have me at Alabama.”

Alabama also had several elite 2016 quarterbacks participate in camp: Arizona commitment Shea Patterson, from Calvary Baptist High School in Shreveport, La.; Jawon Pass from Carver High School in Columbus, Ga.; Jacob Eason, a new Georgia commitment from Lake Stevens High School in Washington; and Seth Green, from East Ridge High School in Woodbury, Minn.

“ать everything went really good,” Patterson said. “I got a chance to really build my relationship with Coach Kiffin. I got a chance to sit and break down film with him. It was really good. We had similar interests. We both have high interest in each other. I thought Coach Kiffin was a good guy. I enjoyed sitting down and talking to him. He was cool. He is a coach I can see myself playing for. I definitely have high interest in Alabama right now.”

The Crimson Tide coaching staff welcomed several out-of-state commitments, including Calvin Ridley, a five-star wide receiver, and Shawn Burgess-Becker, a Rivals100 safety from Monarch High School in Coconut Creek, Fla.; Minkah Fitzpatrick, a five-star cornerback from St. Peter’s Prep in Jersey City, N.J.; Deionte Thompson, a Rivals100 safety from West Orange-Stark High School in Orange, Texas; Richie Petitbon, a Rivals100 offensive guard from Gonzaga High School in Washington, D.C.; and Mekhi Brown, a Rivals100 defensive end from Carver High School in Columbus, Ga.

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Alabama added four major commitments in the last week including Benito Jones, a 2016 defensive tackle from Wayne County High School in Waynesboro, Miss.; Demetris Robertson, a 2016 athlete from Savannah Day School in Georgia; Shyheim Carter, a 2016 cornerback from Kentwood High School in Louisiana; and Brandon Kennedy, a 2015 four-star center from Wetumpka High School. TideSports.com has highlights, interviews and much more on these new verbal pledges.

A trio of elite prospects who visited Alabama last week plan to make their decision in the near future. Ronnie Harrison, four-star defensive back and North Carolina commitment from Florida High School in Tallahassee, Fla., will announce his final choice on July 29. Adonis Thomas, four-star linebacker from Central Gwinnett High School in Lawrenceville, Ga., will announce on Aug. 1 between Alabama and Florida. Joshua McMillon, four-star linebacker from Whitehaven High School in Memphis, Tenn., will announce on Aug. 22. Alabama might land all three prospects.

“My family loved it,” Harrison said. “This was my mom’s first visit there. She enjoyed it. I like everything about Alabama. The football program, the fans, just everything. I can get a good education there. They have the best coaches in the country.”

TideSports.com has daily recruiting updates with prospects on campus and interviews with high school coaches sharing more insight about these star players. The TideSports.com staff participates on the message board daily answering recruiting and team-related questions. The 30-day free trial will not last much longer. Go to www.tidesports.com for more information.

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Network will boost
SEC image, coffers

By Tommy Deas
Executive Sports Editor

The SEC Network won't debut until next month, but it is already a success.

Even before Comcast, the nation's largest cable television provider (and the primary cable provider in the Tuscaloosa area), signed on last week to carry the league's network, it was already available nationwide through distribution deals with Dish Network, AT&T U-verse, Cox and other providers. The SEC Network will launch Aug. 14 with the ability to be reached in more households than the Big Ten or Pac-12 had when they launched their networks.

What kind of demand is there for the SEC Network? Ask Joe Clayton, chief executive officer of Dish, which became one of the first major carriers to sign on for the network, some six months before the network's launch. Clayton, in Hoover last week for SEC Media Days, confirmed that Dish has already experienced subscriber growth from customers seeking out a place to get the network.

"We have definitely seen an increase" in subscribers, Clayton said.

Clayton made a calculated decision to sign on early. Others who held out longer, like Comcast, may have had greater negotiating leverage as the launch date approached, but Clayton wanted Dish customers, and potential customers, to know from the start they would have access to the network.

Joe Clayton
"We wanted to be in on the ground floor," Clayton said.

"I've been working on this for two years."

A Kentucky native and longtime University of Kentucky basketball fan, Clayton grasped the demand the network would create.

"We understand the passion of SEC fans," he said. "We understand the tradition and we understand the

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emotions the fans have for their schools. We wanted to be a part of that, to be a provider they could go to for that programming."

Dish began a national advertising campaign touting the SEC Network last week. Clayton believes the network's reach is far beyond regional.

"Our headquarters is in Denver," he said, "but I want to be able to watch my Kentucky basketball. There are graduates from SEC schools across the country and people who grew up in the South who might live in California or New York or in the Midwest who want to be able to watch their teams."

The network will, of course, have a full inventory of SEC athletic contests in all sports to draw upon for programming. It will carry a football triple header each Saturday during the fall.

"Live events will be the focus of the network," SEC Commissioner Mike Slive said last week.

The SEC Network has already signed high-profile talent like Paul Finebaum, Brent Musburger, Jesse Palmer, Tim Tebow and former University of Alabama quarterback Greg McElroy to anchor studio shows or serve as game commentators.

The network's reach, however, is not limited to football. It will carry more than 100 men's basketball games, 60 women's basketball games, 75 baseball games and 50 softball games. Every conference men's and women's basketball game, baseball game and softball game will either be televised or be available digitally through the network.

Even the football coaches recognize the network will be a big boost to other sports.

"I think the big positive is the ability for our other sports to be shown nationally, get their brand out, for them to be able to recruit nationally, which they do," said Texas A&M coach Kevin Sumlin.

The Pac-12 may have surpassed the SEC in annual average payout to school distributed for the 2013-14 school year, depending on which reports you credit, but each are somewhere in the neighborhood just below $21 million per school. The Pac-12 just signed a lucrative new television deal with Fox and ESPN, while the SEC is now spreading funds to 14 schools (since the addition of Texas A&M and Missouri last year) from previously-existing contracts with CBS and ESPN. The SEC Network figures to add a major new revenue stream to the coffers of league schools.

Partnering with ESPN and leveraging the SEC's brand to lure major carriers to distribute the network even before next month's launch, the league seems to have positioned itself to maintain its place as the nation's premier collegiate athletic conference.

"We feel great about where we are, particularly in comparison to the other conference networks and other networks generally at this point."

Justin Connolly, ESPN senior vice president of college networks

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NFL to restrict evaluations of underclassmen

NEW YORK | The NFL will limit the number of underclassmen who can receive evaluations for the draft to five from a single school, although special exceptions will be allowed.

Concerned about the record 107 underclassmen who applied for this year's draft, and with 37 of them not selected, the league's College Advisory Committee developed new guidelines for players considering forfeiting their final years of eligibility.

Troy Vincent, the league's head of football operations, said Friday the underclassmen will be advised on their potential to be picked in the first or second round. They also could be advised to stay in school.

Previous assessments dealt with the first through third rounds, and whether a player had potential of being selected.

"When you look at our accuracy rate, we did a good job evaluating first- and second-round picks," Vincent told SiriusXM NFL Radio. "Below — the third, fourth and fifth rounds — a lot of these players were not getting drafted. It's better for these young men to remain a student-athlete for another year."

Only two schools, LSU and California, had more than five underclassmen in this year's draft. Six of LSU's seven players were chosen, while only two of the six from Cal were drafted.

Qualifications for an exception will be taken on a case-by-case basis by the NFL committee.

Vincent emphasized the league is not prohibiting underclassmen from entering the draft, but "we want them to make an informed decision."

He added that the basketball model in which players beyond their first year of eligibility can enter the NBA draft and then withdraw as long as they don't hire an agent would not work for the NFL. Vincent fears "everybody would test the water every year" under a similar system applying to college players whose high school graduation class has completed its third year of college.

Alabama coach Nick Saban said at the SEC Media Days this week that "it's getting overwhelming" for the NFL's evaluation committee. The Crimson Tide had 11 players ask for evaluations after last season.

"A guy is going to get a first-round grade, a second-round grade or a stay-in-school grade," Saban said. "Look, all these players that went out for the draft, that went out for the draft late, or didn't get drafted, they were potential draft picks next year. They're not in the draft next year. They're not playing college football either."
COLLEGE GRADUATES

STARTING SALARIES

Starting salaries for recent college graduates have risen far more slowly than the average earnings of all U.S. workers since the recession, an analysis by the Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco found.

The study, released this week, found that median earnings for recent college graduates rose only 6 percent from 2006 to 2013, less than half the rise of 15 percent for the overall U.S. workforce over roughly the same period.

Such disparities in pay growth rates have been seen in previous recessions, but the report says the current one “is substantially larger and has lasted longer than in the past.”

“The gap between the two groups of employees appears to be substantially wider and their paths appear more divergent,” the report found.

College graduates are particularly susceptible to wage stagnation during weak labor markets because older, experienced employees tend to have more job protections.
Higher wages, job growth linked

The Associated Press

WASHINGTON | Maybe a higher minimum wage isn’t so bad for job growth after all.

The 13 U.S. states that raised their minimum wages at the beginning of this year are adding jobs at a faster pace than those that did not, providing some counter-intuitive fuel to the debate over what impact a higher minimum has on hiring trends.

Many business groups argue that raising the minimum wage discourages job growth by increasing the cost of hiring. A Congressional Budget Office report earlier this year lent some support for that view. It found that a minimum wage of $10.10 an hour, as President Obama supports, could cost 500,000 jobs nationwide.

But the state-by-state hiring data, released Friday by the Labor Department, provides ammunition to those who disagree. Economists who support a higher minimum say the figures are encouraging, though they acknowledge they don’t establish a cause and effect. There are many possible reasons hiring might accelerate in a particular state.

“It raises serious questions about the claims that a raise in the minimum wage is a jobs disaster,” said John Schmitt, a senior economist at the liberal Center for Economic and Policy Research. The job data “isn’t definitive,” he added, but is “probably a reasonable first cut at what’s going on.”

In the 13 states that boosted their minimums at the beginning of the year, the number of jobs grew an average of 0.85 percent from January through June. The average for the other 37 states was 0.61 percent.


Twelve of those states have seen job growth this year, while employment in Vermont has been flat. The number of jobs in Florida has risen 1.6 percent this year, the most of the 13 states with higher minimums. Its minimum rose to $7.93 an hour from $7.79 last year.

Some economists argue that six months of data isn’t enough to draw conclusions.

“It’s too early to tell,” said Stan Veuger, a scholar at the American Enterprise Institute. “These states are very different along all kinds of dimensions.”

For example, the number of jobs in North Dakota — which didn’t raise the minimum wage and has prospered because of a boom in oil and gas drilling — rose 2.8 percent since the start of this year, the most of any state.

But job growth in the aging industrial state of Ohio was just 0.7 percent after its minimum rose to $7.95 from $7.85. The federal minimum wage is $7.25.