SEPTEMBER 4, 2014

ARTICLES OF INTEREST
AUGUST 29, 2014 – SEPTEMBER 4, 2014

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Auto job fair to be held Sept. 13
Area firms hope to fill more than 200 positions

By Patrick Rupinski
Business Editor

Between 200 and 400 jobs will be offered to job seekers at an automotive hiring fair Sept. 13 at the Tuscaloosa Career and Technology Academy, 2800 Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd. The hiring fair will be from 9 a.m. to noon.

The free job fair will have representatives from at least nine automotive suppliers in the Tuscaloosa area who will do on-site interviews to fill entry-level jobs in production, service and material handling.

Many of the available jobs are with contractors and service providers for Mercedes-Benz U.S. International in Vance. The jobs will pay up to $14 an hour.

"We are asking as many people as possible to go to the website — www.tuscaloosachamber.com/jobs — and fill out the application form in advance," said LeNa Powe, director of workforce development for the Chamber of Commerce of West Alabama.

Those without Internet access are encouraged to use a computer at a public library.

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JOBS

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Filling out the application in advance will give the hiring companies a good understanding of the applicants’ backgrounds and will save time when the job seekers arrive at the hiring fair, Powe said, helping them to get through the process more quickly.

The Region 3 Workforce Development Council and West Alabama Works Inc. are hosting the hiring fair.

West Alabama Works is a new workforce development system housed at the chamber. Its goal is to work with local organizations to bring basic skills and literacy training to job candidates with a goal of helping them find a job.

Many of the jobs being offered need to be filled immediately. Other positions will be filled within the next few months, according to the event’s sponsors.

Job applicants must have a high school diploma and GED; be willing to work various shifts or rotating shifts that may include nights and weekends; be able to lift up to 50 pounds; be able to pass security and drug screening and have transportation to get to work, Powe said.

“The automotive industry has played a large part in the economic development and growth of West Alabama and the state of Alabama as a whole,” said a statement from Larry Taylor, chairman of the Region 3 Workforce Development Council. “We feel that this unique opportunity will not only benefit some of our region’s largest employers, but will more importantly benefit the citizens of West Alabama who comprise our dedicated workforce.”

In June, West Alabama Works hosted a similar hiring fair for the University of Alabama’s BAM-A Dining. About 600 job seekers attended that event, and BAMA Dining hired 250 applicants.

Powe said she hopes to see similar results with the Automotive Hiring Fair.

Companies that will be hiring at the fair include ABM Industries, ARD Logistics, BLG Logistics, Brose, Clean Harbors, Eberspaecher, Inteva, MacClellan, Metalsa and Quality Vehicle Processing.

Career counselors from Tuscaloosa Career Link, the Ready to Work programs at Bevill State Community College and Shelton State Community College, and the Adult Education GED program will be on hand to assist applicants. The two community colleges and the University of West Alabama also will have displays and information on job training opportunities that they offer.
Superintendents: AAA potentially ‘devastating’

Mike Cason » mcason@al.com

Superintendents of 30 of Alabama school systems have joined in a lawsuit claiming the Alabama Accountability Act is unconstitutional.

The superintendents filed a brief asking the Alabama Supreme Court to uphold a lower court’s ruling that the law violates the state constitution.

They include superintendents Dee Fowler of Madison, Casey Wardynski of Huntsville, Paul McKendrick of Tuscaloosa, Elizabeth Swinford of Tuscaloosa County, Ed Nichols of Decatur, Tim Wilder of Dothan, James McCoy of Lee County and Alan Cosby of Etowah County and 22 others.

There are about 135 school systems in the state.

In May, Montgomery County Circuit Judge Gene Reese ruled the school choice law unconstitutional. State officials have appealed to the Alabama Supreme Court.

The law has remained in effect while the appeal is pending.

Madison City Schools voted in July to file a court brief supporting Reese’s ruling.

Senate President Pro Tem Del Marsh of Anniston, who was the leading proponent of the law in the Legislature, issued a statement in response to the superintendents’ brief.

“It’s unfortunate that these superintendents do not believe that parents who have children trapped in a falling school should have the choice to move them to a non-failing school,” Marsh said.

In a 20-page brief filed Aug. 20, the superintendents acknowledge that the legal issue concerns whether the law is constitutional. But they take note of “the negative financial impact of AAA on public schools and the potential devastating financial impact of this unconstitutional legislation.”

The Legislature set aside $40 million from the fiscal year 2014 education budget to cover the cost of the Accountability Act. That was an estimate, because the level of participation in the law’s tax credit programs was unknown.

The law set up two tax credit programs. One allows parents with children in public schools designated as failing to receive a credit on their state income tax worth up to about $3,500 to reimburse them for the cost of transferring their child to a private school or nonfailing public school.

As of last September, about 800 students had transferred from failing public schools under the Accountability Act but only 52 had transferred to a private school.

The other tax credit program in the Accountability Act gives a state income tax credit to corporate and individual donors to scholarship organizations. The organizations can award scholarships to students in families earning up to 150 percent of the state median household income.

Until Sept. 15 of each year, the scholarships can only go to students zoned for failing public schools. The maximum total tax credit is $25 million, and almost the full amount, $24.8 million, was claimed for donation’s last year.
John Carroll to lead Ethics Commission

MONTGOMERY | Former Cumberland Law School Dean John Carroll will serve as acting director of the State Ethics Commission beginning Oct. 1.

Ethics Commission Chairman Ed Crowell announced Tuesday that Carroll will fill in when Director Jim Sumer retires Oct. 1 after being the commission's top staff member for 17 years.

The commission is accepting applications for the permanent position.

Carroll spent 13 years as dean of the Cumberland Law School dean before retiring recently. He previously served as a U.S. magistrate judge in Montgomery for more than 14 years.
WORKSHOP

RESEARCH GRANTS

Alabama Launchpad and the Birmingham Business Alliance are offering a workshop for researchers who want a piece of the $2 billion awarded annually by the National Institutes of Health.

The workshop is part of the Economic Development Partnership of Alabama's Small Business Innovation Research and Small Business Technology Transfer Assistance Program, which seeks to increase the amount of grant funding coming into the state.

Alabama receives more than $40 million from the programs each year, which goes to fund scientific research all over the state, but the application process is notoriously difficult.

"The Launchpad SBIR workshops, especially those targeting NIH, provide an excellent resource to help the innovators in our community compete for funding and bring their life-saving technologies closer to market," said Steven Ceulemans, the BBA's vice president of innovation and technology.

The workshop is set for Thursday at the BBA offices, 505 20th St. N., Suite 200. Check-in is at 8:30 a.m. and the workshop is from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. The cost is $50 for Alabama participants and $100 for out-of-state participants.

Ian Hoppe
Forum kicks off planning process for future of city school system

Consultant to use citizen input to help assess education needs

By Jamon Smith
Staff Writer

What are the core challenges that public schools face?
Socioeconomic disparities, funding, equity and demographics were some of the most common answers that nearly 300 people gave at the midday session of the Tuscaloosa City Schools Educational Futures Conference on Tuesday.

The conference was led by Tracy Richter, CEO of DeJong-Richter, an Ohio-based educational planning firm that was hired by the school board to conduct a demographics study and create the facilities master plan that will guide the school system's building plans and possible district rezoning for the near future.

The conference was held to gather community input on what education should look like in Tuscaloosa. Richter said the information gathered will be used to help DeJong-Richter design the facilities master plan.

"Today was about educating people on the process, what it takes to really do an effective facilities master plan and knowing that it's not just about bricks and mortar," Richter said. "How we do education plays a big role.

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the demographics play a big role, finance plays a big role. And so we're looking at all kinds of different things that impact how we're going to do facilities in the long run. And that was the point of talking to the folks today."

Richter had people complete a 20-item questionnaire on what technology, partnerships, school size, enrollment and facility changes they want to see in the schools.

Richter said people need to think about how students are reacting to what educators are doing. He said a lot of parents think that how they were educated is good for their children because it was good for them. But things are different now, and children learn differently. Technology should be an integral part of education, as well as hands-on learning.

He said diversity is another very important part of educating today's children.

"We need to make sure that we're preparing our kids for this county, for this state, for this country and for this world," he said.

Bill Foster, 65, a Tuscaloosa resident who attended the conference, said he thought it went well.

"It gave people the opportunity to express themselves about some of the planning process," he said. "I feel that we have to focus on the needs of all children. I have the particular opinion of focusing on the children who need the most help."

Laurie Wright, 39, a Tuscaloosa resident at the conference, said Richter made her think about a few things in a different light.

"Getting people to think along different avenues and trains of thoughts is something that we need," she said. "So I found it very informative, and I look forward to future meetings and seeing what he's uncovered about our school systems."

Wright said she hopes the demographic study and facilities master plan leads to more equality in the Tuscaloosa City Schools system.

Myron Chwe, 47, a Tuscaloosa resident who attended the conference, said he hopes Richter's presentation gave the community greater insight about education that will move the city forward.

"We have to change our perception, understanding and values about education away from what we experienced ourselves," he said. "Because what we see as the world accelerates away in terms of technology and global vision has to be included in our education for the kids that are going to live in the new reality."

The Educational Futures Conference PowerPoint presentation and questionnaire will be on the Tuscaloosa City Schools website at www.tuscaloosacityschools.com this morning.
Residents’ input will be used to create master plan for buildings, redistricting

By Jamon Smith
Staff Writer

Tuscaloosa City Schools will host the “Educational Futures Conference” today to gather input from the community on the system’s demographic study and facilities analysis.

All Tuscaloosa residents are encouraged to attend the meeting, since the public’s input will be used to create a facilities master plan that will guide the school system’s building plans and possible district rezoning for the near future.

“This is a very important meeting for the community,” said Marvin Lucas, a Tuscaloosa City Board of Education member. “For the next 10 to 20 years, it will decide what our education will be like.

“A lot of the times, people think we hold community meetings just to get their support for what we’re already going to be doing. But with this meeting, we’re asking for their input to help shape what we’re doing.

“We’re asking what would they like to see in our schools.”

The conference will be held today at University Church of Christ.

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EDUCATIONAL FUTURES CONFERENCE

What: Public meeting to help chart a course for the future of the Tuscaloosa City Schools System.

When: 1 to 4 p.m. and 5:30 to 8:30 p.m. today.

Where: University Church of Christ, 1200 Julia Tutwiler Drive.

Transportation available: Buses will be available to transport residents to the meetings. For full details on pickup times, see Page 3B.
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1200 Julia Tutwiler Drive. There will be two sessions — one from 1 to 4 p.m. and another from 5:30 to 8:30 p.m.

The meeting is one of three major community meetings that DeJong-Richter, an Ohio-based educational planning firm hired by the school board to conduct the study and create the facilities master plan, is using to gather community input.

The conference will provide a global view of the future of education, Superintendent Paul McKendrick said in a letter.

The meeting will include presentations and a questionnaire. The questionnaire will also be available online.
Mayor proposes policy changes

Maddox calls for reducing vehicle, fuel costs, wants to analyze take-home vehicle policy

By Jason Morton
Staff Writer

Mayor Walt Maddox has proposed a series of policy changes in an attempt to reduce motor vehicle and fuel costs while more accurately tracking surplus funds for budget planning.

When the mayor presented his proposed fiscal 2015 budget to the City Council on Tuesday, he said it already contained the groundwork for lowering gasoline and diesel fuel expenditures.

"Out of the budget process also has come the need for us to take a look at some policy (decisions)," Maddox said. "In the coming months, you're going to have policy proposals come to you that were born out of this budgeting process."

Both the vehicle maintenance and fuel cost estimates have been reduced 5 percent from the current year's expected final costs in the fiscal 2015 budget. For the fuel budget, this amounts to an allotment of $2.07 million, or a $51,000 reduction from the $2.12 million that is expected to

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be spent on fueling up city vehicles by the time fiscal 2014 ends on Sept. 30.

The mayor wants to continue the reduction in future budgets and is calling on the council to review the regulations and guidelines that govern the city’s vehicle take-home policy.

There are 296 city-owned vehicles in the take-home program, and the employees that use them are allowed to drive them to homes up to 25 miles away from City Hall.

Amending the policy will not be simple, but there is some room for change. For example, Maddox said it makes little sense for a Water and Sewer Department employee who is on call for failing lift stations to be called away from a home north of Tuscaloosa to a problem near the Mercedes-Benz U.S. International plant.

“I believe we need to go and take a step back and look at our take-home vehicle policy,” Maddox said. “I feel there are opportunities to reduce costs and I believe we can do things structurally, and over time, to reduce the costs of take-home vehicles.”

For future budgets, Maddox wants to establish capital funds for Public Safety and Public Works operations.

While nothing more than an accounting practice, the new funds will allow city leaders to have a better understanding on how one-time revenue sources and expenses affect current budgets.

“What this does, it allows us to take one-time revenue proceeds, put them into a fund (and) allows us — in some cases — to expedite purchases for city services,” Maddox said.

The sale of an unused Fire Department property, such as the former Fire Station No. 4 in Alberta, cannot be counted on in future budgets. Likewise, the one-time purchase of a trash truck, no matter when the funds were allocated, shouldn’t be accounted for outside of the fiscal year in which it was purchased.

To correct this going forward, the mayor wants these two funds separated from the rest of the General Fund and, for now, the Public Safety Capital Fund is expected to continually stay funded as a means for future equipment and vehicle purchases for the city’s public safety departments.

Maddox is proposing to direct revenues garnered from the city of Tuscaloosa’s red-light violators captured on the city’s camera into the Public Safety Capital Fund in order to have a steady revenue stream for future public safety purchases.

These two funds also will help city officials better gauge when and where the city’s revenue is flowing.

Reach Jason Morton at jason.morton@tuscaloosanews.com or 205-722-0200.
Holt in, Northport out in new school priorities

County, school board change 2011 building deal

By Jamo Smith
Staff Writer

The Tuscaloosa County Commission voted 3-to-1 Wednesday to allow the Tuscaloosa County Board of Education to temporarily drop its plans to build a new middle school in Northport and use the remaining $6.2 million of its 1-cent temporary sales tax money on other projects.

Superintendent Elizabeth Swinford said the vote would allow the county school system to move ahead with two of its higher priorities, “renovating Lloyd Wood Middle School in order to accommodate the medically fragile children of Sprayberry Education Center, as well as starting the steps towards a brand new Holt High School.”

In 2011, the County Commission and the school board struck a deal allowing the board to borrow $50 million against future allocations of a countywide 1-cent temporary sales tax to complete a list of construction projects that included a new $20 million middle school in Northport adjacent to Tuscaloosa County High School. But with only an estimated $6.2 million remaining from the tax, system leaders told commissioners they can’t afford to keep their agreement and build the new middle school.

Though Swinford and the board agreed that building a new Northport middle school is not an immediate priority, they asked the commission Wednesday if they could use the remaining sales tax money to hire professionals to plan and design the new Northport middle school and also use the money to identify, locate and possibly obtain land for the new $34 million Holt High, as well as start designing and renovating Lloyd Wood to convert it to a new Sprayberry Center. Converting Lloyd Wood to Sprayberry will cost an estimated $6.4 million.

The board’s proposal was accepted by the commission, but not fully intact.

Commissioner Reginald Murray made a motion to accept the proposal with the exception of using the remaining money to build a new Northport middle school. He said with Tuscaloosa County High having an enrollment of only 1,500 students when it has a capacity of 2,200 students doesn’t convince me that the money should be used there.

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vince him that a new middle school being built adjacent to county high is a priority. But building a new Holt High and Sprayberry Center are.

"I can't support going forward with Northport, but I can support Sprayberry and Holt as far as allowing funding to be used," Murray said. "And since I made the motion initially for the vote for the Northport middle school, I motion that the money go ahead and be used for the development of Holt and Sprayberry."

Commissioner Bobby Miller seconded Murray's motion, and he along with Jerry Tingle and Murray voted in favor of it.

Northport Mayor Bobby Herndon, who attended the meeting, and Commissioner Stan Acker, who was the only commissioner to vote against the motion, weren't happy.

"I do appreciate the act on Sprayberry, because those kids need that school ... but the issue of whether a new Northport middle school is needed or not, it is," Herndon said.

Acker said the commission is micromanaging the school board by changing its proposal to exclude a new Northport middle school. Like Herndon, he said the board's original proposal was fine.

After the meeting, Acker said he foresees the commission's decision causing a lot of problems for Northport's elected officials.

"I suspect there will be a great deal of conversation in Northport on a number of topics in the coming days and weeks about what the future needs to be with them, because obviously they don't seem to have much of a future with the Tuscaloosa County School System," Acker said.

"That's something that the folks in Northport obviously need to look at," Acker said. "I hate we had to pit one group against the other, and I just wish we could have looked at something where everyone would have benefited across the county."

Probate Judge Hardy McCollum wasn't in favor of approving the school board's proposal — or an amended version of it — right away. Before the vote, he asked the commission to wait two weeks to vote so they could discuss the issue further.

His primary concern was that the county school system doesn't appear to have enough money to maintain the schools it builds.

"One of the things that ought to be as obvious to the public as it is to me and the nose on your face is that you can't build all of these new facilities and expect them to take care of themselves," McCollum said. "We don't have the operating dollars to maintain (Tuscaloosa) County High, to maintain Sipsey Valley (High), to maintain Duncanville (Middle School), to maintain all of the new facilities that we've brought online in the last 10 years."

Holt High School Principal Rachael McDaniel said she's thrilled about the commission's decision.

"I ride around Tuscaloosa and we go to different schools for athletic events, and there's always that equity thing," McDaniel said. "What's equal and what's fair. It's not fair. You go to the facilities at these places and the kids see that. They automatically get the impression that they're not worth what the other kids are worth, and I think that it's more than time to move forward."

Reach Jamon Smith at jamon.smith@tuscaloosanews.com or 205-722-0204.
AWARDS

NORTH ALABAMA ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

A former Decatur mayor took home an award for service and commitment to economic development last week during the North Alabama Industrial Development Association's annual conference luncheon.

Lynn C. Fowler, board chairman of the Morgan County Economic Development Association, won the Michael D. Roberts North Alabama Excellence Award. MCEDA President and Chief Executive Officer Jeremy Nails presented the award.

Launched in 2003, the award recognizes groups, individuals, projects or activities that have had a positive economic and social impact on North Alabama.

Fowler is a Decatur resident who has served as MCEDA chairman for three decades.

Lucy Berry
Ex-DOD official to head UA's Cyber Institute

Reginald Hyde led college's Cyber Security Initiative

By Ed Enoch
Staff Writer

The University of Alabama has named a former U.S. Department of Defense official executive director of its new Cyber Institute, an umbrella organization for interdisciplinary research and educational programs on campus related to cyber security and cyber-related technologies.

Reginald D. Hyde, former deputy undersecretary of defense for intelligence and security in the U.S. Department of Defense, was announced on Tuesday as the executive director of the institute, having previously served as director of UA's Cyber Security Initiative that preceded it.

"The Cyber Institute and Reg Hyde's leadership will propel not only the university's priorities, but our collaborative interactions across our state and nationally," UA Vice President for Research Carl Pinkert said in comments released by UA.

Hyde will report to Pinkert. Hyde's association with the project began with a visit to his alma mater in 2012. As then-deputy undersecretary of defense for intelligence and security, Hyde came to campus to give classroom talks to students during homecoming week.

Subsequently, the university asked Hyde, who earned his bachelor's degree in economics and his law degree from UA, to be involved in an advisory group about the cyber initiative.

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Hyde described his background in government and the private sector — both of which included significant cyber experience — as attractive to the university.

Hyde retired from his Department of Defense post in May 2013, citing the pending spending cuts under sequestration and a long career in government.

The cyber initiative at UA offered a way to use his expertise and a return to Tuscaloosa that was attractive to the UA alumni.

"The university has been like a second home for me," Hyde said.

The UA board of trustees voted to establish the University of Alabama Cyber Institute at its April meeting. The total salaries for institute staff would be about $285,000.

Among the aims laid out in the packet presented to the trustees was formalizing the institute as a research center to allow UA to increase visibility in the national and international community and enhance its ability to expand research opportunities.

UA has had an interest in cyber security research since at least the early 1990s, according to Pinkert.

But within the last two years, UA decided it needed an interdisciplinary approach to cyber education, research and security.

The goal is for UA to leverage its strengths and move into a leadership role in terms of the technology.

"We are not looking to create empires," Hyde said, adding the vision was never a center full of massive servers and a large staff of researchers.

"Mostly what we are doing is trying to help the existing programs on campus," Hyde said.

Hyde argued cyber-related problems shouldn't be considered narrowly as computer science problems, but as technology that can be applied to solve an array of human problems. The hope is that cyber technology can be approached as a Swiss Army knife with applications for a variety of challenges, according to Hyde.

The institute will collaborate with other universities, the government and private sector industries.

The Cyber Institute is officially partnered with UA's
Center for Advanced Public Safety of the College of Engineering, the chief information officer and the Office of Information Technology.

In the immediate future, the center will continue to work on fostering communication on campus, working with colleges to build cyber capabilities, research and curriculum, Hyde said. The center will also work on building partnerships with other universities, industries and government agencies.

UA is a member of the Alabama Cyber Research Consortium, a partnership formed last year that includes the state's six other PhD-granting universities.

Hyde said the center is working on plans for a cyber-security curriculum but said it is premature to discuss specifics.

"Across the university we are looking at enlarging our curriculum," Hyde said.

Hyde said the university is still working on where the institute will be housed.

The center will seek a broad variety of grants, including National Science Foundation funding, Hyde said.

The center will have a core executive staff of about four. It also will have affiliate faculty from departments campus-wide. Hyde estimated that there are about 40 to 55 faculty with a key interest in technology related to cyber security.

"We have a tremendous amount of expertise on campus in a number of areas," he said.

With the growing automation and use of computers, there is a growing interest in security, according to Hyde.

Considering the financial impact of cyber crime losses — estimated globally to be between $445 billion and $1 trillion annually — and the potential of the technology to solve problems, the university decided to create a multidisciplinary approach, Hyde said.

"In the U.S., we face a tremendous asymmetrical threat in the cyber side," Hyde said.

Hyde said the financial sector, critical infrastructure and "vast other areas" including the defense industrial base are areas of concern as targets of attacks and espionage.

It's the challenge of matching problems in a variety of fields with the expertise and research to help find a solution.

"It really is a sort of broad swath and very exciting," Hyde said.
UA unveils its ‘cleanest room’

Research at Microfabrication Facility will focus on boosting memory on hard drives

By Caroline Gazzara
Special to The Tuscaloosa News

The University of Alabama engineering department on Tuesday revealed a new site for its Microfabrication Facility, which will be used for research to improve technology by increasing the memory capacity of computer hard drives.

The state-of-the-art, 7,111-square-foot facility was previously housed in two other sites on campus before finding permanent space in the North Engineering Research Center.

"What we are doing is making tiny devices, and these can be applied toward solar cells, they can be applied to semi-conductor chips, they can be applied toward the guts of a computer disk drive and other unique and interesting things like that," said Subhada Gupta, director of the Microfabrication Facility since 2007. Gupta oversees graduate and undergraduate students.

Dubbed the “Cleanest Room” at UA, the facility houses three bays where machines work with ultraviolet light to deposit film and etch out patterns onto silicon wafers. The room is kept at maximum cleanliness to preserve the wafers from corruption from dust particles.

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A state-of-the-art, 7,111-square-foot Microfabrication Facility is in the North Engineering Research Center at the University of Alabama. This photo shows the Etch Bay Class 1000 section. For more photos of the facility, visit www.tuscaloosanews.com.
CLEAN

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Gupta said it’s vital to keep things clean.

“One micro device can be destroyed by a dust particle,” Gupta said. “So if a dust particle lands that’s half a micrometer in size on top of one of these devices, it could wipe it out. So it’s very important to clean the photolithography area where we pattern with light. It’s actually a Class-100 area, which means there are less than 100 particles half a micrometer in size per one cubic foot of space.”

The photolithography bay is part of the three-bay system that prepares the wafer with a thin filament before it goes through the etching process. The other two bays, deposition and etching, are the next two steps that lay out the pattern with metals and then etch out the patterns.

Gupta said the increase in space provided by the new facility will help out the program greatly.

“The differences with this facility is that is has much more space, it’s much better laid out and we’re able to service our equipment much better,” Gupta said. “Also, the people that will be working in there will be much more comfortable because they have much more space to work in.”

Students and researchers are required to wear protective gear over their clothes, shoes, hands and face to prevent any dirt or pollen from entering the facility. Billy Clark, graduate student who has been with the program since 2008, said that the program has been working toward researching and improving the engineering field.

The program is among 13 other university programs in the country looking to improve hard drive memory.
3 UA physicists get funding for research

Scientists to take part in international dark matter experiment

"No one knows what dark matter is. We don't know what the universe is made of, so to say."

Dr. Andreas Piepke

"It's an unknown, a challenge for modern science," said Dr. Andreas Piepke, one of the researchers.

The experiment, known as the Lux-Zepelin, or LZ, experiment, involves dozens of researchers and is led by the Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory, a national lab supported by the U.S. Department of Energy. Among the researchers are the three UA physicists, a team composed of Piepke, Dr. Jerry Busenitz and Dr. Ion Stancu.

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RESEARCH

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The most popularly accepted theory to explain the universe relies on dark matter, Piepke said. There are some gravitational forces, he said, that can't be attributed to visible matter. Dark matter, unseen to the world and not yet proven to exist, would fill in the gap in the theory.

"No one knows what dark matter is," Piepke said. "We don't know what the universe is made of, so to say."

This dark matter, he said, would be all around us, forming what he calls a "cosmological soup" that makes up about 27 percent of the universe's mass — a far higher percentage than that made up by the matter we see around us.

The LZ experiment aims to spot collisions between dark matter particles and atoms of a heavy element called xenon, Piepke said. A team of researchers will monitor 7 tons of this liquid xenon with a particle detector for at least four years, he said.

They hope to witness a "weakly interacting massive particle," or WIMP — one potential type of dark matter particle — crash into an atom of xenon and leave the xenon with a new, measurable, energy deposit.

This experiment will take place nearly a mile underground in a former gold mine, now the Sanford Underground Research Facility in South Dakota, Piepke said.

Scientists have been conducting experiments like these since the early 1990s, he said, and as of yet there has been no evidence of these reactions.

Dark matter may elude scientists because it does not react with light and has no electrical charge, making it hard to detect. But it also slips by because of its weakly interacting nature.

If dark matter were all around us, Piepke said, the only way we could fail to notice its effects on earth is if it were very weak.

"We are submerged in it," Piepke said. "But it has very little interaction with ordinary matter."

As a result, it's unlikely that the WIMPs would react with the xenon, Busenitz said.

"It'll just pass through because it's so weakly interacting," he said. "So if this process occurs, it's going to occur very rarely."

Because of this, he said, they could be collecting data for a few years and only get a handful of these collisions.

The small number of collisions means it is essential there are very few of the more commonplace reactions that would trigger false results.

This is where the UA physicists come in.

Their primary job is to screen potential materials to be used in the detector for naturally occurring radiation.

"The problem is that you build the detector out of real things," Busenitz said. "They could contain a lot of radioactive materials, and if you're
not careful they will emit particles that will mimic the same kind of reactions we would expect.

They are also working to try to predict how much background radioactivity to expect so they can read the results more easily, Stancu said.

"You cannot fully eliminate it, but you want to minimize it as much as possible and predict how much there will be," he said of the naturally occurring radiation.

Several teams from other universities are also involved in the screening process, simply because of the sheer number of screening measurements that need to be made, Busenitz said.

The three physicists collaborate on the project, but they also have their own responsibilities and areas of expertise.

Piepke is leading an effort to custom-make a substance that would be used to test the detector before it begins collecting data.

Stancu is also separately leading a task force to create criteria for centers that will store and process the experiment's data.

In April, these three researchers received funding from the Department of Energy and the National Science Foundation to cement their role in the project. They had joined the project already in 2012 with the caveat that they must acquire their own funding.

They applied for funding in 2013 and received it in 2014. This is the standard funding cycle for the DOE, Piepke said.

"We have a long track record of getting funding from the Department of Energy and National Science Foundation," he said. "Our experiences and skills allowed us to persuade the DOE and NSF to give us funding to participate."

The three physicists will continue to be involved in the experiment for years to come. The team of scientists is expected to begin building the detector in 2016 and finish in 2018, when they'll start collecting data. The UA researchers will travel to the lab in South Dakota, where they will help install the detector and return often to help operate it.

"This is one of the hot areas in physics, Piepke said. "It is a big thing for the future, something that will keep us occupied for some time to come."
Accounting report ranks UA programs nationally

Public Accounting Report, an accounting profession newsletter, ranked the University of Alabama's Culverhouse School of Accountancy's undergraduate and master's programs eighth in the nation and its doctoral program 12th nationally.

The report released this month was based on a survey of the nation's accounting professors.

UA's three accounting degrees increased in the rankings by at least 12 spots from the report's 2013 survey results.
Needy get stadium's leftover food

UA's Greek organizations help package meals for West Alabama Food Bank to distribute

By Angel Coker
Staff Writer

As fans file out of Bryant-Denny Stadium on fall football Saturdays, Phi Gamma Delta fraternity brothers and Alpha Gamma Delta sorority sisters work their way through the crowd back into the stadium to package leftover food to send to the West Alabama Food Bank.

The sorority and fraternity partnered with the food bank to create the Fifth Quarter Program, a food salvage project which will kick off its third year after the Alabama-Florida Atlantic game on Saturday at Bryant-Denny Stadium.

Clad in plastic gloves and aprons to cover their game-day dresses and collared shirts, about 20 volunteers will divide between two windowless rooms — one in each zone — and begin scooping hamburgers, pulled pork, sliced beef, potatoes, chili, soups and other buffet-style foods into bags.

"I love how hands-on we get to be in our community," said Shae Tate, Fifth Quarter chairwoman for Alpha Gamma Delta. "Fifth Quarter is not one of those philanthropies where sending a check in the mail will suffice. Us taking an extra hour or so after a home football game to package up a little leftover but delicious food leads to someone having a meal."
FOOD

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meal for that week."

The food comes from vendors who have catering contracts with Crimson Tide Hospitality to feed football fans in the north and south zones and the skyboxes, said Henry Lipsey, director of the West Alabama Food Bank. He said the amount of food made is based on how many tickets are sold for that game.

"They have no way to judge how many people are going to show up, and they have no way of judging how much food they're going to eat," Lipsey said.

He said the vendors deliver about 2,000 pounds of leftover food after each game, all of which has never gone out to service. The food goes straight from the kitchen to the packaging rooms.

Lipsey said the volunteers package the food in plastic bags that are then vacuum-sealed, labeled and sorted into boxes before being transported to the food bank freezer. On Monday, it is distributed among the food bank's agencies in its nine-county coverage area. The food goes to group homes, halfway houses, elderly homes and other agencies that cook on a daily basis, or the mobile food pantry, where the food bank goes into a neighborhood and hands out food, he said.

"It's all going back into our local area. Most of it is going back into Tuscaloosa County," Lipsey said. "Thousands of people have eaten some of that food."

Dean Azar, the brain behind the program and whose sons were active members of Phi Gamma Delta, said he researched how much food one person eats in one meal, which is about 13 ounces. He said 11,202 pounds of food was saved in 2012, and 14,803 pounds was saved in 2013 totaling 26,005 pounds.

He said 26,005 pounds of food would provide over 32,000 meals.

The program also receives food after basketball games and gymnastics meets.

"It is crazy to think about all the food we have saved in the past couple of years before it was just thrown away," Tate said.

Lipsey said to pay for materials, food transportation, vacuum-seal machines and employee salaries, "it costs the food bank about $600 per game to pull this off."

To become a Fifth Quarter Program sponsor, contact the West Alabama Food Bank office at 205-333-5353.
Students to intern at Walter Reed

New social work program is designed for undergraduates

By Ed Enoch
Staff Writer

Senior Shankitta Brown and four other University of Alabama students will spend the fall semester at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center as the first interns in a new undergraduate social work program at the facility in Bethesda, Md.

The program launched this year is the first for undergraduates majoring in social work anywhere in the Department of Defense.

Brown, 21, of York is joined by Caroline Miller of Charlotte, N.C.; Stephanie Craig of Pace, Fla.; Nicholas Marshalek of Flower Mound, Texas; and Keri Warren of Decatur.

The internship, which began Aug. 20, will last the entire fall semester.

The first week has been training and orientation as the students prepare to begin work with their supervisors, Brown said.

The interns are paired with supervisors at the medical center based on their interests. Brown said the students will spend roughly half their time with each supervisor during the internship.

Brown is working with transplant and dialysis patients, but will

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begin working with neurosurgery and cardiothoracic surgery.

The students will participate in a rotation at the hospital, gaining experience in medical social work, group work, multi-disciplinary treatment team participation, care coordination and referral, crisis intervention, administrative and policy implementation, risk assessment, as well as service learning opportunities, said Carroll Phelps, the coordinator for the UA School of Social Work’s Washington, D.C., internship programs.

“At the beginning, they are learning ... by mid semester they are beginning to act completely autonomously and carry a caseload,” Phelps said.

The students will have direct contact with patients and their families. Most patients are active duty military personnel and their families, Phelps said.

(Walter Reed) has put together the rotation program to offer comprehensive experience with many different facets of social workers,” Phelps said.

The students will work full time at Walter Reed and also participate in a seminar class taught in the capital by Phelps.

The Walter Reed program will join other internship opportunities, which undergraduate students in the program typically complete in the fall semester of their senior year, said Javonda Williams, chair of the BSW program at the UA School of Social Work. The students are required to have 450 hours of practicum or internships or field education.

The choice of UA to launch the new internship program came as a surprise to the school, according to the women.

“We are very honored to have been asked by Walter Reed,” Phelps said.

Phelps was contacted in February by Walter Reed officials about launching a bachelor of social work internship program at the hospital.

“The reason they did that is because our MSW program has a long history of internships at the hospital,” Phelps said.

UA’s 35-year-old internship program for graduate students has been sending students to work at the hospital and other agencies in the capital for years.

“We were delighted that Walter Reed felt our students were well-prepared,” Phelps said.

The students were interviewed and selected from a pool of 25 students in March by Williams, Phelps and fellow faculty member Debra Nelson-Gardell. The students were also interviewed by staff at the medical center as part of security checks for clearance to work at the hospital.

The school decided to select honors students for the first year because they wanted students with a strong history of academic success who the faculty felt would be most likely to be successful, said Williams, chair of the undergraduate social work program.

Internships will help prepare them to be versatile as social workers when they graduate, she said.

“The students get a really broad and sound educational experience because they are exposed to so many different experiences,” Phelps said.

While the masters programs help students specialize, the undergraduate programs produce generalists who might work in a variety of jobs. The internships offer the undergraduates from UA valuable practice as they prepare to graduate.

“We are going to have a great need for social workers going forward. (Walter Reed) wanted to be certain undergrad students get trained just like masters students,” Phelps said.
Fans to experience Gameday upgrades this week

Attendees of Saturday’s home football game to see $2.5M in changes in, around stadium

By Ed Enoch
Staff Writer

Football fans will see upgrades at concession stands in Bryant-Denny Stadium and few changes for campus tailgating when the University of Alabama Crimson Tide faces Florida Atlantic University for the first 2014 home game on Saturday.

“It’s almost like going to a movie theater,” Milton Overton, senior associate athletics director, said about the concession upgrades.

The concession upgrades are part of a host of changes at the stadium that include new ticket options, an expanded fan zone and connectivity upgrades by cellular providers.

In June, the university’s trustees approved spending roughly $2.5 million on upgrades to the concession stands and concourses of the stadium. The upgrades include 246 TVs and digital signs and 300 point-of-sales terminals.

The new equipment is expected to speed concession purchases for fans and allow them to follow Alabama home games and other matchups while they wait, Overton said. The new sales terminals will allow fans to use cash, credit or Bama Cash.

“Now you can do cash and credit cards anywhere,” he said.

The TVs in the stadium will offer more highlights from SEC and other games, along with scores and other information.

“We are going to make it more like a home viewing experience in the stadium,” Overton said.

Overton said there have also been updates to the stadium’s cellular networks by providers based on fan survey responses about connectivity — or lack thereof — in the stadium. Verizon and AT&T added additional 4G LTE cellular network equipment.

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GAMEDAY

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at the stadium this summer, he said.

"Based on your device, you should have better connectivity," Overton said.

The stadium staff will also rotate more musical content and be allowed to play music on the sound system between plays following an SEC rule change.

Overton said the changes were driven by surveys of season ticket holders, students and other fans conducted periodically throughout the year.

"We are really looking at data and letting fans make the decisions," he said.

Overton highlighted the launch of the value ticket program, which adds $10 to tickets that can be used for concessions or merchandise. Another option offered this year was a flash sale, a $35 discounted ticket for seats in the upper decks for the Florida Atlantic matchup. Overton said the department is considering a similar sale for the home game against the University of Western Carolina on Nov. 22.

The fan zones adjacent to the Walk of Champions will include the Coca-Cola Kick-Off Zone and the Mercedes-Benz Fan Fest. The zones open four hours before kickoff and feature the Crimson Tide Sports Network Radio Show, autograph sessions, food, inflatables for children and giveaways.

"It's really a family-friendly zone, more so than you have seen in the past," Overton said.

Fans tailgating on the UA campus won't see many changes, according to Virginia Johnson, associate vice president in the division of financial affairs, auxiliary and support services.

There will be more space available on the east side of the Quad following a move by the Crimson Tide Sports Marketing activities to the corner of University Boulevard and Wallace Wade Avenue.

The SPU Store tent location is also moving up to University Boulevard, she said.

The university is re-emphasisng no vehicles or trailers on the promenade following recent renovations to the Ferguson Center and its surrounding landscaping.

"That area is pretty sensitive right now. We just got sod in there," Johnson said.

The university said no vehicles or trailers will be permitted to enter or park on the Promenade. Fans can still picnic in the area and use pop-up tents. The standard Quad drop-off procedures should be used to unload supplies for the Promenade.

UA is also requesting fans not park in the areas in front of the new Fresh Food Co. and Hackberry Park location at the corner of Hackberry Lane and Margaret Drive, areas the university has added bollards as part of a beautification process.

Regular fans won't see any disruptions to parking, though construction near Coleman Coliseum will displace some Tide Pride fans, who will be parking at an alternative site at Central High School, Johnson said.

The university has updated its event and parking reservation software after issues last year with fans having to register for each game, Johnson said. The new software allows fans to create permanent accounts and purchase passes per game or for the season. Parking passes may be purchased online through the UA Gameday website.

Johnson said there were no major changes for RV parking.

She did stress tailgaters cooking with open flames need to bring household fire extinguishers as part of their equipment.

Johnson also noted road construction at exit 79 on U.S. Interstate 20/59, which could cause delays as crews begin work later in the season to widen the interstate. In Tuscaloosa, there are ongoing resurfacing projects that the university encourages fans to be mindful of when traveling for home games, Johnson said.

Reach Ed Enoch at ed.enoch@tuscaloosanews.com or 205-722-0209.
Roads shouldn't hamper UA fans

Construction could affect games later in the year, though

By Jason Morton
Staff Writer

Road work shouldn't hamper football fans traveling to Tuscaloosa this weekend, Alabama Department of Transportation officials said.

Future football weekends could have a potential snag here or there, but fans coming into town for the University of Alabama's home opener against Florida Atlantic University should have clear sailing on ALDOT-controlled roads.

"We do not anticipate any road work which would affect traffic in the Tuscaloosa area this weekend," said David Hand, assistant engineer for construction of ALDOT's Fifth Division, which includes Tuscaloosa.

And the university has updated its event and parking reservation software for when fans arrive.

The new software allows fans to create permanent accounts and purchase passes per game or for the season through the UA GameDay website, www.UAGameday.com.

No major changes, however, have been added for RV parking.

As for interstate construction work planned for later this year, ALDOT has met with university officials to work on a potential game plan.

"Concerning future weekends, we met with UA officials a few months ago to discuss the effects of our projects on game-day traffic," Hand said. "Our larger projects are scheduled to minimize..."
ROADS

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1A

traffic delays during these periods. Updates on delays or road blockages also can be found at the UA Gameday website under the “Traffic Flow” section or its Facebook (facebook.com/UAgameday) or Twitter (twitter.com/uagameday) pages.

Also, anyone in the U.S. can receive tweets on their phone even if they haven't signed up for Twitter, which simplifies the way motorists can get game-day traffic information in real time. To get tweets from UA Gameday (@uagameday), text “follow uagameday” to 40404, but know that data and text charges may apply.

Future roadwork

While an original 8.8-mile construction plan to widen both sides of the interstate between Exit 73 at McFarland Boulevard and mile marker 81 near Cottondale was supposed to go to construction in 2013, it was delayed after bids came in above the $29 million cost estimate.

The work is now planned for three stages, with $29.4 million in construction work expected to get under way between Exit 79 and the Keenes Mill Road overpass before the football season ends.

“We do expect the interstate widening work in the Coaling area to begin within the next few weeks,” Hand said. “But there will still be four lanes open to traffic during peak hours.”

Additional stages will widen the interstate between Butter-milk Road and Exit 79 in 2015. The third and final stage — McFarland Boulevard and Exit 77 at Buttermilk Road — is expected to go out to bid in December 2017.

For those who rely on Interstate 359, a $4.425 million resurfacing project is also expected to be under way before Alabama's final home game with cross-state rival Auburn on Nov. 29.

This work will resurface I-359 from its I-20/59 interchange to 15th Street and help alleviate the damage brought by last year's unexpectedly harsh winter.

ALDOT officials have said that multiple freeze-thaw cycles — freezing water expands and breaks pavement apart, then it thaws and flows into a new area, only to refreeze again to continue the cycle — contributed to a higher level of road degradation than is typically experienced in this part of Alabama.

“We anticipate resurfacing work on I-359 to begin within a few weeks,” Hand said. “It is our goal to minimize traffic delays during this project as well.”

Another project that could slow game-day travelers is a mile-long widening of U.S. Highway 11 near the Cottondale and Coaling Exit 79, but L. Dee Rowe, chief engineer of the Alabama Department of Transportation’s Fifth Division, said this work isn’t expected to start for another three weeks.

This means it could be under way by the Sept. 20 game against the University of Florida. If not, Alabama game-day travelers won't be affected by this construction until the Oct. 18 game against the Aggies of Texas A&M.

Either way, lanes will be open in both directions, Rowe said.

But it appears that a concern voiced by city officials in recent weeks will not become reality.

Hand said the anticipated improvement and widening project for McFarland Boulevard between 13th and 15th streets should not begin until after the regular season ends on Nov. 29.

This project was let for bid on July 25 and ALDOT received one bid. This allowed state transportation officials to negotiate a $5.9 million agreement with construction company Lcarus Inc.

The city of Tuscaloosa will cover 20 percent of the construction and utility relocation costs.

The contract will contain a 180 calendar-day provision that allows the contractor additional time at the beginning of the project for the procurement of materials.

“So... it is likely to be a few months before the main work begins on the project,” Hand said last month.
HOOVER

Free-standing ER stands to be historic one

It's more than just a free-standing emergency department.

The $13.5 million emergency care center at the southwest corner of Interstate 459 and John Hawkins Parkway will be the first free-standing ER in Alabama and, more importantly, will help fill a void for medical care in the growing city of Hoover.

UAB Medical West, an affiliate of the UAB Health System, held a ceremonial groundbreaking Thursday for the project. The 24,342-square-foot emergency center will include 10 exam rooms (including two trauma rooms) and CT, X-ray, ultrasound, EKG and other diagnostic and lab equipment.

READ THE FULL REPORT . 3
FILLING A VOID

Jon Anderson  
janderson@al.com

UAB Medical West's new freestanding emergency department should greatly improve the speed Hoover residents receive emergency care.

So said Hoover Executive Director Allen Pate at Thursday morning's groundbreaking for the $13.5 million center at the southwest corner of Interstate 459 and John Hawkins Parkway, across from The Grove shopping center.

Some history: The facility will be the first free-standing ER in Alabama.

More importantly, it will help fill a void for medical care in the growing city of Hoover, said Medical West CEO and President Keith Pennington.

Pate, who has served on the board of directors for Medical West's hospital in Bessemer since 2002, agrees.

"A lot of people like to point out things that Hoover has that other cities don't have, but there are some things that other communities have that Hoover would like to have," Pate said.

"We would love to have a hospital in our city," Pate said, noting that Hoover is the only city in Alabama with a population of more than 60,000 residents but without a hospital.

But Medical West's full-service ER is a great step forward in improving access to emergency care, he said.

Hoover paramedics in the past year answered about 6,600 medical calls, and about 5,000 people were taken to other facilities for further medical care, including about 4,800 by ambulance, Pate said.

The city's paramedics have an excellent response time in getting to patients, but the time it takes to get patients to a hospital for treatment probably would be rated only good, Pate said.

"With this ER being here, we're hoping to be able to elevate that to excellent status," he said.

More than 100 people came to the groundbreaking in Hoover on Thursday. (Jon Anderson/janderson@al.com)

William Ferniani, CEO of the UAB Health System, the parent company of Medical West, said when he moved back to the Birmingham area 16 years ago, he was amazed at the growth of the Academy Drive 1-20/59 exit in Bessemer and the growth along the Interstate 459 corridor.

"I do believe that this area — the Hoover area and western area — is where the future lies," Ferniani said.
A CLOSER LOOK

Here’s what can be expected of the new $13.5 million emergency care center when it opens at the southwest corner of Interstate 459 and John Hawkins Parkway:

- The 24,342-square-foot emergency center will include 10 exam rooms (including two trauma rooms) and CT, X-ray, ultrasound, electrocardiogram and other diagnostic and lab equipment.
- It will be a Level 3 trauma center, which is equivalent to any hospital emergency room in the Birmingham-metro area except UAB Hospital, which is a Level 1 center.
- Medical West expects to treat 40 to 50 patients a day, or 12,000 to 15,000 patients a year at the facility.
- Any patients in need of invasive surgery or hospitalization will be stabilized at the Hoover site and then taken to a hospital by ambulance.
- There will be a heliport for helicopter transportation for patients with more severe injuries.
- The projected opening date is spring 2015.
- The freestanding ER will sit on 3 acres that are part of a 14-acre tract being developed by Hoover Investment Partners, which is affiliated with GBT Realty out of Nashville. That development is set to include a specialty grocery store, as well as a McDonald’s, Starbucks, Jimmy Johns gourmet sandwich shop and a nail salon, according to GBT’s website. Hoover officials have identified the grocery store as a Sprouts. Sprouts confirmed it is coming to the Birmingham-Hoover market but has not yet confirmed that specific site.

Source: Medical West
Beyond booze, bite blocks: 'Horrendous' Civil War pushed surgeons to use anesthesia, says UAB doc
By: Jesse Chambers

The Civil War was by the far the bloodiest in American history, with one recent estimate putting the number of dead as high as 750,000.

And for the many wounded, the field hospitals on both sides were often horrific, with a lack of supplies and a startling number of infections and amputations.

However, the huge number of battlefield injuries and the other horrors of the war played a major role in establishing the regular use of anesthesia in the United States, in part because of the experience gained with it during the conflict by the roughly 15,000 Union and Confederate doctors, according to Dr. Maurice S. Albin, a professor in the Department of Anesthesiology at The University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB).

Albin shared his findings in an article, "The Civil War (1861-1865) and the Familiarization of American Medicine with Anesthesia and Anesthetics," in the July issue of the newsletter of the American Society of Anesthesiologists.

"One can note that the first-hand exposure to anesthetic agents and techniques, as well as to their side effects and complications, gave these physicians an insight into the world of anesthesia that might never have been possible without this conflagration occurring, whose sesquicentennial we now celebrate," he said.

Anesthesia was not commonly used prior to the war, despite the fact that the use of such agents as ether and chloroform was first described in the 1840s by several American physicians, according to Albin.

"Prior to the war, alcoholic drinks, physical restraints, opioid drugs and bite blocks were the most typically employed methods of keeping a patient under control during surgery," Albin said. "It was thought to be unmanly for a male to undergo surgery with an anesthetic, which was usually reserved for women and children."

However, anesthesia was used about 120,000 times in the military hospitals, according to Albin. After the end of "this horrendous conflict," he said, many of these doctors took their new knowledge back to their civilian practices.

UAB created the world's first academic anesthesiology history unit in 2002 with the development of the David Hill Chestnut, M.D., Section on the History of Anesthesia, according to a UAB news release.
UAB boasts largest season-opening home crowd Saturday in Conference USA

By: Solomon Crenshaw

Among the five Conference USA schools that hosted games during the first week of play UAB the boasted highest attendance with an announced crowd of 27,133 for Saturday's 48-10 victory over Troy, well ahead of second-place Old Dominion (20,118).

It was also a significant increase above last season's average announced attendance of fewer than 12,000 fans, the second-lowest among 128 Football Bowl Subdivision teams, and the lowest since 1995, when UAB played as a Division I-AA school. Only Eastern Michigan (4,051) drew fewer fans last season, according to the NCAA.

"Our crowd has been maligned but it was great to see," head coach Bill Clark said on Monday.

In 2012, UAB had an announced average crowd of 15,271.

Rounding out other C-USA first-week hosts, Western Kentucky drew 17,215, Middle Tennessee 15,605 and FIU 14,053.
Study: The Lower Troposphere Has Not Warmed In The Last 26 Years
By: Michael Bastasch

The nearly two-decade long pause in global warming may just be the tip of the iceberg for evidence against anthropogenic climate change. A new paper found that temperatures in the lower troposphere have not shown a warming trend in as many as 26 years.

“In the surface data we compute a hiatus length of 19 years, and in the lower tropospheric data we compute a hiatus length of 16 years... and 26 years” according to Dr. Ross McKitrick of the economics department at the University of Guelph in Canada.

McKitrick looked at two different satellite data sets in his research on tropospheric temperature trends. Satellites don’t directly measure temperatures — they measure radiances in wavelength bands, which scientists then convert into data. Satellite data from the the University of Alabama, Huntsville showed that the lower troposphere has not warmed in the last 16 years. Satellite data from the Remote Sensing Systems series shows lower tropospheric temperatures have not risen in the last 26 years.

McKitrick’s study used a method that he says is “robust” when it comes to “heteroskedasticity and autocorrelation,” as well as cherry-picking of beginning and endpoints that present biased temperature trends. He found that the lower troposphere stopped warming between 16 and 26 years ago, and that surface temperatures have been flat for the past 19 years.

“Application of the method shows that there is now a trendless interval of 19 years duration at the end of the HadCRUT4 surface temperature series, and of 16 – 26 years in the lower troposphere,” reads McKitrick’s study, which was published in the Open Journal of Statistics.

News of the pause in global warming has baffled climate scientists and reignited debates over the dangers of global warming. Scientists have offered a wide range of explanations for why global temperatures have been flat for nearly two decades, including ocean oscillation cycles and increased volcanic activity.

The United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, however, has written off the pause in global warming and does not even estimate how long global temperatures have been flat — though scientists generally say it’s lasted between 15 and 20 years.

Despite the pause, the IPCC’s latest climate report continues to sound the alarm on global warming.

“Human influence has been detected in warming of the atmosphere and the ocean, in changes in the global water cycle, in reduction in snow and ice, and in global mean-sea-level rise; and it is extremely likely to have been the dominant cause of the observed warming since the mid-20th century,” reads a draft Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report obtained by The New York Times.

“The risk of abrupt and irreversible change increases as the magnitude of the warming increases,” the draft report reads.

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Since 1990, carbon dioxide levels in the atmosphere have climbed 13 percent, from 354 parts per million to just under 400 parts per million. The early 1990s saw global temperatures rise, but that rise stopped late in the same decade and it has not trended upward since.

This is not McKitrick’s first foray into examining temperature trends. He published a paper in late July that found that climate models used by scientists and governments may have been overestimating tropical tropospheric warming for the past 55 years.

McKitrick found that from “1958 to 2012, climate models not only significantly over-predict observed warming in the tropical troposphere, but they represent it in a fundamentally different way than is observed.”

Update: The troposphere is the lowest portion of the Earth’s atmosphere. Wikipedia says the “lowest part of the troposphere, where friction with the Earth’s surface influences air flow, is the planetary boundary layer... The word troposphere derives from the Greek: tropos for “change” reflecting the fact that turbulent mixing plays an important role in the troposphere’s structure and behaviour. Most of the phenomena we associate with day-to-day weather occur in the troposphere.”
Scientists' Work May Lead To Mission To Find Out What's Inside Asteroids

Future asteroid mining operations and how we deal with an impending strike could be influenced by research on a potential NASA mission that's being done by team that includes a University of Alabama in Huntsville (UAH) scientist.

"If you identify an asteroid coming toward us, how you deal with it could depend on its density and structure," says Dr. Richard S. Miller, a UAH physics professor. "Likewise, if this technique pans out, you could imagine sending out a specialized telescope to determine what the densities and interior structure of various asteroids are, then decide on the basis of that information what ones to mine."

Little is now known about asteroid interior density and composition. Are they uniform or are they what astrophysicists call differentiated bodies, having denser and less-dense areas?

"Asteroids are time capsules of the early solar system," Dr. Miller says. "We know about their surface properties and we can also infer the mass of some asteroids. But what we want to do is actually probe the interior of asteroids and determine information about their structure, are there interior density gradients, what is the composition - is it solid or like Swiss cheese - and do they have cores or not? Is it a pile of rubble? It turns out this structure can tell us a great deal about the conditions present during the early epochs of solar system formation and its evolution."

To find that out, the team's scientists will be borrowing imaging technology concepts developed for medicine and high-energy physics. They are developing a mission concept to probe asteroids using a technique similar to human computerized tomography (CT) scans. Dr. Miller is a co-investigator in a collaborative effort with the Planetary Science Institute (PSI), NASA's Johnson Space Center, the Universities Space Research Association's Arecibo Observatory (Arecibo/USRA) and the University of Houston to do the fundamental research and design that could lead to such a mission.

Led by principal investigator Dr. Tom Prettyman, senior scientist at PSI, the group has $500,000 in funding from the NASA Innovative Advanced Concepts (NIAC) Phase II program. The team's two-year proposal, "Deep Mapping of Small Solar System Bodies with Galactic Cosmic Ray Secondary Particle Showers," is one of only five projects selected for funding. Other funded collaborators include Dr. Steven Koontz, NASA Johnson Space Center; Dr. Michael Nolan, Arecibo/USRA; Dr. Lawrence Pinsky, University of Houston; and Dr. Mark Sykes, PSI.

The team proposes using ever-present cosmic rays to perform its measurements. All objects in space are constantly bombarded by these particles, which are thought to be the remnants of massive supernovas and are primarily protons. On Earth, the atmosphere breaks them up and shields us from direct hits.

"In space, on contact with dense matter like the moon's surface or other airless planetary bodies, they interact within the first few centimeters of depth and create a shower of particles," Dr. Miller says. "Studying those interactions has provided us surface knowledge of asteroids. But cosmic rays also contain muons, which are particles similar to electrons, but which can go a lot farther into the asteroid, in some cases up to one kilometer."

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The idea is to position a telescope to orbit the asteroid and measure the number and trajectories of the muons passing through it.

"Muons are like an SUV," says Dr. Miller. "Once they are moving it is not easy to knock them off their course."

An asteroid composed of varying densities of material would return a different pattern than one with a single density, just as a CT scan differentiates between densities of structures in the body. Likewise, if an asteroid has a denser core, it will stop muons from passing through and the telescope will detect the change. That process is called muon tomography and is well understood. Developed in the 1950s, it was even used in the 1960s by Luis Alvarez to map the Pyramid of Chephren.

"What's different about a CT scan is that instead of using cosmic rays and muons to determine densities, a CT scan uses x-rays," Dr. Miller says.

To mature the concept, the scientists must first solve a number of fundamental challenges. They'll be using computer modeling to work on:

- Detailed estimates of the particle signatures, including muons and other radiations that will be present in deep space and in the neighborhood of any asteroids;
- Doing the initial work on the muon telescope's design and operation. There are competing ideas, and the team will evaluate a variety of performance tradeoffs;
- The development and implementation of advanced algorithms for asteroid structure reconstruction;
- Establishing the preliminary outlines of how a proposed NASA mission would be conducted, its feasibility and making predictions of the ultimate science return.

"What it has to do is detect those muons and give us a direction they are coming from," Dr. Miller says of the telescope, but getting to that goal involves tradeoffs.

For example, the bigger the area the telescope can scan as it orbits, the less time it will take to get results encompassing an entire asteroid being studied. But the greater the telescope's size, the more resources will be involved to launch the mission. Also, to tell where the muons are coming from, the telescope will have to be able to tell directional "up" from "down."

Dr. Miller says he was already exploring using muons to probe asteroids when he attended a conference and found that PSI's Dr. Prettyman was working on the same thing.

"This is a good story of how you had two independent groups who were both looking at the same idea," Dr. Miller says, "and we have joined forces to make a stronger project."
Safer credit cards may protect against breaches
By: Margo Gray

Home Depot is another major retailer to suffer a massive credit card breach. This comes after banks reporting the stolen information hitting the black market.

The retail giant is now working with banks and law enforcement to investigate the breach.

Hackers have mastered compromising the everyday person's debit and credit card.

Now they're looking at how they can tap in one time and walk away with information on millions.

You may have seen newer credit cards with a microchip on the outside which was already widely used in Europe.

It encrypts data differently for every transaction, which prevents fraud. Experts say it's harder to clone than a magnetic stripe card.

Dr. David Berkowitz is Professor of Marketing and Dean of Graduate Studies at The University of Alabama in Huntsville. He says that corporations need to pay attention to the breaches because it not only hurts the company's reputation, but their profits too.

"They are coming to the United States but it has its limitations. It's an RFID chip and it can also be hacked but then again the hacking there is also more at the individual level so it limits it to the individual rather than at the broader corporate side," said Berkowitz.
RENEWABLE ENERGY

Alabama may not yet be at the forefront of the renewable energy movement, but an Alabama A&M University mechanical engineering professor isn't waiting around.

Dr. Showkat Chowdhury, who's been teaching mechanical engineering at A&M for the past dozen years, has launched a new series of courses this fall term aimed at getting engineering students geared up in the basics of renewable energy technology.

Funded by a $300,000 National Science Foundation grant, the two new courses will ground A&M engineering students in the growing renewable energy field. They include:

- ME 441 Renewable Energy, a survey course touching on all renewable technologies: solar, wind, geothermal, biomass, and hydroelectric.
- ME 442, offered in Spring 2015, will take a deeper plunge into solar thermal, solar photovoltaic (i.e. solar electricity) and wind power.

Both courses will have additional work options for graduate students.

Mike Kelley
ASU to inaugurate first female president

MONTGOMERY | Alabama State University is holding a week of activities to celebrate the inaugural of its first female president.

Events began Sunday with a women's empowerment luncheon honoring President Gwendolyn Boyd.

The activities include a speech by former United Nations ambassador Andrew Young on Tuesday. On Thursday, former U.S. Sen. Carol Moseley Braun will appear at a luncheon.

Boyd is a Montgomery native who was working as an administrator at Johns Hopkins University before she was selected by Alabama State in December. She began work in February.

Boyd replaced Joseph Silver, who resigned in late 2012 after questioning financial practices at the university.

— From wire reports
‘Fear of retaliation is real’ at Athens St. Anonymous letters, survey raise concerns at university

By: Mary Sells

Anonymous letters sent to Athens State University board members raise a variety of concerns, from spending at the university to enrollment to a fear among faculty about speaking out publicly.

The Decatur Daily obtained two letters purportedly written by faculty or staff members. Members of the Board of Trustees and university President Bob Glenn have said they received letters listing complaints over the past six months, but they refuse to address them because they were made anonymously.

Some faculty members, upset about leadership at the two-year university, gave senior leadership a 26 percent approval rating. The administration gave itself an 87 percent rating. The faculty also ranked the school’s teaching environment at 37 percent and “job satisfaction/support” at 50 percent.

Board of Trustees Chairwoman Sandra Sims-deGraffenried said this week she plans to meet with the university’s Faculty Senate in October to discuss specific concerns.

One unsigned letter, dated Aug. 8, hit several topics, including what is alleged to be the administration’s unwillingness to address anonymous complaints.

“The fear of retaliation is real, and no reasonable person can expect anyone to risk losing his/her job,” it said.

Professor Robby White, the presiding officer of the Faculty Senate, said Thursday his biggest concern is a recent survey that shows low morale among faculty. He said he has never heard of a case of retaliation against a staff member for speaking out.

“But I know that perception exists,” said White, who has more than 20 years at the university.

“I think it is because of that perception that people have gone to the anonymous way of relaying information.”

He said he doesn’t like anonymous communication.

Glenn said Thursday anything in an anonymous letter should be considered “suspect,” but he answered questions about some of the points of contention.

They included:

Finances and declining enrollment.

According to numbers from the Alabama Commission on Higher Education, Athens had 3,624 students in the fall of 2010. In the fall of 2013, it had 3,175 students.

See next page
Glenn said enrollment is down across the board at the state’s two-year colleges, which feeds students to Athens to complete their degrees.

“When community college enrollments fall, our enrollment falls,” he said.

During the same period, Calhoun Community College’s enrollment dropped from 12,139 to 11,186.

The letter also mentions “careless expenditures” hurting school finances.

Provost’s home and other spending.

Besides questioning Athens’ financial commitment to the Alabama Center for the Arts in Decatur, where the university has spent about $3 million and committed another $3 million, the letter asked why a campus of about 3,000 students needs seven vice presidents.

It doesn’t, Glenn said. It has four.

The letter also questioned why the provost lives in an on-campus house, rent free.

Ronald Cromwell previously paid rent there, Glenn said, until a salary survey showed that he was paid less than other provosts at comparable institutions. For tax purposes, the value of the rent is added to Cromwell’s total compensation, and he pays taxes on it, Glenn said.

He said the house is nothing fancy and a rational person would look at it “to determine how much of a benefit it is.”

The letter also questioned the process used to review Glenn’s performance and his 2013 raise.

Glenn received a 14.9 percent salary increase last year and opted not to ask for one this year. He earns $200,000 a year, and his contract was extended last month by the board to 2016.

Also in July, the board approved a $29.5 million budget for fiscal 2015. Tuition will increase 7 percent.

Tuition increases from $167 to $179 per credit hour for traditional classes and from $240 to $257 per credit hour for online classes.

A second letter, unsigned and undated, goes after Cromwell, accusing him of working to create a “stripped down curriculum.”

Cromwell did not return a call to his office Thursday, but Glenn defended recent curriculum changes.

“We have some folks who are unhappy because we decided to standardize our programs at 124 credit hours,” he said. Some of the degrees had previously required 136 or 140 credit hours.

“Almost everyone in the country is graduating teachers at 124 hours,” Glenn said. “We didn’t think it was in students’ best interests or the university’s best interest to require more than anywhere else.”

See next page
He said none of the curriculum changes cut the "meat" of a degree program, but allow students to graduate more quickly and with less debt.

"Some of our faculty are concerned that will have a negative impact on us because that money is now in our students' pockets, not our pocket," he said.

White, the Faculty Senate leader, said he thinks the faculty's concerns can be addressed.

"I'm committed to finding a win-win, a place where we can come together and move forward," said White, who is also a pastor. "We have a long and rich history, and we can move past this."
Faculty flap at Athens State
By: Mary Sellers

A recent survey of Athens State University faculty members shows many are not happy with senior leadership and other aspects of their work.

Meanwhile, members of the school’s board of trustees said for about six months they have received anonymous letters from writers claiming to be faculty. The writers complain about a variety of issues, including the university’s financial involvement in the Alabama Center for the Arts in Decatur.

University leaders said Wednesday they will be happy to talk to faculty members about any concerns, but they have to be specific and the conversations will be open.

“We have some folks that are unhappy,” Athens State President Bob Glenn said. “Let’s stand up in the broad light of day and talk about it.”

Faculty frustrations were visible in a recent survey commissioned by the university. Faculty members gave a 26 percent approval rating to senior leadership. Administration gave itself an 87 percent rating.

The faculty also ranked the school’s teaching environment at 37 percent and “job satisfaction/support” at 50 percent.

Glenn said several changes have been made in recent years and more is being asked of faculty members.

“We had a number of faculty and staff that had found a quiet place in the university, and they didn’t have to do too much,” he said.

The school’s tenure system also has changed since the university stepped out from the umbrella of the state’s two-year college system about two years ago.

Now, instead of simply remaining employed for three years to earn tenure, a six-year process that requires a review of professors’ teaching, community service and research is in place.

“I can see how there are people who would think that isn’t a good deal,” Glenn said.

According to the Alabama Commission on Higher Education, the average salary for male professors at Athens in 2011-12 was $85,522. Assistant professors averaged $68,862.

Glenn said most of the complaints he hears are against him or the provost. But unless a complaint is specific — and signed — Glenn says he won’t address it.

“All the anonymous complaints go into one file and aren’t dealt with, and that has made me unpopular,” he said.

See next page
He has been told that faculty fear retribution for speaking out, but he said that won’t happen.

Glenn, the school’s president since 2009, said when he arrived on campus some faculty members declined to speak out for fear of retaliation. He said that’s a mentality that’s hard to change.

“I can’t find any evidence that it’s occurred, but we still have some folks that think they can’t speak openly,” he said.

Glenn said he is concerned about the survey and has spoken with professor Robby White, the presiding officer of the Faculty Senate. Glenn is suggesting a task force to look at issues brought up by faculty.

White on Wednesday declined comment about the survey or morale on campus.

Professor Mark Durm, the previous presiding officer of the Faculty Senate, declined comment on the survey because he said it isn’t his place to do so.

Durm is president of the newly formed Association of University Professors. He said the group was formed to seek more input into university operations.

“The faculty felt the need to express our opinions separate from the senate,” Durm said.

Board member Sandra Sims-deGraffenried said she is planning a meeting, likely in October, with Faculty Senate members.

She said the unsigned letters during the last six months have been “shotgun blasts of topics that were so broad they rendered themselves useless.”

Sims-deGraffenried said the board is approachable, but it wants detailed complaints, not generalizations.

“We want specifics or we don’t want to hear it,” she said.

Board member Mary Scott Hunter, of Huntsville, said she has received anonymous complaints.

“I remain confident in the administration and their ability to manage whatever problems may be,” Hunter said.

At least some of the complaints were about financial decisions made by leadership, including investing in the Alabama Center for the Arts. Athens and Calhoun Community College split most of the $8.4 million cost of the building. Athens also pledged $3 million to the center’s second phase.

Glenn said the center has faced opposition since it was first proposed.

“There have been a number of faculty that have said, ‘Why would you want to go to Decatur and do that? ... Why would you want to waste money on the arts?’” Glenn said.

He said some wanted the facility built on Athens’ campus. He said Calhoun wouldn’t have agreed to that.
At least one board member said he’s not reading the unsigned letters.

“When I get an anonymous letter, I immediately throw it in the trash can. Well, I shred it first,” said board member Garth Lovvorn, of Athens.

Lovvorn said he’d be willing to meet with faculty, but he has no way to respond to those correspondences.

“I am not going to bite anyone’s head off. I’d like to talk to them face to face and address their concerns,” he said. “But don’t send anonymous letters.”

Lovvorn said he’s been receiving letters for several months, but couldn’t say what they were about.

“If I threw away the letters. I can’t tell you,” he said. “Call someone who read the damn things. They can go to hell if they can’t sign a letter.”
The Montevallo City Council's latest appointment means that half of the board is employed by the University of Montevallo.

The City Council this week unanimously appointed Jason Peterson to serve on the council in the seat vacated by Don Hughes, who resigned from the board during the group's July 28 meeting. Peterson had lost to Hughes in the city's runoff election in 2012.

Peterson, 41, will serve the remainder of the term that ends in November 2016.

He works as a network administrator at the University of Montevallo through a company called Ellucian that is contracted by the institution. Mayor Hollie Cost, meanwhile, is an associate professor at the university, and Councilwoman Sharon Gilbert is director of the university's federally funded TRIO Upward Bound program that helps qualifying students reach academic success.

Councilman Rusty Nix, who voted in favor of Peterson's appointment, pointed out the employment commonality.

"Jason, I've looked at your résumé and it looks really well. ... I do have a problem: it puts three council members ... employed by one employer," Nix said.

"There's nothing with Jason here. It puts three people employed by the university on the council. ... I just wanted to publicly state that."

Some in the community have stated concerns about the university increasing its presence in the city. Examples include the former Alabama Power office complex on Main Street becoming a university building, the opening of a Barnes & Noble bookstore for the university on Main Street and the under-construction softball field at Orr Park.
UAB men's soccer ranked No. 18 in coaches' poll

The UAB men's soccer team was ranked No. 18 in the first NSCAA/Continental Tire NCAA Division I Men's Soccer National Poll of the 2014 regular season, as announced on Tuesday. UAB has now been ranked in the last 12 coaches' polls conducted in the regular season.

In the preseason poll, UAB received 20 votes, third-most among those not ranked in the top 25. Following a 2-0 start to the 2014 campaign, the Blazers jumped 11 spots in the first poll of the regular season.

The UAB men's soccer team faces a stiff challenge this upcoming weekend at the Hurricane Classic in Tulsa, Okla. UAB will open with Cal State Northridge on Friday, Sept. 5 at 5 p.m. CT, before taking on No. 3 Virginia on Sunday, Sept. 7 at 12 p.m. CT.

NSCAA/Continental Tire National Poll

1. UCLA
2. Louisville
3. Virginia
4. Washington
5. Notre Dame
6. New Mexico
7. Michigan State
8. Creighton
9. Georgetown
10. Maryland
11. Coastal Carolina
12. Indiana
13. North Carolina
14. UMBC
15. Saint Louis
16. Penn State
17. UC Irvine
18. UAB
19. Denver
20. California
21. Connecticut
22. Seattle
23. Boston
24. UIC
25. Clemson

Also receiving votes:

games that will make or break UAB's season

Solomon Crenshaw Jr.
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Let's make one thing clear: Bill Clark did not approve this message. No coach would. The most important game on the schedule is always the very next game. Don't overlook the next opponent. Don't ignore them. Don't take anyone for granted.

That said, here are three of the most critical games of UAB's 2014 season, the games that will define success or failure for the team and its first-year coach:

1. TROY, SATURDAY, 11 A.M., LEGION FIELD.

UAB's opener is nothing less than Job No. 1 for Clark, his staff and players. Why? Confidence. A 2-10 record last season must have the Blazers wondering if their playbook included Murphy's Law. Add a slew of injuries that swept into spring training and UAB could be forgiven for being down. But Clark is upbeat and positive, an approach that his squad appears to appreciate.

Clark is quick to say that win or lose, the Blazers must grow beyond the season-opener. But that game is the program's first opportunity to begin erasing what had appeared to be an indelible image of defeat from last season. That the opponent is an in-state rival elevates its importance even more.

2. WESTERN KENTUCKY, OCT. 4, IN BOWLING GREEN, KY.

The Blazers' first conference road game is against an opponent pegged to finish in the top three of Conference USA East. Need we say more?

3. SOUTHERN MISS, NOV. 28, IN HATTIESBURG, MISS.

At first glance, making this game one of the most important of the season makes no sense. The Golden Eagles are the regular season finale for UAB, so beyond potentially needing to win to become bowl eligible, the success or failure of the Blazers is likely to have already been decided.

But the circumstance of their last meeting at the end of 2013 cannot be dismissed. The Golden Eagles had lost 23 games over two seasons before that encounter in Birmingham and UAB, a big favorite, led 21-13 at the half. The Blazers lost, however, by the very embarrassing 62-27 score. Somebody will be looking for payback against their closest conference rival.
BLAZER BUZZ
What: Troy at UAB
When: Saturday at 11 a.m.
Where: Legion Field.
TV: Fox College Sports.
Radio: FM-107.7
Line: UAB is a 2-point favorite.

THIS GAME WILL DETERMINE
Which team can get off on a good foot after a not-so good 2013 season.
The Trojans were 6-6 last year while the Blazers were a woeful 2-10 under
now departed Garrick McGee. Bill Clark is the new man and there is a
whole new aura about this team.

THREE THINGS TO LOOK FOR
1. Can UAB stay healthy? Injuries were a big reason the Blazers stumbled mightily last season. It was
a death spiral where players got hurt and wore out the few reserves who were available.

2. Can Troy recapture its offensive magic? Two years ago, the Trojans ranked No. 11 in total offense
in the Football Bowl Subdivision, averaging 6.2 yards per play. The Trojans slipped to No. 45 in 2013.

3. Has the UAB defense improved? Despite Troy's offensive numbers falling off last year, it piled up 497 total yards and
beat UAB 34-31 in overtime. UAB finished 2013 ranked No. 118th in total defense.

KEY MATCHUP
Troy's run game against UAB's front seven. The Blazers' new 3-4 base defense will ask more of the
linebackers and they'll have to deliver against the Trojan trio of running backs — junior Brandon Burks, the
team's leading rusher (675 yards); sophomore Jordan Chunn, who led all freshman in the nation with 14 TDs
last season and senior Khary Franklin.

Solomon Crenshaw Jr.
UAB pounds Troy in home opener

The Associated Press

BIRMINGHAM | Cody Clements passed for two touchdowns and ran for another, while Jordan Howard rushed for two more in helping the University of Alabama-Birmingham beat Troy University 48-10 on Saturday.

UAB of the Conference USA-East, opened its 2014 season and the Bill Clark era by falling behind Troy 7-0, but the Blazers ratted off 24-straight points before halftime behind Clements’ and Howard’s efforts.

“It’s a good start. I’m definitely proud of these guys,” Clark said of getting his first UAB win. “We know what kind of program Troy has, and we have a lot of respect for them.”

Howard routinely shredded the Trojan defense en route to 74 first-half rushing yards and UAB’s first score, a 2-yard touchdown run. Clements, making his first start for UAB, then sandwiched a 34-yard field goal by Ty Long with a pair of touchdown passes to Kennard Backman to put UAB up 24-7.

Ryan Kay cut the UAB lead to 24-10 with a 47-yard Trojan field goal as time expired in the first half.

UAB sealed the win with Howard’s 55-yard touchdown pass and Clements’ 1-yard TD run in the third quarter.

Howard finished with 179 yards on the ground, while D.J. Vinson added 106 yards and UAB’s final touchdown.

“We were totally ill-prepared for what we faced,” Trojans head coach Larry Blakeney said. “We got to make some changes and adjustments and try to be a more physical-minded football team in all three phases.”

Meanwhile, the Troy offense struggled in its first game following the graduation of Corey Robinson, who owns virtually every Sun Belt Conference passing record.

Redshirt-freshman Brandon Silvers earned the start over junior college transfer Dontrelle Prtittt and led the Trojans on a five-play, 75-yard drive on their first possession. Jordan Chunn capped the drive with a 1-yard run with 13:31 left. From that point, UAB limited Troy to 138 yards of total offense.
BLAZER BLOWOUT

CLARK ERA BEGINS: EXPECTING A CLOSE ONE? UAB RUNS AND PLAYS DEFENSE TO OVERWHELM THE TROJANS.

Solomon Crenshaw Jr.
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Diaheem Watkins had a simple word of advice for his UAB teammates after Troy scored a quick touchdown to take the lead Saturday at Legion Field.

"Let the game slow down," the senior defensive end told his fellow linemen. "Don't say nothing. Don't nobody yell at nobody. Let the game slow down."

It was sound counsel. After the early Troy dart, UAB rolled to a 48-10 victory over the Trojans at Legion Field before an announced crowd of 27,133.

The win was the Blazers' first against Troy since 2010, breaking a three-game losing streak to their in-state rival. The past four meetings were nail-biters, with three of them decided by a single point.

This one turned into anything but a heart pumper.

The Trojans scored just six plays into the game, bolstered by a first-play, 41-yard pass from quarterback Brandon Silvers to Chandler Worthy to the Blazer 34-yard line. Troy ultimately scored on a Jordan Chunn 1-yard touchdown run.

"That's not the way we wanted to start defensively," said first year coach Bill Clark, who ran his career season-opening record as a head coach to 11-0. "We didn't get aligned properly on that first drive. After that defensively we just played very well."

So well that Troy only managed a net 112 yards for the game and just 71 on the ground.

"We were very sound (and) tackled well against a historically really good offense," Clark said.

Offensively, the Blazers leaned heavily on the running tandem of Jordan Howard and D.J. Vinson. Howard, a freshman backup last season, torched the Trojans for 179 yards and two touchdowns on 19 carries. Vinson, a senior who has moved across various positions, had 106 yards and a touchdown on 22 carries.

"My O-line did a great job, and my tight ends and receivers," Howard said. "My O-line - they did the work for me."

The running game (343 yards) helped make first-time starting quarterback Cody Clements comfortable to say the least. He was 12 of 18 passing for 150 yards and two touchdowns to tight end Kennard Backman. He also had an interception.

"They're worrying about (Howard and Vinson) running down their throat," Clements said. "Our line did a spectacular job today. Our running backs were running with a purpose and it makes my job a lot easier."

Troy coach Larry Blakeney said his team was "totally ill-prepared" for what it faced in the game.

"We've got to make some changes and adjustments and try to be a more physical-minded football team," he said.

Linebacker Jake Ganus led the Blazer defense with seven tackles and a forced fumble. Watkins had six solo tackles and two sacks.
When’s the last time anyone felt as good about UAB football?

The last time UAB won its first game of the season, five long years ago, the Blazers beat a limp, wet carbohydrate in Rice. This time, they beat an in-state rival in Troy that was about to start paying taxes on its ownership of the Blazers.

The last time UAB beat Troy, four long years ago, the Blazers needed a Hail Mary to do it. This time, long before the game ended, the Trojans were down on their knees, praying for the beating to stop.

The last time UAB players, coaches, administrators and fans felt this good about their program ... wait a minute. When was the last time anyone felt this good about UAB football?

Bill Clark did a lot more Saturday than become the first UAB coach to win his debut. He gave a starving fan base hope based on results. As opposed to hope based on where he’d worked, whom he’d worked for or empty shut-up-and-admire-my-brilliance rhetoric and attitude.

The new UAB football coach is just that. He’s a football coach. A real head football coach who learned the game from the ground up, who didn’t have to leave the spotlight and lower himself to take the job in Birmingham. He’s not a buddy of the board of trustees or a Bobby Petrino wannabe.

UAB’s gone down those dark alleys before and ended up face-planting into a brick wall. Clark was a breath of fresh air before Saturday, and reading the postgame comments of his players, it was striking how many of them mentioned the new coach’s positivity and enthusiasm. It’s probably not a coincidence that, after Troy flew right down the field for a touchdown on the opening drive, UAB didn’t drop its head like Eeyore and get donkey-kicked for the next 58 minutes.

Instead the Blazers scored the next 24 points, and the rout was on.

One game doesn’t make a season, let alone a program, but UAB 48, Troy 10 was an opening statement as emphatic as any on opening weekend this side of Texas A&M wiping the smirk off Steve Spurrier’s face.

UAB doesn’t win season openers. UAB doesn’t beat Troy. UAB doesn’t beat anybody in the Football Bowl Subdivision by 38 points.

Or it didn’t, not all at once, not until Bill Clark got to Birmingham.

The good folks in green and gold have wandered through the desert for so long, they could be forgiven for wondering if this big gulp of water is a mirage. Nothing wrong with being a little skeptical with a big grin on your face.

UAB’s not going undefeated, not with Mississippi State up next, but there’s a reason to believe there are better days ahead. One week into the season, there’s a victory on the scoreboard, and there are smiles in the locker room.

It really is a fresh start.
6 questions on how Mississippi State is approaching this week's game against UAB

By: Solomon Crenshaw

As UAB gets set to play its second game of the season at Mississippi State on Saturday, AL.com checked in with Steve Robertson, who covers Mississippi State for scout.com affiliate Genespage.com.

Robertson was asked six questions concerning the Bulldogs and their game with the Blazers. Here are his responses:

Q: Is quarterback Dak Prescott for real? He's a dual-threat who doesn't mind using his legs, but his accuracy and decision-making were suspect in 2013. Has the offense changed much with Prescott the unquestioned starter?

A: Dak has worked very hard to become a more proficient passer in the off season with a lot of emphasis on his footwork. He looks more crisp and decisive this season.

I believe knowing it was his team heading into the spring gave him the confidence he needed to take the next step in his development.

He's is tailor made for the Mullen spread. He is a punishing runner and solid passer in the same mold as Tim Tebow, another Mullen QB.

Prescott can handle the running component and make plays in the passing game as well. It has been sort of a mixed bag before. [Former MSU QB] Chris Relf was a good runner and Tyler Russell, [another former Bulldog], was a great passing quarterback. Prescott can do both, which makes the offense more versatile.

Q: Wide receiver Jameon Lewis's youngest brother died after the win over Southern Miss. He's the team's biggest playmaker. Will he play Saturday?

A: Jameon Lewis will play this weekend. He has dedicated his season to the untimely passing of his younger brother.

Q: Can State's defense contain this new, explosive UAB offense? With one of the SEC's top linebacker corps led by Benardrick McKinney, and the rest of the front seven, including Chris Jones, the Bulldogs find themselves dealing with a whole new spread offense and attitude.

A: MSU defensive coordinator Geoff Collins stresses the importance of stopping the run, so I am sure he has been pouring over UAB game film to see how they had their success against Troy. Mississippi State has one of the best defensive lines in the SEC, and is as athletic as anyone in the conference at linebacker. McKinney and Matthew Wells are both expected to go in the NFL draft next spring.

I believe the fact that UAB blew out Troy has the Bulldogs attention. Any chance of them looking past the Blazers was largely erased once the result of last week's win made the rounds in the locker room.

See next page
Q: Can State really take a C-USA team seriously after blowing out Southern Miss, the team that blew out UAB last fall, 49-0?

A: MSU has had its way by and large with CUSA teams under Mullen. The one C-USA school that has made MSU sweat it out has been UAB. Yes, MSU won the last two meetings, but neither was pretty a win for State. While MSU had a lopsided win over Southern Miss, they also had several teachable moments in that game. They did not take care of business in the red zone twice. Mullen called both of those turnovers "silly. They had some pass protection issues in the first half despite the fact they had been coached to expect USM to run some twists to create some confusion.

Mullen called that "disappointing." While the fans are ecstatic about a 49-point win, the team and coaching staff sees plenty of room for improvement in Week Two.

Q: What's the situation at right tackle? Last year's starter, Charles Siddoway, graduated. Who's taken his place?

A: Siddoway was the starter at right tackle the past two years. Damian Robinson has been in the program for five years now, but he suffered a torn ACL and has yet to take a step forward and take a spot. There would have been a new starter at right tackle with or without Robinson's injury. Justin Senior is now the starter and was reportedly, at worst, even with Robinson when he became injured. I am not sure how Senior graded out last week, but it appears that he did well enough to stay in the starting lineup this week.
ALABAMA GYMNASTICS

Tough schedule for Duckworth in first season

The University of Alabama gymnastics team will host defending national co-champions Florida and Oklahoma in 2015 in Dana Duckworth's first season as head coach.

Duckworth succeeded longtime coach Sarah Patterson when Patterson retired from coaching in the summer.

Alabama will host three teams — defending national co-champions Florida and Oklahoma, as well as LSU — from last year's NCAA Super Six team finals. UA will visit another Super Six finalist, Georgia, in a road meet. The Crimson Tide is the defending SEC champion.

All home meets will be held on Fridays.

"This is a typical Alabama schedule — it's very challenging and will prepare our ladies for the championship season," Duckworth said. "I'm especially excited about our home schedule, which will bring some of the best gymnasts in the country to Tuscaloosa."

Alabama will open the season on Jan. 9 against Pac 12 foe Arizona, host Florida on Jan. 23 and close out the regular season at home on March 13 against Oklahoma. UA will also host Florida, LSU and Auburn in SEC competition, as well as Boise State.

Additionally, Alabama will have a neutral-site meet against Auburn at the Birmingham Jefferson Convention Center, which hosted last season's NCAA Championships.

"When the chance came to add an extra meet to our schedule and to have that meet in Birmingham against Auburn, we were delighted," Duckworth said. "We had such great support in the BJCC last year for both the SEC and NCAA Championships, and I know that this will be another great environment for the college gymnastics."

Alabama will go on the road to face Arkansas, Kentucky, Georgia and Missouri.
Crimson Tide releases its SEC schedule

Combined reports

BIRMINGHAM | The University of Alabama women's basketball team has finalized its 2014-15 schedule with the unveiling of the Southeastern Conference slate on Friday by the league office.

The Crimson Tide tips off SEC play on Friday, Jan. 2, when it hosts Kentucky in Foster Auditorium. Three more of Alabama's eight home conference games will be in January against South Carolina (Jan. 8), Auburn (Jan. 22) and Vanderbilt (Jan. 25). The Crimson Tide will then take on Arkansas (Feb. 1), Missouri (Feb. 12, Fox Sports Net), Mississippi State (Feb. 22) and Florida (Feb. 26, SEC Network) to round out its home games.

Alabama's first road contest of the SEC season is on Jan. 4, at Georgia, which will be televised on Fox Sports Net. Additional away games include Ole Miss (Jan. 11), Mississippi State (Jan. 18, Fox Sports Net), South Carolina (Jan. 29), LSU (Feb. 8, SEC Network), Texas A&M (Feb. 16, SEC Network), Big Monday game), Tennessee (Feb. 19, Fox Sports Net) and the regular-season finale at Auburn (March 1).

The 2015 SEC Tournament will take place March 4-8 in North Little Rock, Ark. The SEC Network will televise all but the semifinal and finals, which will air on ESPNU and ESPN, respectively.

All of the games included in the ESPN package (ESPN, ESPN2, ESPNU) and the SEC Network will be available through WatchESPN, accessible online at WatchESPN.com, on smartphones and tablets via the WatchESPN app, and streamed on televisions through Amazon Fire TV, Apple TV, Chromecast, Roku, Xbox 360 or Xbox One to fans who receive their video subscription from an affiliated provider. Fox Sports Net events will be available via these avenues outside the SEC Footprint only.

ALABAMA SEC SCHEDULE

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PERFECT TEAMMATE

Sims’ willingness to do what’s best for the team earns respect from Crimson Tide teammates

By Aaron Suttles
Sports Writer

He sat there in the middle of Atlanta and cried so hard that those around him cried, too.

The last time Blake Sims entered the Georgia Dome as the starting quarterback, he experienced the biggest heartbreak of his young life.

Then a Gainesville High School senior quarterback, Sims threw a 21-yard touchdown on the last play of regulation to pull the Red Elephants within an extra point of sending the Georgia Class AAA state championship game to overtime.

But Gainesville coach Bruce Miller elected to put the ball in Sims’ hands and gambled for the win on a two-point conversion. The game ended as Sims’ pass fell to the turf, batted down at the line.

So he sat there and cried.

That doesn’t surprise those closest to Sims. He’s known as an emotional guy. He’s also known as a great teammate, one of the most liked members of the Alabama football team.

So whether or not Sims starts Saturday against West Virginia, don’t expect him to pout, and don’t expect the 30 or so members of the Sims extended family going to the game to be anything other than joyous. They’ll be easy to spot, though, all decked out in B. Sims jerseys and shirts.

Sometimes Sonny Sims, Blake’s dad, barely recognizes the man his middle son is now.

Blake was always the best athlete on every team of every sport he played. Sitting the bench was as foreign to him as speaking Latin.

That’s why Sonny gleams with pride today. He sent a boy to Tuscaloosa. He got back a man.

“When he gives you his word you can count on it,” Sonny Sims said. “Whatever coach (Nick) Saban asks Blake to do, he’s going to do it. It don’t matter. Coach Saban could tell Blake right now, ‘We want you to play safety,’ and Blake wouldn’t blink an eye. He’d just go do it.”

CHICK-FIL-A KICKOFF GAME

No. 2 Alabama
vs. West Virginia

- When: 2:30 p.m., Saturday
- Where: Georgia Dome, Atlanta
- 2013 records: Alabama 11-2
- West Virginia 4-8
- TV: ABC/ESPN2
- Radio: 95.3 FM, 99.1 FM

See Sims | 4C
That selflessness earned the respect of his teammates. They all knew how badly Blake wanted to play, but only if it would help the team.

Sims was always a great athlete — he first dunked a basketball in eighth grade at 5-foot-8. Sonny thinks baseball was Blake’s best sport. “He was a lead-off hitter who could hit the home run.”

Those athletic exploits weren’t limited to the fields or courts either.

“I’ve seen him run off a wall and do a backflip before,” senior tight end Brian Vogler said.

At Gainesville, Sims played quarterback and wide receiver and was a return specialist. He totaled 3,736 all-purpose yards and 49 total touchdowns on his way to All-State honors, as one of the most sought-after prospects in the nation.

When he got to Alabama in 2010 he began at safety. Then he moved to running back. Last season he worked as the back-up quarterback.

During the offseason he worked with a private quarter-

back coach. “I can tell you one thing: We spent a whole ton of money,” Sonny Sims said.

He punted on vacations, rarely saw his family, and went all-in, so to speak, on giving the quarterback competition his all. No one ever doubted his athleticism, and they would be hard pressed finding fault in anything he’s done in every aspect of the quarterback competition since the spring, including handling the circus that came with the constant Jake Coker transfer rumors and the eventual transfer.

Finally it was Sims’ time, but a majority of the talk centered around Coker, as if Sims was an afterthought. Even so, he never made one false step publicly.

And those close to him say he won’t even if he doesn’t win the starting job.

“I’ll tell you what, if Coker beats him out, Blake will be his best cheerleader,” Sonny Sims said. “That’s just how he is, and he’ll go play something else if they want him to play something else. He’ll just do anything.”

It’s little wonder why the guys in the locker room hold him in such high regard.

“He’s a perfect teammate,” senior safety Nick Perry said. “He’ll do anything to help the team out, help the team win. He did everything that coach Saban asked him to do. He asked him to return punts, Blake would have done it.”

A position change for Sims isn’t likely. With his performance during fall camp, he’s a favorite to earn the start Saturday. Either way, he’s expected to play.

Sims and Coker could be more different. Sims is 6-foot, Coker 6-5. Sims thrives outside of the pocket, Coker can run, too, but he’s known more for pro-caliber arm strength. Sims has worked hard on his drop, working under center and his throwing motion, passing more natural for Coker.

But the competition between the two was dead even through fall camp.

Sims has the edge in experience in the Alabama program. He’s so ingrained into “The Process” that his dad can’t talk football with him anymore.

“He acts like coach Saban,” Sonny Sims said. “He keeps the team stuff to himself. We don’t talk that much about football no more, we just talk about life all the time. I miss that part. I can’t ask him about the competition because he’ll tell me, ‘There ain’t no competition, we’re just out working hard.’”

“I ask Blake, ‘How is Coker? Is he good?’ He says, ‘Daddy, he’s working hard just like all of us.’ He never talks about what I want to hear. I want to hear ‘Is he good? Can he throw?’ But Blake never talks about it. He’s bought into the whole thing. He’s an Alabama football player.”

How true the Saban comparison is aside, the eighth-year Alabama coach couldn’t be much more proud of the way Sims, under difficult circumstances, has represented himself and the program.

“If you look at Blake’s five-year career here, he’s played every position we’ve ever asked him to play. He’s done whatever you need if you ask him to do it for the team. He’s very well liked by all the players on the team. He’s a very good guy to lead,” Saban said.

“And it’s really not always about him. He really does a lot to serve other people. Sets a good example in how he works. I think he’s always put the team first. I think he’s certainly done that in this competition. I’m very pleased with the way he’s managed this.”
New College Football HoF likely to please

Atlanta facility’s exhibits interactive

By Stephanie Taylor
Staff Writer

The College Football Hall of Fame is sure to be a hit with college football fans who visit Atlanta on Saturday for the Crimson Tide’s 2014 season debut.

The three-story, 94,256-square-foot facility that opened Aug. 23 in downtown Atlanta is filled with high-tech, interactive exhibits that can be tailored to a visitor’s team preference.

Influential coaches and players are of course featured, but the exhibits also celebrate college football’s fans and their traditions. There’s fight-song karaoke and an ESPN GameDay studio where visitors are superimposed alongside the hosts.

A chip in visitor tickets indicates their favorite school, which means that the interactive exhibits will deliver school-specific content first, said spokeswoman Traci Messier.

See Hall | 6A

Former Georgia Tech, Alabama, Kentucky and Georgia State football coach Bill Curry, left, greets visitors at the College Football Hall of Fame grand opening Saturday in Atlanta.
COLLEGE FOOTBALL HALL OF FAME

- Where: 250 Marietta St NW, Atlanta. The facility is within walking distance of downtown hotels and is about half a mile from the Georgia Dome
- Hours: 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Sunday through Friday; 9 a.m.-6 p.m. Saturday
- Admission: $19.99 for adults; $16.99 for kids ages 3 to 12 and $17.99 for seniors 65 and older, members of the military and students; children 3 and younger free
- More Info: www.cfbhall.com/ or 404-880-4800

HALL

Continued From Page 1A

The front lobby features a wall with helmets of 768 college teams, she said.

“When you register your favorite team, the helmet lights up on the wall,” she said. “Then when you walk up to the kiosks and exhibits, you’ll see content about your team first.”

University of Alabama fans will see exhibits related to the school’s 23 Hall of Fame members, the 1979 Sugar Bowl Goal Line Stand in the “Great Moments” exhibit and the team’s rivalry with Auburn University in the “Great Rivals” exhibit.

There’s Alabama content in the “Champions Database” and several other exhibits.

Of course, legendary coach Paul W. “Bear” Bryant is featured in several exhibits, Hall of Fame historian and curator Kent Stephens said.

There’s also a 45-yard replica field where fans can toss a football, run an obstacle course or kick an extra point.

Tickets are $19.99 for adults, $16.99 for kids between 3 and 12 and $17.99 for seniors 65 and older, members of the military and students. Children younger than three are admitted for free. Messier encouraged people to purchase tickets online at www.cfbhall.com, where they can choose a time to begin the tour.

The facility is within walking distance of downtown hotels and is about a half mile from the Georgia Dome.

Birmingham construction firm Brasfield & Gorrie was the general contractor for the $68.5 million project, which was bankrolled by Chick-fil-A, Southwest Airlines and other corporate sponsors. It is expected to attract 500,000 annual visitors and an estimated $12 million in ancillary revenue to Georgia.

The College Football Hall of Fame moved to Atlanta from its longtime site in South Bend, Ind.

Material from the Associated Press was included in this report. Reach Stephanie Taylor at stephanie.taylor@tuscaloosa news.com or 205-722-0210.
FSU leads initial College Football Computer Composite

Computers no longer are determining college football's championship matchups, but that doesn't mean they have been turned off.

Five of the computer rankings that contributed to the Bowl Championship Series have reunited for a composite ranking that takes the human element out of college football team evaluation. Richard Billingsley, Wes Colley, Ken Massey, Jeff Sagarin and Peter Wolfe have combined the metrics that helped forge 16 years of championship matchups. Those include such factors as wins and losses, strength of schedule, home-field advantage, recency of game and, in some cases, margin of victory to give an objective rating of all 128 FBS teams.

The composite calculates the geometric mean of each FBS team's five computer rankings. The teams are then ranked in order of their geometric mean value. Complete rankings through Week 1 are listed below.

The Computer Composite, which reevaluates every game every week, is updated weekly and is hosted by FootballFour.com.

The top of the first Composite has five SEC teams among the top 11, which is a result of the league's strong performance in inter-conference games in Week 1. Alabama (No. 2), LSU (No. 7) and Georgia (No. 11) all had good wins against teams from other Power Five leagues.

The top four of the composite after one week are Florida State, Alabama, Oregon and Auburn. The next four teams are Oklahoma, Texas A&M, LSU and Stanford. The complete list of 128 teams can be found here.

One slightly surprising aspect of the composite is that Clemson is ahead of Oklahoma State, with the Tigers at No. 23 and the Cowboys at No. 25. But there is an explanation for that. Oklahoma State arguably had a better showing against the nation's top team than Clemson did in a 45-21 loss to Georgia, but for the first few weeks of the season, the computers still draw on preseason rankings.

Meet the people behind the computers:

Richard Billingsley has been ranking college football teams since 1970 and in 1995 was recognized by the NCAA as the first pollster to mathematically run the entire history of college football (from 1869) through one system. In 2006 Billingsley was a major contributor to ESPN's College Football Encyclopedia. He currently owns and operates CFRC.com, which is home to Billingsley's Online College Football Encyclopedia.

Wes Colley, Ph.D., is a Principal Research Scientist at the Center for Modeling, Simulation and Analysis at the University of Alabama in Huntsville. Colley developed his rankings while a graduate student at Princeton in 1997, and became involved with the BCS in 2001. His site is ColleyRankings.com.

Ken Massey produces the Massey Ratings, which provide objective team evaluation for professional, college, and high school sports. His college football ratings were a component of

See next page
the Bowl Championship Series for 15 years. Massey also provides sports data analysis for USA TODAY high school sports. Kenneth did graduate research at Virginia Tech in the field of numerical linear algebra, and is a professor of mathematics at Carson-Newman University in Jefferson City, Tenn., where he lives with his wife Alina.

Jeff Sagarin is a 1970 MIT mathematics graduate who's been doing ratings in print beginning in September 1972 and in USA TODAY starting in January 1985. He was also with the BCS for all 16 of its seasons, 1998-2013. His complete ratings also can be found at sagarin.com.

Peter Wolfe is an infectious diseases specialist in Los Angeles. He is an associate clinical professor of medicine at UCLA. His ratings became part of the BCS in 2001. His college football site can be found here.
At College Football Games, Student Sections Likely to Have Empty Seats

Declining Attendance Reflects Soaring Ticket Prices, Increase in Televised Games

By: Ben Cohen

Football stadiums will be packed this weekend for the kickoff of the college season. But many of the student sections are likely to have empty seats.

Average student attendance at college football games is down 7.1% since 2009, according to an analysis by The Wall Street Journal of stadium turnstile records from about 50 public colleges with top-division football teams. The decline was 5.6% at colleges in the five richest conferences.

The decrease even at schools with entrenched football traditions and national championships stands in contrast to college football's overall popularity. Total turnout at home games of top-tier teams hit a record in 2013, while average attendance has slipped just 0.8% since 2009.

The growing number of empty seats in student sections across the U.S. is a sign of soaring ticket prices, more lopsided games and fewer matchups against longtime rivals, and the proliferation of televised games that make it easier than ever for students to keep tailgating long after kickoff. (Explore the interactive on college football attendance since 2009.)

Declining attendance by students at college football games reflects soaring ticket prices, more lopsided matches and the proliferation of televised games. Ben Cohen joins MoneyBeat.

Some college administrators and coaches are alarmed by the attendance declines because noisy students help give their team a home-field advantage that often is bigger in football than other sports. Colleges also depend on football to create bonds that will keep students connected after graduation, including as season-ticket buyers and donors. Colleges and athletic conferences are scrambling to lure students back, but it is a daunting challenge. "There are so many other things they can do that maybe going to the game that day isn't the most important thing on their agenda," says Louisiana State University athletic director Joe Alleva. Student attendance fell 5.5% to 8,508 in 2013 from 9,000 in 2012.

"Nothing can unify a community and alumni base of a university like college football can," says Kirby Hocutt, athletic director at Texas Tech University. An average of 11,365 students attended the college's six home games last year, up 16% from 2012 and 25% higher than 2009. The college hired a new coach before the 2013 season.

Colleges don't report student attendance in game box scores. To tally student attendance, the Journal requested stadium-turnstile figures from public institutions that are subject to state public-records laws.

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About 80 colleges provided data to the Journal, including 38 in the Atlantic Coast, Big Ten, Big 12, Pac-12 and Southeastern conferences, collectively known as the Big 5. The NCAA recently granted those conferences more power to govern themselves.

Some schools don't track how many students actually used tickets they bought, and other colleges say the attendance figures they provided might not be accurate because of faulty ticket scanners at football stadiums. The Journal's percentage calculations exclude colleges that didn't provide student-attendance numbers for every year between 2009 and 2013.

Among college football's heavyweights, student attendance was lower in 2013 than 2009 at Ohio State University, Michigan State University, University of Florida and Florida State University. It also declined at the University of Michigan and LSU, though the schools didn't provide five years of data to the Journal.

Schools can't even rely on students who buy tickets to show up at games—or they trickle into their seats late and leave early. At the University of Kansas, which had a 3-9 record last season, 74% of student tickets went unused. At Michigan, an average of 14,749 students showed up at the college's home games last season, an 11% decline from 2011. The team won just seven games in 2013, down from 11 in 2011.

The attendance slide also was blamed on an increase in student ticket prices, which jumped to $295 from $205 last year, as Michigan replaced a long-standing policy that rewarded seniority with a plan that gave students general-admission access. A midseason survey by the college's student government showed that 76% of student season-ticket holders disapproved of the new plan.

"There are students who are being priced out," says Michael Proppe, a 22-year-old Michigan business student who was the student-body president last year. "People are looking to trim costs, and for a lot of folks, football is an easy thing to cut. It's not essential to going to college."

Student dissatisfaction led to another change that takes effect at Michigan's home opener against Appalachian State University on Saturday. Michigan students are now assigned seats based on how many sports games they attended the previous school year. The athletic department, which formed a student council for advice on ticketing issues, also decided to offer discounted, single-game student tickets.

Michigan has another problem. Because of the Big Ten's expansion, Michigan's home schedule doesn't include either Michigan State or Ohio State, Michigan's two biggest rivals, for the first time since 1966. Football ticket sales to Michigan students are down 40% from last year.

For schools in college football's top division, football revenues soared 99% in the last decade, with much of the growth coming from TV networks battling to broadcast games.
Those lucrative media deals are now seen as a threat to the live-game experience. Of the 85 games involving at least one of the 128 Football Bowl Subdivision teams this week, almost all can be seen on TV or streamed online, giving students more reason to watch from home.

In response, the Southeastern Conference, home to seven of college football's last eight champions and some of the sport's most passionate fans, formed a committee in 2012 to study fans' experiences. All 14 schools in the conference made improvements this season, the SEC said last week.

The changes range from better cellular reception at the University of Georgia to new stadium video boards, cleaner restrooms and an enhanced sound system at LSU's Tiger Stadium.

At Michigan, an average of 14,749 students showed up at the college's home games last season, an 11% decline from 2011.

Many of the tweaks are aimed at students. "The goal is to make sure they come to the games and then stay at the games," says Mr. Alleva, the athletic director at LSU.

Alabama saw an uptick in attendance last season after Crimson Tide football coach Nick Saban urged students to come to games and stay for all 60 minutes regardless of the score. "We're just asking them to do the same thing we ask our players to do," he said at the time.

One college that has bucked the downward trend is University of California, Los Angeles, where student attendance has climbed 58% since 2009. UCLA's football team improved its record to 19-8 since the 2011 hiring of coach Jim Mora.

Dan Guerrero, UCLA's athletic director, says the gains also reflect years of effort to overcome the 30-mile distance from campus to home games and competition for attention with other big-city attractions.

In 2012, Mr. Guerrero rode the bus with students and sat with them at the Rose Bowl. That led to changes at a student tailgating area and a "Football 101" crash course, he says.

"We needed to do more," Mr. Guerrero says. "The fact that we have to persuade and convince and cajole and provide special types of activities shows how much things have changed."
Fewer Chinese grad students come to U.S.

Los Angeles Times

WASHINGTON | For years, soaring numbers of Chinese graduate students in the U.S. have been a boon for American universities and local economies, especially in places like southern California. But it looks like the influx could be slowing.

Admission offers from U.S. graduate schools to Chinese nationals, who make up one-third of all international master’s and doctoral degree students in the U.S., flattened this year after nearly a decade of rapid annual growth, according to the Council of Graduate Schools, a Washington nonprofit.

As recently as 2012, admission offers to prospective Chinese graduate students shot up by 20 percent.

At the same time, applications from prospective Chinese graduate students are also leveling off, dropping 1 percent this year, the nonprofit group said.

The council does not track information on Chinese students seeking bachelor’s degrees in the U.S., and experts and officials at universities said there were no hard data to suggest that the number of Chinese undergraduates at American schools has slowed from the double-digit annual increases seen over the last decade.

But if the Council of Graduate Schools’ admissions data prove to be on the mark, as they have in the past, American universities could see a drop in overall foreign graduate students in the not-too-distant future because the Chinese have been driving the growth in graduate enrollment in recent years.

That could financially pinch some schools that have come to rely more on Chinese and other international students to fill their graduate programs.

Experts said one factor behind the apparent shift from China is the same force that has hurt prices of steel and other raw materials: slower growth in the world’s second-largest economy in the last two years.

“IT’s not realistic to expect the Chinese numbers to rise as fast as previously,” said Dali Yang, faculty director of the University of Chicago Center in Beijing. “As growing numbers of Chinese students study abroad, the allure may have also been somewhat diminished for some students.”

Drop-off in Chinese graduate students certainly would be felt in Southern California, a major destination for foreign students, especially from Asia.

Based on F-1 visas, the most common issued to foreign students, no school has more international students than the University of Southern California.

From 2008 to 2012, USC had 13,996 students on F-1 visas in bachelor’s and graduate degree programs, according to a study by Neil Ruiz, a senior policy analyst at the Brookings Institution. Columbia University and the University of Illinois were closely behind.

The University of California, Los Angeles, had 7,860 students on F-1 visas during that five-year period, making it No. 15 among American universities, and UC Berkeley was 20th, with an enrollment of 7,133 international students.

For the 2013-14 academic year, USC reported a total of 8,745 international students—42 percent of them from China. The Chinese enrollment was up 21 percent from the previous year, and USC spokesman Carl Guido Marziali said he had no indication of a leveling off in the new academic year, though data won’t be available for a few months.