SEPTEMBER 11, 2014

ARTICLES OF INTEREST
SEPTEMBER 5, 2014 – SEPTEMBER 11, 2014

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Center to be named for ex-UA chancellor

STARKVILLE, Miss. | Mississippi State University plans to name two facilities after former presidents.

The university will name its high-performance computing center after Malcolm Portera, its president from 1998 to 2001. He went on to be chancellor of the University of Alabama System, a post he retired from in 2012. Portera was an advocate for what became MSU's High Performance Computing Collaboratory and has served as a workforce development consultant to Golden Triangle Development Link since retiring.

MSU will name the Agricultural and Biological Engineering Building for Charles Lee, president from 2003 to 2006, and interim president for a year before that. The building was constructed while Lee was president. He was earlier vice president for agriculture, forestry and medicine and dean of the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences.

The College Board approved the namings last month.
Mercedes-Benz plant to boost capacity to 300,000 cars by 2015

Kathryn Jacoby  ktjacoby@al.com

Mercedes-Benz will boost the manufacturing capacity at its Tuscaloosa County plant to 300,000 cars per year by 2015, the company announced.

That’s up from a record 185,000 manufactured in 2013. The expansion is a continuation of the company’s five-year expansion, which began in 2010 and will total $2.4 billion by next year. Approximately 1,400 new hires were projected during that time frame, and Mercedes says people are still being hired to reach that goal. Once that happens, Alabama will have the third-largest Mercedes manufacturing plant in the world.

Many of the new hires may go to work on the new SUV the automaker plans to begin manufacturing in 2015. It will be similar to the Concept Coupe SUV announced in April at the Beijing Auto Show and will be called the “ML Coupe.” The car will be the fifth model built at the Tuscaloosa plant, along with the new C-Class Coupe, the M-Class, the GL-Class SUV and the R-Class crossover.

In June, the first new C-Class came off the line. Dieter Zetsche, chairman of the Board of Management for Daimler AG and head of Mercedes-Benz Cars, said during a visit to the plant on Friday that Mercedes expects to reach another production record at the Tuscaloosa plant this year, thanks in part to the new C-Class line.

Zetsche wouldn’t specify how many vehicles are expected to be made in Tuscaloosa this year, but said the capacity of 300,000 vehicles projected by 2015 is the “perfect number to run a very efficient plant.”

Record sales

From January to August, sales of Mercedes in the U.S. increased by 8.2 percent to 205,894.

“We are consistently seeing record sales in the USA. By launching the new C-Class we are setting new standards in our biggest sales market,” Zetsche said.

Karl Brauer, a senior analyst with Kelley Blue Book, said the C-Class will serve as a more “mainstream premium luxury experience.”

He said Mercedes’ expansion was a sign that things are good in Alabama.

“It speaks to the fact that they’ve been doing production here for a number of years, and obviously it’s working for them. You don’t put more investment in an area where it’s not paying for itself. The Germans seem happy to produce cars in the U.S.,” Brauer said.

Gov. Robert Bentley said Mercedes’ continued expansion was a real tribute to the state and its workers.

“When we see a business continuing to invest in Alabama and the people of Alabama, that’s the greatest compliment we could receive,” he said. “Most jobs are created by existing businesses, and when businesses grow here, we don’t forget about them.”
MERCEDES' FIVE-YEAR EXPANSION
2010-2015

- Will boost manufacturing capacity to 300,000 automobiles
- Will add 1,400 jobs
- Added production of a fourth model this year, with a fifth scheduled for next year
- Represents a $2.4 billion investment

COMING TO BIRMINGHAM

Over the next four years, a steady stream of Mercedes-Benz employees from around the world will visit Birmingham to participate in Mercedes' new "Brand Immersion Experience."

The two-day, three-night experience will take employees to the Tuscaloosa County plant, where they will visit the Mercedes museum, tourist center and manufacturing space. The employees will have an opportunity to drive the cars and see "where the cars are born," said Gareth Joyce, vice president of customer service for Mercedes Benz USA.

Approximately 26,000 Mercedes employees will fly into Birmingham-Shuttlesworth International Airport for the experience and will be bussed to the plant daily. The employees will be staying in Birmingham hotels and dining in Birmingham restaurants as part of the program, Joyce said.

"We are excited to work with Mercedes to host these employees over the next few years," said Birmingham Mayor William Bell. "Our efforts to attract visitors and tourists from around the world to give them an opportunity to learn about Birmingham's historic legacy and spend time and money in the city is starting to pay off. We look forward to this being the first of many large groups and conventions to frequent the city."

The program, which will start pilot testing at the end of September, is estimated to cost approximately $30 million and will begin in earnest before the end of 2014.
Griffith kicks off state education lottery tour

Brendan Kirby • bkirby@al.com

Democratic gubernatorial candidate Parker Griffith kicked off a statewide tour Tuesday morning in Mobile to drum up support for a centerpiece of his campaign — a lottery that he says could raise $250 million a year for education.

Griffith also planned stops in Union Springs and Montgomery Tuesday and was prepared to visit Birmingham and Huntsville Wednesday.

"Hopefully, we'll get some traction," he told reporters outside Mobile Government Plaza. "It seems like everybody is going over a state line ... to help education in other states."

Rebekah Mason, a spokeswoman for Republican Gov. Robert Bentley, reiterated that his position always has been that he supports the people's right to vote on the issue.

"It's the same place that he has stood," she said. "The governor has been asked about this since 2010 ... He respects the people's right to vote on any issue."

Griffith, though, said Bentley has failed to lead on the matter. He said occasional pronouncements in favor of the people's right to vote are no substitute for a full-scale effort to push the proposal through the Legislature.

"That's not being for a lottery. That's weak, lazy governing," he said.

Mason acknowledged that Bentley has not proposed a lottery during his first term. But she added that the governor cannot unilaterally put the question to referendum.

"It will have to go to the Legislature. You would have to convince a Republican Legislature to put that on the ballot," she said. "No one has proposed a lottery in four years. There has not been an appetite that we've seen for a lottery."

Griffith said he believes rank-and-file Republican lawmakers would be receptive to a lottery if freed from their leadership.

"I think a lot of Republicans are intimidated and managed by fear," he said.

The Griffith campaign said it bases the $250 million revenue projection on the first-year experiences of Tennessee, Georgia and other states with similar lotteries. The plan calls for channeling that money into pre-kindergarten education and higher education. The proposal calls for scholarships to two- and four-year colleges as well as job training programs.

Griffith said his ultimate goal is to send students to community colleges and trade schools for free, as Tennessee did earlier this year with excess lottery funds. He said improving education would pay dividends in job creation, where he says Alabama ranks at the bottom in the nation.

"Right now, in Mobile County, the unemployment rate is 8.7 percent," he said. "National average: 6.8."

Alabama has flirted with a lottery before. Democrat Ron Sparks proposed one four years ago in his unsuccessful campaign against Bentley. Voters rejected a proposal offered by then-Gov. Don Siegelman in 1999. Griffith said his proposal both differs substantively from that one and benefits from different times.

"I think we realize that the forces against the lottery were the forces from other states" that did not want the competition, he said.

Griffith also said his plan differs from Siegelman's in its "absolutely sacred" commitment to explaining where all of the money would go and how an independent lottery commission would be structured. The proposal in the 1990s collapsed because people had questions about those things.

"Siegelman's plan was not transparent," he said.

Griffith also addressed a common criticism of state-run lotteries — that they prey on the most vulnerable citizens, folks who should not be taking money from food and other basic needs to gamble on a big payday that statistically is exceptionally unlikely. Griffith said he is not convinced that the poor are any more likely to play the lottery, and that even if they are, they already are doing it in Tennessee, Georgia and Florida.

"I think that's a myth, and if that myth is half true, don't we want those people buying tickets in our state?" he asked. "The question is where they buy them, not do you want to buy them."
Hubbert says AEA is in crisis

Mike Cason  mcason@al.com

Paul Hubbert, who made the Alabama Education Association a vaunted force in state politics during more than 40 years as its leader, mailed the members of the AEA board a letter saying the organization is in crisis.

"With great reluctance, but with absolute conviction of its necessity, I write this letter to you to inform you of the immediate danger, in fact crisis, in which our association finds itself," Hubbert wrote in a letter he said he mailed this morning.

He wrote that the problems are both external and internal. He mentioned changes resulting from the Republican supermajority in the Legislature, as well as problems with the organization’s finances and leadership.

Hubbert said the most immediate concern is the financial welfare of the AEA, saying the organization is not living within its means and is "in steep decline in membership and revenues with increasing deficits, risky investment strategies and uncontrolled expenditures."

Before stepping down in 2011, Hubbert was executive secretary of the AEA for more than 40 years.

He said tonight his letter "pretty much speaks for itself."

"I have been concerned about some things," he said. "I think after three years it was time to express those concerns."

Hubbert writes that he was "recently approached and given information and materials about the current status and welfare of the AEA and agreed that this is a matter that the Board should be aware of and agreed to send the attached material to you."
He attached three pages of information to his letter.

It says:

- AEA's membership is declining by the thousands.
- Expenditures have increased while revenues, membership fees, assets and savings had dropped since fiscal year 2011.
- AEA has suffered damage in the political arena, including the loss of payroll deduction for membership dues, exclusion from RSA boards, and cuts in public school funding and personnel.
- Work environment at the AEA is not healthy. Internal communication is absent or non-productive, and an atmosphere of intimidation exists.
- Reserves have dropped from about $13 million in fiscal year 2011 to about $6 million in fiscal year 2013.
- Membership fees dropped from $15 million in fiscal year 2011 to $13.7 million in fiscal year 2013.

The pages attached to the letter are critical of Hubbert's successor, AEA Executive Secretary Henry Mabry. It says Mabry has "created intolerable friction between AEA and members of both parties in the Legislature with resultant loss of respect, standing and influence."

Efforts to reach Mabry were not immediately successful.

Hubbert closes his letter by saying he has great hopes for the association's future.

"Alabama needs a strong public education voice in making policy and budgetary decisions," he wrote. "A weak AEA cannot represent teachers and support personnel and provide the needed programs and defend public education against all of the external threats, if it is weak internally and financially."
Hubbert says AEA in crisis
Retired leader details concerns in letter to board

By Kim Chandler
The Associated Press

MONTGOMERY | The retired leader of the Alabama Education Association says the teachers' organization that he built into a political powerhouse is now in crisis.

Paul Hubbert sent a letter Tuesday to the AEA board of directors, saying the organization is in danger of losing its strong membership and financial might that made it a formidable force in state politics.

"With great reluctance, but with absolute conviction of its necessity, I write this letter to you to inform you of the immediate danger, in fact crisis, in which our association finds itself," Hubbert wrote.

The organization faces both external and internal challenges. Hubbert warned of a "real crisis of financial support." He said leaders must work to "improve the image of the AEA in the minds of our membership and in the minds of the teachers of Alabama."

Hubbert said he wrote the letter in response to "requests" from leaders of the AEA's Montgomery Chapter and leaders of AEA's Mobile County Association.

"I have never refused to help the association and I am not going to start now. I am not going to be afraid to speak my mind," Hubbert said.
internal threats, he wrote. The external threats include the Republican legislative supermajority that ended the organization's ability to collect membership dues by payroll deduction.

But he said the organization also faces internal troubles, including management, financial and organizational problems. Hubbert particularly criticized the organization's dwindling reserve funds and investment in high-risk stocks.

Hubbert led AEA for more than 40 years before retiring in 2011 for health reasons. The board hired former Gov. Don Siegelman's finance director, Henry Mabry, to replace him.

Hubbert, in a telephone interview Wednesday, said he wrote the letter because he has concerns about the health of the organization and "to some extent" the management style of the current executive secretary.

"The reserve fund that was there when we left has been used up," he said.

He noted that spending the reserve funds occurred before the end to payroll deduction started with the new school year. He said the ending of dues checkoff was a blow for AEA, but the financial impact is just starting.

He said AEA membership peaked at 105,000 before the recession and had dropped to about 100,000 when he retired because schools cut teachers and staff during the recession. He said he doesn't know what the membership number is now, but he understands it is down significantly.

Hubbert attached an unsigned memo to the letter called the "State of AEA." Hubbard said it was information given to him that he agreed to send on to the board. The memo said that Mabry's "bull in a china shop" style had caused friction with legislators and that morale in the organization was suffering.

"The atmosphere of secretiveness, bullying and admonishments has resulted in an atmosphere of intimidation and mistrust," the document read.

Mabry issued a statement saying he understood that Hubbert's letter was receiving press attention, but that these were internal matters.

"I respect Dr. Hubbert as a mentor and a friend. But these issues must be handled by the elected leadership of AEA, not in the press," Mabry said.

Asked if he supported Mabry's hiring, Hubbert said he didn't push the AEA board to hire anyone. But he said, "I was pleased Dr. Mabry came through the process and was appointed."

Asked if it was time for a change, he said, "That's the board's decision."

Hubbert said he hopes his letter will get AEA to live within its means. "They haven't been doing that for the last three years," he said.
Schools chief gets positive evaluation

But needs work on communication skills

By Jamon Smith
Staff Writer

Tuscaloosa City Schools Superintendent Paul McKendrick’s evaluation is in, and the results are once again high. Out of 52 possible points, McKendrick received a score of 47.

His evaluator, James Wright, president of Professional Development Services, said McKendrick has done an “outstanding job of maintaining high standards of academic excellence in the school system in every aspect of administration."

McKendrick, who earns $198,000 a year and is the state’s third highest paid superintendent, said he felt the evaluation was mostly fair.

“Evaluations as they are take a picture of you during that window,” he said. “You just hope that it captures everything you do. ... With 47 out of 52 points, I’m pretty satisfied about it. There are a few parts I’m disappointed in. You look at your own growth and go from there.”

Lee Garrison, school board chairman

“I believe Dr. McKendrick has a lot of strengths, but I believe we have to continue to work on communication, whether that be internally with the board or externally with the community.”

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REPORT

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There were eight "areas of excellence" on which McKendrick received four out of four points, five "areas of strength" on which he received three out of four points and two areas listed as in need of improvement.

The areas rated as excellent were knowledge of federal/state laws, organizing for results, technology, planning, school operation, assessment, fiscal and innovation. His five areas of strength were leadership of human resources, professional responsibilities, communication, problem solving and collaboration.

"His evaluation was extremely good, and he got glowing reviews," said Harry Lee, a school board member. "I still say one of the best things this board has done is hire Dr. McKendrick. We've been on an upward trend since then."

Needs improvement

Oddly enough, problem solving and collaboration were listed as both strengths and as the two areas he needs the most improvement in.

Communication was also mentioned as a strength, but in the comments section of the evaluation and in interviews with board members, it was mentioned as McKendrick's biggest problem.

"I believe Dr. McKendrick has a lot of strengths, but I believe we have to continue to work on communication, whether that be internally with the board or externally with the community," said Lee Garrison, board chair. "That was noted on his other two evaluations."

McKendrick said he doesn't understand why the evaluation listed problem solving and collaboration as problem areas.

He said if problem solving was a weakness, the system would not have the success it's experienced under his leadership.

As far as collaboration is concerned, he said he collaborates when necessary, but everything doesn't require collaboration, and some people may not understand that.

But when it comes to communication, he admits that's an area where he's fallen short.

"Even before my evaluation, I submitted to the board a communication plan," McKendrick said. "I own that, and it's something I could have done a better job with. What I didn't do up until that point is that we had three new board members and they needed to be apprised of information at a greater frequency than what I was doing. Every evaluation is a chance for you to grow."

Not released

There were other problems with the evaluation.

A summary of the completed evaluation was presented to the school board at its Aug. 5 meeting, but copies of the complete evaluation weren't given to the school board until its Aug. 19 meeting.

Also, The Tuscaloosa News made repeated requests for a
A summary of the completed evaluation was presented to the school board at its Aug. 5 meeting, but copies of the complete evaluation weren't given to the school board until its Aug. 19 meeting. Also, The Tuscaloosa News made repeated requests for a complete copy of the evaluation for nearly a month. A copy of it was obtained from a source outside of McKendrick's office this week.

complete copy of the evaluation for nearly a month. A copy of it was obtained from a source outside of McKendrick's office this week.

McKendrick said Friday there was no specific reason why he didn't provide a copy of his evaluation to The News.

"The first time you asked for it, I had not given it to the board," McKendrick said. "The second time, there was no particular reason. I haven't been able to always give you what you ask for. Anytime you ask for stuff, I give it to you, but it's not always at a specific time. We're just busy. If you look at the results, it's nothing to really hide from anybody."

Evaluation issues

Other problems with the evaluation are that it's not objective enough and doesn't represent enough of the opinions of people who work with McKendrick, board members said. The only groups surveyed by the evaluation were board members, system administrators, principals and teachers.

"I think the (evaluation) instrument was fine, but I would like to see more community involvement in his evaluation," said Norman Crow, a board member. "I think part of his job is not just with the school system and the board."

Board member James Minyard said measurable objective goals need to be a part of any superintendent's evaluation.

"I'm hoping that the board is more thorough of our analysis for what we think should be done by the superintendent next time," Minyard said. "Student achievement is our No. 1 priority. This had too much subjective stuff. How do you rate communication? How do you do that? But when it comes to student achievement, there are some milestones."

Board member Marvin Lucas said creating a thorough and fair evaluation instrument needs to be a continuous process for the board.

Garrison said he's hoping the board can nail down a better evaluation instrument by the end of November.

"I do not believe the (evaluation) tool was what I was ex-
State's school choice law doesn't go far enough
Merrifield and Ortiz recommend lawmakers expand the tax credit program to include all schools. Currently, it applies only to 14 percent of them. "Universal eligibility should be rapidly phased in," the report states. "The resulting huge increase in the market would create incentives for education entrepreneurs to increase or expand their services."

Most of the report details the shortcomings of the Alabama public school system and promotes a range of options that would make it easier for parents to choose alternatives for their children's education. If Alabama accepted all of the report's recommendations, it would have the most far-reaching school choice programs in the country.

The report rehashes some of the well-documented measures by which Alabama trails the rest of the country in education. Data from the National Assessment of Education Progress indicate that the state's fourth graders rank below average in math and science. Eighth graders score well below average in math, science and reading. Alabama also lags the national average in graduating students' performance on the American College Testing exams for most subjects. In addition, Alabama has a "scandalous dropout rate," the report states.

Alabama has posted these results, Merrifield and Ortiz write, despite repeated state and national educational reform efforts. Spending is not the problem, either, the authors argue. They note that Alabama per-student spending is slightly higher than in Germany, France, South Korea and Finland. All of those countries have significantly out-performed Alabama on international standardized tests, the authors point out.
Universal choice urged

In assessing why education reform initiatives have barely moved the needle, Merrifield and Ortiz argue that the reason has to do with a reliance on large education bureaucracies that foster a “one-size-fits-all” approach.

Ortiz and Merrifield argue that would be like having a restaurant that had to serve everyone in a geographic area. Such an eatery would have a “poorly executed, huge menu” in an attempt to cater to a diverse customer base or would lack specialized foods that appeal to smaller groups.

The resulting offerings would be bland to appeal to the largest number of people possible but would leave most diners unsatisfied, they write.

The same is true for education, according to the report. Students fail in traditional public schools because they are bored or cannot keep up or need different teaching methods.

The best way to address those problems is to encourage a broad range of options, the authors argue. They contend that a large number of new schools could allow parents to find the one that meets their children’s particular needs. For instance, a school might reach sports enthusiasts by designing math problems around sports statistics.

Dan Smith, a Troy professor who has reviewed the research, said breaking monopoly of public schools not only benefits students who transfer to new schools but those who stay because schools are forced to improve.

“The long-term evidence is crystal clear that expanding school choice is the best way to improve educational outcomes,” he said. “The public schools are beginning to shape up and compete.”

Details

The study offers a number of recommendations:

Education savings accounts. The state could make an annual deposit into parents’ accounts that could be used to pay tuition at a private school, purchase supplies or buy courses from an approved provider.

Course choice. Similar to education savings accounts, the state would pay for course from non-public schools.

A universal tax credit. Like the Alabama Accountability Act, except it would be open to everyone. Merrifield and Ortiz argue that it would foster specialized schools.

Tuition vouchers. The state would pay for children to attend private schools. This could be phased in, first as a pilot program targeted at the worst-performing urban school systems.

Charter schools. Illegal in Alabama but adopted by 43 states and the District of Columbia, they are public schools that operate outside the normal system. Merrifield and Ortiz argue for a “strong” charter law that would provide funding comparable to traditional public schools and allow more than one entity to grant charters.

The study also recommends that Alabama create a program to train educators in the business aspects of running a school. This would encourage more education entrepreneurship, it states.
Mutually beneficial

UA, Lockheed Martin announce research partnership

By Jason Morton
Staff Writer

Global aerospace titan Lockheed Martin has partnered with the University of Alabama to develop an analytics research lab at the Culverhouse College of Commerce.

The partnership, announced Monday, will result in the first such facility of its kind in the United States that is dedicated exclusively to the field of data science.

"The University of Alabama and the Culverhouse College of Commerce have become recognized leaders in business analytics and innovation," said University of Alabama President Judy Bonner. "We are excited that this lab will provide research to businesses that will help them become more effective not only locally, but globally as well."

Designed to help companies of all sizes better compete in a global economy, the laboratory will serve as a research center for data analytics — the science of discovering meaningful patterns within data — and provided collaboration and research across government, industry and academia to help companies anticipate and solve problems.

By incorporating UA students, the lab is meant to supplement the traditional classroom experience by focusing on the development

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and application of analytics technology. It's also meant to improve the analytics labor pool to meet industry needs for a diverse workforce while providing visual, hands-on experiences that represent the basic elements for analytics applications and research.

"We are using data analytics today at Lockheed Martin to study nuances in cost, schedule and performance data from across our nearly 4,000 programs and throughout our supply chain," said Ray O. Johnson, Lockheed Martin's senior vice president and chief technology officer. "Applying machine learning algorithms, for example, to real program data can help provide early warning to identify and eliminate risks before even an expert program manager may have discovered them."

Johnson said Lockheed Martin chose to partner with UA's Culverhouse College of Commerce because of its experience with data analytics, it's commitment to prepare students for a global economy and proximity to key Lockheed Martin facilities, such as the manufacturing facility in Troy.

The company's CEO and president is a two-time UA graduate.

Marilyn A. Hewson, who earned her bachelor of science degree in business administration and her master of arts degree in economics from the University of Alabama, was named chairman, president and chief executive officer in 2012. She has had 18 management jobs with Lockheed Martin since joining the company in 1983.

The laboratory, which is still in the design stages, will be housed in Bidgood Hall. Features are expected to include plasma screens, digital projectors and digital idea boards that can be used to monitor trends and graphically represent data.

There also will be private meeting areas to facilitate the work of small groups and an alumni tracker to show the reach of Culverhouse alumni in international business.

Also, with the backing and partnership of Lockheed Martin, the laboratory can become a destination for any expert in the field as well as an environment for current students to access data in a unique and powerful way.

"Our students have been using business analytics to help companies improve their bottom line with innovative solutions since 2002. Just over the past few years, our students have saved companies hundreds of thousands of dollars by using data to predict future events, solve critical problems and increase performance," said J. Michael Hardin, dean of UA's Culverhouse College of Commerce. "This new partnership with Lockheed Martin will enhance our abilities to provide cutting-edge services to all types of businesses around the world."

Reach Jason Morton at jason.morton@tuscaloosanews.com or 205-722-0200.
Which Alabama college received highest rating in U.S. News & World Report rankings?

By: Paul Gattis

The University of Alabama received the highest ranking among Alabama colleges in one of the nation's premiere comparisons released Tuesday morning.

U.S. News & World Report unveiled its 2015 Best Colleges rankings and ranked Alabama in a tie as the nation's 88th best college in national universities -- the top listing of institutions of higher learning.

Auburn University was close behind, tied for 103rd nationally.

The University of Alabama at Birmingham (tied for 149th) and the University of Alabama in Huntsville (tied for 181st) were the only other state colleges listed among national universities.

The magazine defined national universities as offering "a full range of undergraduate majors, plus master's and doctoral programs. These colleges also are committed to producing groundbreaking research."

Princeton, Harvard and Yale were listed as the nation's top three colleges, followed by Columbia, Stanford and the University of Chicago in a tie for fourth.

Birmingham-Southern College was ranked in a tie for 124th among national liberal arts colleges.

Samford University, at No. 3 in the South region, received the top ranking in Alabama for regional universities -- defined as offering "a full range of undergrad programs and some master's programs but few doctoral programs." The University of Montevallo was 37th.

Spring Hill College, tied for 18th, leads Alabama colleges in the South region for regional universities rankings. Auburn University-Montgomery and Troy University are tied for 76th and the University of North Alabama at 81st are the only other Alabama schools in the regional universities rankings.

Tuskegee University is tied for ninth in the South Region for Regional Colleges and the University of Mobile is tied for 25th.
UA 38th in ranking of public universities

The University of Alabama finished in a five-way tie for 38th place among public universities in the United States, according to the annual U.S. News and World Report ranking of colleges and universities.

UA tied with Binghamton University-SUNY, Colorado School of Mines, Stony Brook University-SUNY and the University of Colorado-Boulder.

The University of California-Berkeley finished first, followed by UCLA, Virginia, Michigan and North Carolina.

According to the magazine's website, public schools are supervised by state governments and are funded at least partly by tax dollars and state subsidies.
Buy for Rise benefit slated

School fundraiser to be held Sept. 26-27 on UA campus

By Ken Roberts
City Editor

The formula for the annual Buy for Rise charity sale and silent auction is tried and true, so organizers plan few changes for this year's fundraiser on Sept. 26-27.

"The format is the same, but the silent auction is fabulous with many 'packages' for bidding," said Martha Cook, executive director of Rise School.

All proceeds benefit the Rise School on the University of Alabama campus, which enrolls nearly 100 preschool children, about half of whom have special needs. The program uses a creative curriculum that integrates therapy into the classroom.

"As usual, the money raised is for the operation budget for Rise. We have to raise at least $300,000 per year just to fund the program," Cook said. "The golf tournament (held in the spring) is our major fundraiser, but this one is the second best. I hope we have a great turn out this year. Our goal is to raise) $50,000."

Buy for Rise features clearance items provided by local retailers at deep discounts, 75 percent off on Sept. 26 and up to 90 percent off on Sept. 27.

The pre-sale night and silent auction will be from 5 to 8 p.m. Sept. 26 at Rise School, 600 Johnny Stallings Drive. The pre-sale will feature catering by Hoo's Q and Greene Beverage and International Wines.

Tickets to the pre-sale are $10 in advance, available now at Rise

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RISE

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School, and $15 at the door.

Before the pre-sale, 35 "golden tickets" will be sold for $100 apiece for a preview party.

On Sept. 27, admission will be free, and shoppers can take advantage of the bargains from 8 to 11 a.m.

Participating retailers include Anders Hardware, Anna Kate and Co., Baby Talk, Bag 101, Barton's Nursery and Gifts, Black Warrior Outdoors, Bow Regards, Canterbury Clothing, Campus Collection, Christy's, Confetti, Downtown Baby, Effie's, Enchanting Casuals, Expeditions, Faucetts, Forget Me Not, Gilda's Salon and Day Spa, Gracefully Done, Gypsy Spur, Heidi's Interiors, Hudson Poole Jewelers, Iris and Lola, JNJ Apparel, Katelyn's Korner, Krush, Kyle Fine Stationery, Lampada's, Lily Pads and Baby Bundles, the Locker Room, the Purse Man, Lucca, Miss Priss Boutique, Mobley and Sons, Northport Pharmacy, the Pants Store, Part Two, Primadonnas at the Dance Center, Rhubarb's, Sash, Sew Delightful, Susu's Tutus, the Trunk, the Toy Shoppe, Vintage Vibe, Virginia and Lee Interiors, Wagner's and Woods and Water.

Thirty-five "golden tickets" to the preview party will be sold for $100 each.

BUY FOR RISE

■ What: Charity sale and silent auction to raise money for Rise School.
■ When: 5-8 p.m. Sept. 26 for the pre-sale night and silent auction; 8-11 a.m. Sept. 27.
■ Where: Rise School, 600 Johnny Stallings Drive.
■ Admission: $10 in advance for the pre-sale night and $15 on Sept. 26; free on Sept. 27.
■ More information: Call 205-348-7931; go online at www.riseschool.ua.edu; search "Buy for Rise" on Facebook.
UA opens new high-tech clean room with more space, tech

Vasha Hunt • vhunt@al.com

Professor Subhadra Gupta showed off the University of Alabama’s new clean room — which is officially known as the Microfabrication Facility, or MFF — last week at the North Engineering Research Center on campus in Tuscaloosa. The new 7,111-square-foot lab clean room will be for research into computer memory and solar panels.

The lab is an expansion and relocation of the original facility, which launched in January 2007. It is directed by Gupta who is UA’s professor of metallurgical and materials engineering.

The lab is open to researchers across campus, and features three clean room bays. Clean rooms restrict airborne particles to specified limits, allowing the production of very sensitive materials that are measured in nanometers.

The technology being used to create transistors is photo-reactive and sensitive to ultraviolet light, so light filters for ultraviolet light pull out much of the blue light portion of the visible light spectrum too, resulting in a yellowish tinge.
Sales continue, rain or shine

Vendors say weather influences shopping more than victories

By Angel Coker
Staff Writer

Vendor tents lined the sidewalks along 10th Avenue and Paul W. Bryant Drive on Saturday at Alabama's first home game of the season against Florida Atlantic University.

A multitude of Crimson Tide paraphernalia filled the Bamaland tent, but out of all the merchandise owner Tracy Hollingsworth had to offer, he said the majority of what he sold Saturday was visors because of the sun. His wife, who predicted rain, said if they had umbrellas, they would be sold out soon.

"The weather has a lot to do with what people buy," Hollingsworth said.

Of all the autographed pictures and houndstooth, crimson and white koozies, key chains, footballs, foam fingers, flags, shakers, car stickers, clothing, jewelry and more available to fans beneath about 50 tents on city property and more on private property, the majority of vendors said they sold more T-shirts than any other item.

"Everybody wants the T-shirts," said Sports Station vendor Kelly Hester.

Poncho sales began to compete with that of T-shirts when the rain and lightning ended the game with about eight minutes left on the clock in the fourth quarter. Eventually, the game was called for.

Stephanie Prosser takes a picture of her daughter, Camden, 9, as she models a pair of sunglasses from D&D Designs as they shop for Alabama gear and souvenirs outside Bryant-Denny Stadium.
SALES

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safety concerns with No. 2 Alabama moving to 2-0 on the season with a 41-0 win over Florida Atlantic.

But those aren't the only two areas where Alabama ranks No. 2.

In the $4.62 billion marketplace for college licensed merchandise, the university ranked No. 2 in collecting the most royalties of any college or university represented by the Collegiate Licensing Company in the 2012-2013 fiscal year.

Alabama was beat out by the University of Texas at Austin, which claims the same royalty rate on all licensed merchandise as Alabama. According to the Collegiate Licensing Company, Alabama receives a 12 percent royalty rate of all officially licensed collegiate products sold. The royalties go back to the university to fund student and campus endeavors.

The university doesn't have claim to royalties from all the items beneath the tents on game day, however. Revenues from unique items such as solar-powered fan hats that have no trademark are not affected by royalties. Darlene Glenn, whose family has been selling merchandise at UA games for more than 20 years, sold about three of the hats at $35 each Saturday.

The straw hats, which look similar to some of the hats UA head football Coach Nick Saban wears during practices, have small fans in the crown that begin circulating air via solar energy when in the sun.

"This is not something we would typically have in our booth," Glenn said. "The (man we bought them from) said he had some fan hats, and we were thinking Alabama fans. I was thinking it was a fan hat, but I wasn't thinking a fan on the hat."
Bojangles' to be sold at
UA stadium, coliseum

Bojangles', a fast-food restaurant specializing in chicken, and Crimson Tide Sports Marketing have signed a three-year sponsorship and concessions agreement.

Bojangles' menu items will be sold at Bryant-Denny Stadium and Coleman Coliseum during sporting events starting with Saturday's Crimson Tide football game.

Bojangles' food items will be served from two locations at Bryant-Denny — between Gate 15 and 19 in the lower level on the West side of the stadium and outside the North end zone entrance, adjacent to the Walk of Champions, during football games. It also will sell its menu items at Coleman Coliseum during basketball games and gymnastics meets. Crimson Tide Sports Marketing is the multimedia rights holder for the University of Alabama Department of Intercollegiate Athletics. It will manage the relationship on behalf of the school.
Beating sends UA student to hospital

Three other students arrested; warrant issued for fourth

By Stephanie Taylor
Staff Writer

A University of Alabama student was hospitalized after he was attacked and knocked unconscious at a campus dormitory last week.

Four other students are suspected of assaulting the 18-year-old victim, according to court documents. The attack happened early Saturday morning at the Presidential Village II dorm on the north side of campus.

Three other students had been charged with second-degree assault as of Wednesday evening.

According to court documents, suspect Nicholas Mitrow, 18, called his friends at 12:30 a.m. Saturday and said he had found a suspect who had assaulted him earlier.

Authorities believe that Mitrow's friend, Zachary Stewart, 18, arrived and punched the victim in the face, knocking him to the ground, according to the deposition filed by a Tuscaloosa County Metro Homicide Unit investigator. Suspect Joseph Baroni "began jumping on the victim and punching him," he wrote. The fourth suspect, Kevin Brady, 18, "grabbed the victim from behind in a choke hold and pulled him until he fell back and then got up and started

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STUDENT

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punching and kicking the victim until he was knocked unconscious.

The victim, who is 6 feet 4 inches tall and weighs 270 pounds, had a seizure while bystanders called for help. He was transported to the intensive care unit at DCH Regional Medical Center, where doctors diagnosed him with bleeding within his brain, according to the documents. The victim is from Texas, according to the court file.

Mitrow, from New Jersey, was arrested Tuesday while Stewart, from Colorado, and Brady, from New York, were arrested Wednesday. All are charged with felony second-degree assault and have been released from the Tuscaloosa County Jail on bond. Baroni had not yet been arrested as of Wednesday night, but a warrant has been issued for his arrest, according to the Tuscaloosa County Sheriff's Office website.

No further information about the dispute or the victim's condition was available Wednesday night.
Tuscaloosa businessman, community leader Richard Ellis, Sr. dies at 72

Tuscaloosa businessman and community leader Richard Ellis Sr. died Thursday morning. He was 72.

Ellis was the founder of Advantage Realty and was active in the real estate industry for 30 years. He is a past president of the Tuscaloosa Board of Realtors and was one of the early board members of the Tuscaloosa County Industrial Development Authority.

“He was a brilliant business person, but what he will be remembered for even more is he was a great Tuscaloosa citizen,” said longtime friend and business associate Bart Adcox.

Many people in the Tuscaloosa area today have good jobs because of Ellis' efforts to recruit new industries to the county, Adcox said.

Ellis was originally from La Grange, Ga. He moved to Tuscaloosa to work in management positions in the textile industry before getting into real estate and real estate development — both commercial and residential.

Ellis is survived by his wife, four children and seven grandchildren.
The secret weapon of Southside

ART TIPTON IS NO STRANGER TO SRI - NOW HE'S BACK TO LEAD THE CHARGE

Art Tipton says one of the best pieces of advice he has received is to remain curious.
Just south of the University of Alabama at Birmingham campus sits one of the city’s most mysterious economic powerhouses.

It’s a sprawling campus that includes its own castle and research projects ranging from drug development to air defense projects for the federal government.

There’s a lot that happens on the Southern Research Institute campus that many in Birmingham don’t even know about.

But Art Tipton does. The 25-year veteran of the biotech and life sciences industry has worked for a number of startups, successfully seeing them go from ideas to being acquired and flourishing as public companies.

Now, he is back at SRI as CEO of Birmingham’s largest nonprofit organization, one which generated $91 million in revenue in 2011 and an even larger economic impact on the region.

Tipton plans to continue SRI’s work in drug development, the defense world and clean energy, while also increasing collaboration with UAB and boosting commercialization efforts from the research that takes place at the institute.

Tipton sat down the with BBJ to discuss his strategy for leading SRI, its plans for Quinlan Castle and the biotech industry, among other things:

On the best advice he’s received: I was lucky enough to have three mentors in my life and the central thing that they taught me was remain curious. Another thing that my main mentor taught me was that decisions don’t have to be made immediately and it’s important to contemplate.

On his management style: Most of my career I’ve been managing highly educated workforces that are also highly technical, and so they crave independence and self direction and are highly motivated. Making sure that you’re creating an atmosphere that people have the freedom within the boundaries to create value.

On the biggest lesson he’s learned as a CEO: I relearned that the vast majority of people are motivated from their heart rather than their head. It’s that talking about financials is much less of a way to connect and relate to your employees than to talk about the important things that we are doing at Southern Research.

On the biggest challenge of running SRI: When federal funding is flat or declining. If you’re heavily dependent on federal funding you have to reinvent yourself to work toward other types of funding.

On the proudest moment of his career: We sold Brookwood Pharmaceuticals in July 2007 and that was about two-and-a-half years after we spun it out of Southern Research. It was the largest
On how Birmingham can secure more venture capital funding: There are organizations here that are doing some investing, but I think one of the key things is if we could convince a nationwide VC to visit here with some regularity. The ultimate win would be for one of those organizations to have enough deal flow here that they have an office here. They need to see that there’s a lot of potential transactions. We have to try harder than other regions.

On the next big thing in biotech: There are a few things. The phrase that people are using is pharmaceutical economics. I think increasingly looking at the overall cost of the product as it goes through the approval process as the nation thinks about health care dollars there’s going to be an increased awareness of does the price associated with this therapy justify what it’s going to save in overall health care dollars?

single financial event for Southern Research in its history. But what was particularly exciting was that we closed the deal on a Tuesday, announced it on a Wednesday and on Friday we handed a check to everyone who participated and helped.

On his future goals: Continue the transition that is here at Southern Research. We have a phenomenal historical legacy to build on, but with the changing financial climate, we need to be responsive to that.

On the expectations for Quinlan Castle: Anything that we do with the castle will cost multiple millions of dollars. Right now, we are at best in an exploratory mode. We don’t have any immediate plans to do anything yet. The range of things we’ve talked about have been pretty broad.

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Alan Alexander conducted this interview. Reach him at aalexander@bizjournals.com or 205-443-5609.
Rare respiratory virus could be in Alabama

ENTEROVIRUS 68: IT COULD EXPLAIN A RECENT SURGE IN RESPIRATORY ILLNESSES SEEN AT UAB AND CHILDREN'S OF ALABAMA.

Mike Oliver < moliver@al.com

The unusual spread of a relatively rare respiratory virus that has sent hundreds of children to hospitals in about a dozen states is believed to be in Alabama — although tests have not yet confirmed it.

A top infectious disease expert at UAB said this week he believes it is likely that Enterovirus 68 is at least partially responsible for a surge in respiratory illnesses seen at UAB and Children's of Alabama since mid-to-late August.

Meanwhile, the Alabama Department of Public Health is investigating two clusters of respiratory illness in children, one in Mobile and one in north Alabama. Six specimens have been received and sent to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to test for Enterovirus 68. Results could take several weeks.

Especially hard-hit have been Colorado, Kansas City and the Chicago areas, but other states, including Georgia, have reported the virus, that can be much like the common cold. However in some cases it can cause difficulty breathing and can severely aggravate asthma.

It usually strikes children — from babies up to those in their late teens — but it can hit adults too, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says.

"So here in the Birmingham area, we in our molecular diagnostic laboratory... have been looking for Enterovirus 68 in particular," said David Kimberlin, co-director of the UAB Division of Pediatric Infectious Diseases at Children's. They haven't confirmed a case yet, but the sample size has been small and they are awaiting results of a higher level of testing, Kimberlin said.

"Hospitalizations are higher than would be expected at this time of year," Anne Schuchat, head of infectious diseases for CDC, said, as quoted by National Public Radio.

"The situation is evolving quickly," Schuchat said.

Kimberlin said doctors in the emergency department, inpatient physicians taking care of children being admitted and doctors in the intensive unit have all noticed a "significant" upswing in patients.

"Since the latter part of August, all have noticed an increase in volume of patients being admitted with respiratory illnesses." "To my knowledge, all of those children have done fine," Kimberlin said.

"The difference here is that this particular strain, Enterovirus 68, seems to be more pathogenic, more aggressive, more likely to cause severe infection," Kimberlin said.

"It can cause mild cold symptoms, but on the other hand it can cause more severe respiratory symptoms such as heavy breathing: 'a lot of wheezing is associated with this,'" Kimberlin said.

Parents should watch for children having difficulty catching their breath or wheezing, especially when the child doesn't usually have attacks of wheezing.

The best prevention? Just like cold and flu advice — wash your hands and stay away, if possible, from large crowds and enclosed areas where other infected individuals may be.

Emil Hill contributed to this report.
Thrasher among four finalists for FSU’s top job

By: Jim Turner

TALLAHASSEE— Despite opposition from students and faculty, state Sen. John Thrasher, a well-connected Republican from St. Augustine, remains in the hunt to be the next president of Florida State University.

The university’s 27-member Presidential Advisory Search Committee on Tuesday named four finalists, including Thrasher, to succeed former President Eric Barron. Barron, an academic with a track record in fundraising, was named president of Penn State University in February.

While Thrasher vowed during his interview Tuesday to make the school “proud” if he gets hired, a number of students and faculty members implored the committee to focus on candidates with strong academic backgrounds.

“Sen. Thrasher meets the qualifications that this board agreed to when we put those qualifications out,” university Trustee Ed Burr, the chairman of the search committee, said after the meeting.

The other finalists, chosen after the committee spent two days interviewing a pool of 11 applicants, are Richard B. Marchase, University of Alabama at Birmingham vice president for research and economic development; Michele G. Wheatly, who until June had been provost at West Virginia University; and Michael V. Martin, Colorado State University System chancellor.

FSU Provost Garnett Stokes, who has been serving as interim president, failed in several votes to make the finalist pool, including one proposal backed by students and faculty on the committee for her to replace Thrasher among the finalists.

The finalists will be expected to attend a second round of interviews that will include meetings with groups on campus next week. Background checks are planned.

The committee is scheduled to make a recommendation to the university’s board of trustees on Sept. 22.

The trustees, who would still have to forward the final choice to the university system’s Board of Governors, are scheduled to meet Sept. 23.

Thrasher, the only “non-traditional” candidate among the 11 interviewed the past two days, has been a major supporter of FSU in the Legislature, including helping the university establish a medical school. Currently chairman of the Senate Rules Committee and chairman of Gov. Rick Scott’s re-election campaign, he is also a former House speaker and former chairman of the Republican Party of Florida.

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During his one-hour, 15-question interview, Thrasher talked about his passion for the university and a desire to make a difference at the school where he received his undergraduate and law degrees.

“I want to be president of Florida State University. If you give me the opportunity to do it, I promise you, I will make you proud,” Thrasher said in response to a question from committee member and state Rep. Jimmy Patronis, R-Panama City.

But Thrasher has faced skepticism and opposition from faculty members for months.

Physics professor Todd Adams and English Department Chairman Eric Walker, faculty members on the committee, both said Marchase was one of the strongest candidates.

Several faculty members advised the committee that there were other excellent candidates interviewed Monday and Tuesday, but that they would not support Thrasher.

William Hallal, a graduate student in freshman composition, said he heard nothing that changed his view of Thrasher during the interview and said Thrasher’s hiring would only bring national “shame and scrutiny” upon the school.

College of Communications and Information professor Gary Burnett added that Thrasher’s hiring would only damage the reputation of the school rather than help boost the school’s national reputation.

Still, the level of objections wasn’t a repeat of Friday’s drama, when students — protesting for more say in the selection process and against the prospects of Thrasher being named the next president — briefly delayed the committee from creating a shortlist of applicants to interview.

And in a sign that the campus isn’t unanimously opposed to Thrasher, a couple of students and faculty voiced support for the senator.

Joe Vance, president of the Pi Kappa Alpha fraternity chapter at FSU, asserted that a large portion of the Greek community backed Thrasher.

“I’m under the impression that a good leader can do anything in terms of leading,” Vance said.

Physics professor Paul Cottle also affirmed that Thrasher has the ability to attract the money needed to improve the research programs at the school.

“We have a candidate who has been a successful and passionate advocate of our institution and he wants to continue that as president,” Cottle said.

For the most part, Thrasher hit key talking points about academics during his interview. He talked about the need to lobby state lawmakers and privately raise money to get the funds needed.

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to improve programs at the Tallahassee campus. He also said “our athletes are students first,” and “our faculty are grossly underpaid.”

“I don’t particularly have a greater skill set than anybody else, but I know how to get things done,” Thrasher said.

Thrasher also kept away from his support during the past legislative session of a controversial proposal that would have moved toward splitting the Florida A&M University-FSU College of Engineering. Ultimately, lawmakers approved a study of the issue and Thrasher noted on a couple of occasions Tuesday that lawmakers and the school need to follow the findings of the study.

“I don’t know what the right fix is necessarily, but if we want Florida State University to move ahead in the STEM areas, particularly engineering areas, we probably need to understand there are issues and problems,” Thrasher responded. “And hopefully this study will reflect those, and we’ll be able to make very positive decisions not only for Florida State but also FAMU.”
WORLDCOM WHISTLEBLOWER

Cynthia Cooper, the WorldCom whistleblower whose team of auditors discovered a $4 billion fraud, will be a guest speaker at the University of Alabama in Huntsville.

Cooper, part of the UAH College of Business Administration Distinguished Speaker Series, will speak at Chan Auditorium at 5:30 p.m. on Sept. 23. The talk is free and open to the public.

According to the announcement from UAH, Cooper was vice president of the internal audit department when her team of auditors uncovered nearly $4 billion in fraud at WorldCom in 2002. At the time, it was the largest accounting fraud in American history. Later that year, Cooper was one of three people named “People of the Year” by Time magazine.

Cooper received a master’s degree in accountancy from the University of Alabama.
SAIC 'optimistic' about future in Huntsville as company nears 1-year anniversary of split

Although the government shut down for more than two weeks last fall during Science Application International Corp.'s (SAIC) split into two firms, officials say the high-technology company weathered the storm without much interference.

The split included a new, smaller SAIC, which retained the original name, and Leidos, a larger business focused new products for the energy, security and healthcare markets.

A week after the split, SAIC Sector President Nazzic S. Keene said the federal government curtailed most of its operations for 16 days. The shutdown went on longer than Keene would have liked, but she said SAIC delivered on its promises to customers, employees and shareholders despite "a lot of noise going on in the system."

"It's a hard industry," she said. "Our customers are faced with budget pressures and are having to make difficult choices on the core aspects of their mission and how to best maximize the dollar."

Approaching one year since the spin-off, Keene and SAIC Senior Vice President and General Manager of the Army and Air Force Group John H. Gully sat down with AL.com to discuss how SAIC has performed as an independent company in a difficult defense climate.

Gully said SAIC, which has 2,300 workers in Huntsville, split into two companies to be more competitive and transition to a matrix organizational structure. SAIC will continue refining the model for the next two years as it supports complex mission solutions for the U.S. Army and enterprise IT systems for NASA.

"We're all pretty excited about how that has worked out for SAIC," he said. "I think we're a leaner organization, a flatter organization and our rates are coming down. Although there are challenges in the market for everyone, we're pretty excited about our position."

In the most recent quarter, SAIC's revenues were $952 million compared to just over $1 billion during the same period in 2013. Operating income was $59 million, up from $38 million, while net income also jumped from $25 million last year to $34 million.

Officials blame the dip in revenue on "the loss of the DISN Global Solutions program, completion of a program to supply technical support to the Army Reserve and National Guard, and lower material and subcontract revenues on Department of Defense contract vehicles due to delays in the release of contract funding."

"As we near our one-year anniversary as an independent company, our strategy to increase shareholder value remains unchanged," said Tony Moraco, SAIC chief executive officer.
Gully said SAIC will kick off a program to hire 250 recent college graduates over the next several months and plans to work with the University of Alabama in Huntsville to find young professionals to help grow the company's technical workforce.

Since the spin-off, Keene said SAIC has had the "time to position ourselves like a startup would." Well before the split took place, SAIC met with clients to explain the spin-off and benefits for customers.

"Even though it's a difficult climate and difficult industry, we remain optimistic about our ability and our stability in the climate we're in," Keene said. "We believe the split has served us well and will ultimately serve our customers, employees and shareholders well."
UAH team builds autonomous robot

By: Shevaun Bryan

Bridging the gap between man and machine. Two University of Alabama in Huntsville students, with the help of their professor, built something they say can be the eyes and ears of military or first responders.

“The project is about teaching robots how to control themselves,” said Dr. Farbod Fahimi, a mechanical engineer professor at UAH.

Fahimi teamed up with an undergraduate and graduate student to create a robot that takes directions and can operate like a driver-less car — a technology that can one day be applied to real cars and trucks.

“Every we do now and days, everything is automated, everything is hooked up to a computer,” explains 19-year-old Tevon Walker, an undergrad studying engineering who says that drones are the future.

The team has been working on the robot for a year and a half, and they say that their robot is part of the unmanned vehicular future that can function on its own or by remote control.

“What we write in code, it will execute that. That’s the great thing the robot is doing,” said Sai Susheel Praneeth Kode, a graduate student from India who says he appreciates the ‘double opportunity’ to work on the computer as well as on a physical robot.

Equipped with GPS, the robot can learn its surroundings and can serve as the eyes of a firefighter before he enters a burning building.”They don’t know how the house looks, or the rooms’ layout,” explains Fahimi, “but they can find their way on their own.”

The robot can detect and report its conditions to its controller — as well as eliminate the human element where it’s not needed in military or first response missions.

“You eliminate the two-level setup with technology and a human, with a robot its all in the same entity,” said Walker. The team expects the robot to process directions its given while telling engineers what its doing, and seeing.
New study: millennials least likely to own a credit card

A new study by Bankrate.com reveals more than 6 in 10 millennials don’t have a credit card.

According to the report, released Monday, 63% of people ages 18-29 do not have a credit card. In comparison, only 35% of adults 30 and over admit they don’t have one.

This could be a bad thing if they need to buy a house or car and need to qualify for certain loans with a good credit score, said John Burnett, University of Alabama- Huntsville finance professor.

“I think for a lot of young people, establishing credit with a credit card is perhaps the easiest way they can get started [building that credit],” he said.

College students we talked to say instead, they tend to rely on debit cards for electronic transactions. They say it’s an option that allows them to use their money, but there’s no way they can spend what they don’t have.

They tell us they haven’t opened a credit card out of fear they won’t be responsible enough with it.

“Especially when it comes to shopping, I feel like a credit card would just get me in huge trouble,” said Lena Cheatham, a University of Alabama- Huntsville freshman.

“If I had a credit card, then I might forget about paying the bills on time and I might mess up my credit score,” echoed UAH sophomore Ryan Gott.

There are other ways to build credit, if you or your child is apprehensive about signing up for a credit card. Burnett says it can help to take out a small loan and pay it back over time, or even open up a department store card and use it sparingly.

But if you decide it’s a good idea to open a card, bankers we spoke with by phone recommend starting small, and starting early.

It may require a co-signer if you’re just starting out, but they say it’s good to open up a card with a small line of credit (like a few hundred dollars.) You can work your way up to a higher limit if need be, and build credit in the process while you’re young. That way, upon graduation, you have some more flexibility.

But the overall message: be responsible, no matter what you decide to do.

“The biggest way to ruin your credit is to not pay your bills on time,” said Burnett.
What's Inside an Asteroid

By: Michael Mercier

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," 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."

What we want to do is actually probe the interior of asteroids and determine information about their structure.

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. 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," 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."

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

By detecting the number of muons that pass through the object at left, scientists can discover and measure the size of its core, shown reconstructed at right.

"Muons are like an SUV," says 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," 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," 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

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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."

Miller says he was already exploring using muons to probe asteroids when he attended a conference and found that PSI's 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," Miller says, "and we have joined forces to make a stronger project."

Source: University of Alabama in Huntsville
“Mike and Molly” creator helps lead workshops at Lee Deal Theatre Symposium

By: Megan Hayes

HUNTSVILLE, Ala. (WHNT) — The creative genius behind the show “Mike and Molly,” is sharing his knowledge with the theatre community in the Rocket City. Mark Roberts was the featured guest speaker at the 2nd Annual Lee Deal Theatre Symposium at UAH Saturday.

“We are doing a lot of talking,” said David Harwell, the director of UAHuntsville Theatre. “We’re talking to people about what we love, which is the theatre and the arts in our community. Sound good?” Harwell looked at Roberts. “Yeah, sounds good to me,” he laughed.

These two are like peas in a pod. Harwell and Roberts have worked together before and formed a close friendship. On Saturday, they both led workshops for young actors, tech personnel, and theatre volunteers.

“This is our second year doing this,” said Harwell. “We’re just thrilled with the turnout today.”

“Yeah, mine was standing room only,” joked Roberts. “Did you sell out?”

“Well, no I didn’t sell out,” replied Harwell.

It’s obvious that the two friends share a common love for sarcasm and a quick wit.

The symposium allows the Huntsville theatre community to come together and pick the brains of some of the best in the business. WHNT News 19 asked Roberts if the participants were interested in how he got his start and created one of the highest rated television sitcoms in 2010. “Those are probably the most frequent questions,” he said. “How did a bumbling idiot like you get to where you got to,” he laughed. “I don’t know. Dumb luck? Other people making poor decisions and letting me in the door?”

At the end of the day, these funny guys just want to share their knowledge and inspire others to keep creating magic on and off the stage. “We’ve just had some really exciting talks about how we work together and how we interpret material and how we present that to an audience,” said Harwell.

Roberts said he wants the participants to take something valuable away from the workshops. “I think a desire to help the Huntsville arts community thrive and to try to bring and maintain some quality theatre for the citizens of Huntsville, that’s what is most important.”

“Me too,” said Harwell. “I second that.”

Supported through funds from the Lee Deal Theatre Endowment and the National Endowment for the arts, this event is offered every year.
USA's new president reflects on his first 5 months; inauguration ceremony is Friday

By: Sally Pearsall Ericson

MOBILE, Alabama — Tony G. Waldrop has been in office as president of the University of South Alabama for all of five months, but he has hit the ground running. He has announced a record enrollment of 16,055; made numerous public appearances, including the grand opening of the newly renovated lobby and courtyard at USA Children's & Women's Hospital; gotten soaked in the ALS Ice Bucket Challenge; and ...

Yes, you were probably wondering: On a few occasions, he has also answered questions about the possibility of a football stadium on campus.

On Friday, Sept. 12, Waldrop will have a formal inauguration ceremony at 2 p.m. in the USA Mitchell Center. It will be the 51-year-old university’s first-ever inauguration; neither of his predecessors, Fred Whidden and Gordon Moulton, had such a ceremony.

Guest speakers will include Mobile Mayor Sandy Stimpson; Mobile County Commissioner Connie Hudson; U.S. Rep. Bradley Byrne, R-Fairhope; and members of the USA Board of Trustees. Dr. Steve Furr, the trustees’ chair pro tempore, will serve as master of ceremonies.

"It's very much an historic occasion for the University of South Alabama," said Bob Lowry, the university's interim director of public relations. There will be no classes during the inauguration, so that all in the campus community can attend, Lowry said.

Waldrop will outline his longterm goals during the event, Lowry said. "He will use that opportunity to discuss what he has referred to as the shared vision for the university.

"Since he got here, he has been encouraging faculty, staff and students to come together with their own ideas and thoughts regarding USA -- where we are, where we want to be and how to get there," Lowry said.

Waldrop sat down with al.com on Sept. 8 for a brief interview about his first few months on the job at USA.

Q. It was recently announced that for the third consecutive year, the retention rate increased for first year undergraduate students at USA. (The rate for the fall 2013 freshman class is at 71 percent, a 3 percent increase over the fall 2012 freshman class and a 6 percent increase over the fall 2010 freshman class.) What’s being done to improve that rate?

A: "We're encouraging more advisory help during the first year, and we're doing more productive analytics to address financial issues," Waldrop said. Students are urged to meet regularly with their advisers and to let them know if problems come up, he said. Getting students involved with campus organizations is also important, he added. "The easiest thing to do is to

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remind everyone that an engaged student is more likely to do well. ... Getting them involved in activities is a big boost."

Q. Let's talk about fundraising and outreach efforts, particularly focusing on the Mitchell-Moulton Scholarships (which were created from Abraham Mitchell's commitment of $50 million to the university; all gifts will be matched, dollar-for-dollar, by Mitchell).

A. "The fact that you can double the impact of your gift is very appealing to many people," Waldrop said. He and his wife, Julee Briscoe Waldrop, have endowed a scholarship in memory of his parents; it will help academically gifted students who come from lower-income families, because "I came from a family like that," he said. The idea of going to college and not having to worry about money is a crucial component of financial aid, he said, and similar scholarship opportunities will bolster the university's goal to improve its graduation rate.

Another important way that businesses can help the university, Waldrop said, is by offering internships to students. "That is a big help to us; you're giving the student a chance to experience what they'd be doing as a career." On several occasions, he said, he has asked industry leaders for advice on how the university can do a better job to prepare its students for the job market. "We've certainly gotten some very good advice on engineering," he said, and the university has just begun offering a Ph.D. in systems engineering as well.

Q. How are things going with the USA Foundation?

A. At the USA Foundation's Board of Directors meeting on Sept. 4, Waldrop praised the board for its support of graduate fellowships. "The funding you put into them is benefiting the community, and not just the students," he said. On Monday, he said he planned to make requests in the future for additional funding in selected areas, such as graduate research. "It's been more about getting to know them and developing a good relationship there," he said. "As we learn more about our students' priorities -- some of those I will consider bringing to the foundation."

Q. What is your assessment of the USA Technology & Research Park?

A. Setups similar to USA's Coastal Innovation Hub, which offers space for startup companies, are proliferating all over the country, Waldrop noted, and "there have been discussions about having such an incubator somewhere downtown as well." But right now, the tech park "is not a money-making opportunity," he said, adding that not every campus initiative has to be about the bottom line if it also helps the community.

Q. How will you address campus infrastructure needs?

A. USA's new buildings are impressive, and the campus landscaping and entrances greatly appeal to prospective students and their families, Waldrop said; several students have told him that the appearance of the campus was a factor in their choosing to attend USA. "That's a big advantage." The university has many great facilities, including the newer dorms, Shelby Hall, the Mitchell Cancer Institute and the expansion at USA Children's & Women's Hospital, he said.

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However, sections of campus infrastructure, such as plumbing, are 30 to 50 years old and showing it in the form of sinkholes and leaks, he said. Officials have hired a consultant to create a plan for repairs.

Q. What's being done to improve campus safety?

A. Every year, Waldrop said, campus police and student representatives walk the campus and take note of areas that are in need of better lighting or pose other potential hazards. More lights will go up this year, he said.

"I firmly believe it is a very safe campus," he said. "Have events occurred? Yes. But our crime statistics have actually been going down. In terms of major events occurring, there have been very little on campus. ... I see the university as an open place, and not something you lock down." The USA campus police department has been proactive about improving safety, he noted, and university officials want to do everything humanly possible to prevent crime.

Q. How will the Affordable Health Care Act affect the university's health services division?

A. No one knows how Medicare reimbursements will change in the future, Waldrop said, but the current trend seems to be emphasizing quality of care rather than quantity of patients, and "I think this is a good thing, to have more of a team-based approach." Not knowing how Medicare reimbursements will change is a concern, he said, but that concern is shared on university medical campuses across the country.

Q. After your first few months on the job, what are your overall impressions?

A. "I'm really impressed with the community and people associated with the university, and how proud they are of South and how much they want to see it get better," Waldrop said. "There's a real commitment there."

USA is the fourth university where he's had a role in administration, he said, and there weren't any big surprises once he got started — in other words, USA's problems are typical of those he's seen elsewhere.

"I'm very pleased that I'm getting to have very good discussions with the faculty," he said, including those in the health services division. USA has a great leadership team that works well together, he said.

Finally, he said, he and his wife are enjoying getting to know the area, and looking forward to seeing their family members who will come into town this week for the inauguration.

"Julee and I are delighted to be here," he said.
Gwendolyn Boyd inaugurated as ASU's 14th president

By: Josh Moon

At an official inauguration event Friday, the university's board of trustees officially welcomed Boyd to the office in front of numerous dignitaries, including the presidents of 26 other universities. The nearly-four hour ceremony, which at times had the feel of an old-time Baptist tent revival complete with hands raised and shouts of praises, concluded with a passionate speech from Boyd, in which she promised to help ASU to a "new day."

"This is not about me," said Boyd, who has been working as the school's president since February. "This is about ASU. Despite all we've been through, we have joy at ASU. Because we know that if we continue to do the right thing, God will bless us and this university. We know storms will come, but they will not last."

Storms have been a consistent part of Boyd's presidency to this point.

She accepted the job knowing of two ongoing grand jury investigations into alleged financial misdealings at the school and an ongoing forensic investigation of the school's finances. There have also been severe money issues, which have forced Boyd to reshuffle the top administration and left her scrambling to raise money.

To that end, Boyd led a 30-day campaign that raised $127,000 and announced during her speech Friday that Freeman Hrabowski, the president of the University of Maryland, Baltimore County, had donated another $100,000.

Boyd has also dealt with criticism from some longtime ASU leaders. She sparred publicly with now-ousted trustee Marvin Wiggins and former trustee and occasional pro-bono attorney for ASU Donald Watkins.

Despite a few missteps, Boyd has retained solid support from the overwhelming majority of students, faculty and alumni. That adoration was evident Friday, as a number of prominent speakers and longtime ASU officials spoke glowingly of Boyd.

Alexis Herman, the former U.S. Secretary of Labor, said Boyd was a visionary and was the right person to "push the university where it needs to go."

University of Alabama president Judy Bonner welcomed Boyd to the small fraternity of female presidents in the state.

Ronald Daniels, the president of Johns Hopkins University and Boyd's former boss, said he did not share in the joy of watching Boyd leave Hopkins to return to ASU. "She changed our university for the better in countless ways," Daniels said. "She will do the same here."

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Boyd, with a throng of red-clad members of her sorority seated in the stands to her right, said she knows ASU will be just fine.

"Together, we will make this a stronger and better university than it ever has been before," she said. "We will remain relevant at ASU. ASU – able, strong and united."

Also speaking at Friday's inauguration and welcoming Boyd to office were Mayor Todd Strange, state Sen. Quinton Ross, Tennessee State University president Glenda Basskins Glover, Executive Director for the White House initiative on HBCUs George Cooper and former U.S. Surgeon General Regina Benjamin.
UWA approves budget to cover shortfall

Reserve funds to help $764K deficit

By Ed Enoch
Stafi Writer

LIVINGSTON | The University of West Alabama Board of Trustees approved a fiscal year 2015 budget Monday that will use reserve funds to cover a $764,227 deficit in its online education budget. The fiscal year starts Oct. 1.

The trustees approved a preliminary plan for its $42 million fiscal operating budget in June when they approved a 5.5 percent tuition increase.

Trustee Alex Saad said in June that the university took the unusual step of splitting the vote on components of the budget because of the situation surrounding the ouster of former President Richard Holland.

Monday, Saad praised work by the university staff to review the budgets and find savings.

"Nobody lost their job, that was the No. 1 thing," Saad said. "We wanted to make sure the students didn’t pick up the tab for something that could have been, should have been done."

The deficit arose in the university’s online education budget of $10 million, according to Ralfrd Noland, vice president of financial affairs. Noland added the general fund budget was balanced. UWA’s online enrollment along with its on-campus enrollment has declined during the past few years.

The university was initially facing a deficit of about $1.5 million, Saad said. It was able to use about $690,000 in funds already in the budget for unfilled positions to help decrease the deficit along with other cost savings of $764,227.

While Saad stressed the board must continue to look for savings and work to reverse the trend of declining enrollment, he remained optimistic about the future.

"What I am optimistic about is we have good people here," he said.

The retention and enrollment at UWA remains an almost constant topic for the trustees faced with a decline in enrollment since 2009.

Monday, Danny Buckalew, vice president of student affairs, reviewed the university’s efforts to attract and retain students during the committee meetings ahead of the full board.

The report began with an update on fall enrollment, which decreased but saw better retention of first-year students.

Angel Jowers, director of institutional effectiveness, said the total enrollment was 1,990 for fall semester on campus. Online enrollment for the first fall session was 1,640 students. There is a second online session that begins in a few weeks, Jowers said. UWA had about 2,141 traditional students and 2,286 online students in fall 2013.

The retention rate for first-year students increased to 63 percent this fall, up from 56 percent last year, Jowers said.

"I think our university is on the right track," Jowers said.

Buckalew’s review included a social media initiative and efforts to recruit students in Florida and Mississippi.

UWA purchased 12,000 student names from ACT’s Educational Opportunity Service based on a profile of the students being sought and used the information for a targeted marketing campaign on social media.

"We felt like it was a good place to start," he said.

UWA is working with a consultant who recommended the targeted approach earlier in the summer.

The school is also targeting eight counties in both Mississippi and Florida, Buckalew said. The students would be recruited using talent scholarships, which offer out-of-state students in-state tuition rates based on recognized talents such as academic or artistic abilities.
Ala. Power donates $150K to UWA

Staff report

Alabama Power Co. has donated $150,000 to the University of West Alabama to support the regional university's advanced manufacturing program.

“Our university is most grateful for this support from Alabama Power Co.,” said UWA President John G. Blackwell in a prepared statement. “The trust that they place in us to build the workforce that our area needs confirms for me that our faculty is doing an outstanding job of aligning the needs of our area with the skills that they can develop in our students.”

The gift was announced Monday during the UWA board of trustees meeting. The money will be used for UWA's automotive technician program, according to Ken Tucker, dean of the business college. UWA will use $125,000 for renovation of the automotive technology facility and the remaining $25,000 for the purchase of new welding equipment, Tucker said. “They are a tremendous corporate partner,” Tucker said. “Without them we could not be where we are with workforce development and career training.”
Stillman welcomes largest freshman class
New president forecasts bright future for 350

To see more photos, visit www.tuscaloosa news.com.

By Ed Enoch
Staff Writer

Stillman College officially welcomed its largest freshman class of students Thursday during its annual fall convocation.

"This is a wonderful time to be a Stillman Tiger," President Peter Millet said.

Millet shook hands with the new students as they crossed the stage in Birthright Auditorium and introduced themselves at microphones on the stage.

The 2014 freshman class includes more than 350 students, Millet said.

The fall convocation was Millet’s first as president, following his appointment earlier this summer. He was named interim president the day after the 2013 convocation, when the college announced then-President Ernest McNealey had been placed on leave.

Millet forecast a bright year for the private institution with plans to open a new fitness center, the addition of new equipment in the classrooms, community service projects, and a $2 million anonymous gift in addition to the influx of new students.

The gift was announced by Stillman last week and is expected to be received by the college this semester. The funds will be used for the long-term stability of the college.

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STILLMAN

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Millet challenged the students sitting on the bleachers and folding chairs in Birthright's gym to excel at their studies.

"Success doesn't have anything to do with your environment; it has everything to do with your expectations," Millet said.

He also encouraged them to see their own potential as college graduates.

"You are what Maya Angelou called the dream and hope of the slave, what W.E.B. Du Bois called the talented tenth ..." Millet said.

To emphasize the point, the president instructed the freshman to take pen and paper or their phones and mark a date in May 2018, their future graduation date, and a reminder about the goal of a college education.

"Start planning for it now," Millet said.

"Now as Stillman grads, there is nothing you can't do."

Reach Ed Enoch at ed.enoch@tuscaloosanews.com or 205-722-0209.
ALABAMA A&M

Alabama A&M University President Andrew Hugine didn't go far to find his new chief financial officer.

Hugine announced today that Clayton Gibson, who had been serving on an interim basis, will be the university's permanent vice president for business and finance.

Gibson took over last year when Ralph Johnson left to accept a job at Xavier University in New Orleans.

Gibson formerly worked for Ernst & Young as an audit manager and provided consultative guidance to Fortune 500 companies.

Gibson is a graduate of the University of Notre Dame with a master's in accounting. Prior to heading the Business and Finance division, Gibson served as Alabama A&M's internal auditor.

Paul Gattis
Small business event set Sept. 26

Conference will be held at Shelton State Community College

The University of West Alabama Small Business Development Center and the Alabama Black Belt Commission will host their second annual Homegrown Small Business Conference on Sept. 26 at Shelton State Community College, 9500 Old Greensboro Road.

The free conference will have two tracks. One will focus on farming and agribusiness. The other will be geared to women and youth who want to start businesses in their home.

“This will be a great opportunity for a diverse set of entrepreneurs to come together and get the tools they need to succeed in business,” said Donald Mills, chairman of the Black Belt Commission’s Small Business Development Committee and director of UWA’s Small Business Development Center.

Charles Spurlin, owner of The Shirt Shop in downtown Tuscaloosa, will be the opening speaker and will discuss what he has learned as a successful business owner.

The luncheon keynote speaker will be Moziah Bridges, an 11-year-old from Memphis, Tenn., who is CEO of Mo’s Bows, a bowtie company that he started a couple of years ago. He has been featured in national magazines including The Oprah Magazine, GQ, Forbes, Vogue, Glamour and Esquire and has appeared on the television program Shark Tank. His business earned more than $30,000 last year.

Breakout sessions will include testimonials from other entrepreneurs, information on resources, loans and technology. Attendees will also learn how to write a business plan, the first step to start a business.

The conference starts at 8:30 a.m. with doors opening at 7:45 a.m. Those interested in attending are asked to preregister by calling the University of West Alabama Small Business Development Center at 205-652-3665 or by going online at www.westalabamaconferencesandevents.com.
Burchell enjoying the moment of national team selection

Kaylin Burchell, a University of Alabama swimmer, was selected to the U.S. national team last week.

By Trish Bradle
Special to The Tuscaloosa News

Kaylin Burchell, the University of Alabama senior swimmer from Richmond, Ky., didn’t see it coming.

“It was news to me,” said Burchell, who received word last week that she had been named to the U.S. national team. “I was definitely shocked.”

Burchell’s 200-meter breaststroke swim at the 2014 Summer Nationals, where she swam a time of 2:26:22, was the first time she had ever made a final at nationals. This race was the one that gave her the opportunity to be part of the 2014-15 national team roster.

“I haven’t done a whole lot to celebrate,” Burchell said.

Getting ice cream with her boyfriend and waiting for her parents to come down from Kentucky were in her plans.

This wasn’t the first major accomplishment for Burchell, who started swimming at age 5. At just 10 years old she set a national record for her time in the 50-meter breaststroke, finishing in 32.46.

“Honestly, then, I didn’t really know what a national record was,” Burchell said. “I remember my coach picked me up and swung me around. It was pretty cool.”

Burchell has also moved from 121st in 2013 to 27th in the world this season.

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BURCHELL
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year in the 100-meter breaststroke, but it doesn't make her feel any different. “It's cool, because it has given me more opportunities, like now I'm getting emails from the nationals coach,” Burchell said. “It still doesn't feel real.”

Burchell said she has three main pre-race rituals: always stretching the same way on the block, finishing her warm-up 30 minutes before the race and listening to the same three songs.

No changes will be made here now that she is on the U.S. team.

Her next major goal is to be named to the U.S. Olympic team.

Short-term, she wants to be in the top three at the NCAAs next March.

Over the last three years, Burchell has jumped into the elite level of swimming and she credits the training she does with UA assistant coach Jonyne Skinner.

“Growing up I never did doubles, my practices were only an hour-and-a-half long and I did that five times a week,” Burchell said. “Getting to college where I'm practicing doubles and weights and everything else, I think that has made the biggest difference.”

She also said being around a group of athletes who are competing for the same thing has helped.

“I wasn’t surprised at all,” said Dennis Pursley, University of Alabama head coach. “She is a positive leader in every respect and an exceptional swimmer.”
ALABAMA GOLF

Tide men's golf team opens season today

Combined reports

The two-time defending national champion University of Alabama men's golf team opens the 2014-15 season this weekend when it competes at the Carpet Capital Collegiate in Rocky Face, Ga. The event will be played at the par 72, 7,012-yard Farm Golf Club.

Alabama, which is the ranked No. 1 in the nation in the Golf Coaches Association of America preseason Top-25 poll, will send a formidable lineup, led by two starters off last year's NCAA national championship squad in sophomore Robby Shelton and junior Tom Lovelady.

Sophomore Dru Love and freshmen Jonathan Hardee and Tyler Hitchner will each make their debut with the Crimson Tide in this weekend's event.
College football’s arms race

From locker room upgrades and new stadiums to swelling coaching staffs, the nation’s college football powers are in the midst of an ongoing, multimillion-dollar arms race.

In fact, expenses for the average Football Bowl Subdivision team increased 48 percent between 2007 and 2012, according to data compiled by the BFI.

For the nation’s most expensive football programs, the spike was even more intense. Those schools increased their spending by 72 percent over the five-year period.

And the epicenter for the arms race is right here in Alabama. The University of Alabama ($41.6 million) and Auburn University ($36.3 million) spent the most on football in 2012. The Crimson Tide had a 156 percent increase in football spending since 2007, compared to Auburn’s 56 percent jump.

Thanks to some key changes on the horizon in college sports, the pace of college football spending may be in for an even greater increase in the years to come.

The NCAA has passed new regulations that will give schools in the "Big Five" conferences, including the Southeastern Conference, more autonomy. One of their first priorities will likely be giving out scholarships covering the full cost of attendance, rather than being limited to the traditional tuition, room and board.

Smaller schools had resisted such a change because they lack the budgets for those added costs. But the big programs are anxious to make that change as debate about compensation for college athletes heats up.

Along those lines, a federal judge’s recent decision in the landmark antitrust case against the NCAA will also likely mean additional expenses for major schools.

That decision will allow major schools to compensate football and basketball players for the use of their likenesses.

The decision does allow schools and conferences to cap those payments at no less than $5,000, which would translate to $425,000 per year for an 85-player football team. But it’s conceivable that the nation’s richest conferences, aiming to win over top recruits, could establish an even higher cap, further increasing costs.

Of course, the likely uptick in expenses coincides with a huge surge in revenue from television deals. If the TV gravy train keeps rolling, rising expenses likely won’t be much more than a bump in the road. Otherwise, we could be in for some huge changes on the college football scene.
Top Colleges That Enroll Rich, Middle Class and Poor

Vassar has taken steps to hold down spending on faculty and staff. Amherst and the University of Florida have raised new money specifically to spend on financial aid for low-income students. American University reallocated scholarships from well-off students to needy ones. Grinnell set a floor on the share of every freshman class – 15 percent – whose parents didn’t go to college.

Over the last decade, dozens of colleges have proclaimed that recruiting a more economically diverse student body was a top priority. Many of those colleges have not matched their words with actions. But some have.

These colleges have changed policies and made compromises elsewhere to recruit the kind of talented poor students who have traditionally excelled in high school but not gone to top colleges. A surprising number of such students never graduate from any college.

This education gap is a problem not only for the teenagers on the wrong end of it. It’s a problem for the American economy. The economic differences between college graduates and everyone else have reached record levels. Yet for many low-income children – even many who get A’s in high school and do well on the SAT – college remains out of reach. No wonder that upward mobility is less common in the United States than in many other rich countries.

To see which selective colleges are doing the most, and the least, to change the situation, The Upshot has analyzed data for every college with a four-year graduation rate of at least 75 percent. We combined data on enrollment and tuition costs to measure how hard each college is trying to attract and graduate poor and middle-class students. The result is our College Access Index.

Recruiting more high-achieving students from modest backgrounds, says Raynard Kington, the president of Grinnell, in central Iowa, “is the smart thing to do, because the country needs as much brainpower as we can get. And it’s the right thing to do, because it’s not fair that your ability to get a college education can be determined by your ability to buy an education.”

Vassar, the once all-female college in the Hudson River Valley, tops our index, with Grinnell placing second. About 23 percent of Vassar’s freshmen in recent years have received federal Pell grants (which mean they come from roughly the bottom 40 percent of the income distribution), up from 12 percent in 2007. After taking scholarships into account, the average annual cost of attending Vassar for lower-income students is about $6,000. Students cover much of that cost through campus jobs and loans.

The biggest theme to emerge from our analysis is that otherwise similar colleges often have very different levels of commitment to economic diversity. In this area, endowment is not destiny, and prestige is not destiny.
After Vassar, the top of the list includes some of the wealthiest colleges in the country, measured by endowment per student: Grinnell; Amherst College, in Massachusetts; Harvard; and Pomona, in Southern California. But other resource-rich colleges, including Swarthmore and the California Institute of Technology, have done substantially less.

Maybe the starkest example is Washington University in St. Louis, one of the hot colleges of recent years, having climbed to No. 14 in the U.S. News rankings last year. Only about 6 percent of the freshman class in recent years at Wash. U., as it’s known, have received Pell grants, even though it is one of the country’s 25 richest colleges on a per-student basis.

Colleges with many fewer resources, meanwhile, have become more diverse. Franklin and Marshall’s president, Dan Porterfield, has made it a priority to recruit top students regardless of income, and the share of low-income freshmen there has more than doubled. The numbers have also risen significantly for the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill; Susquehanna, in Pennsylvania; and Wheaton, a Christian college outside of Chicago.

Economic diversity at top colleges started to receive more attention about a decade ago. With traditional, race-based affirmative action under attack, university administrators began to think about other ways to enroll diverse classes. At the same time, researchers were releasing data showing that although top colleges had become diverse in many ways – race, gender, religion, geography – many of them remained decidedly affluent.

In 2004, more freshmen at the most selective private universities had fathers who were doctors than had fathers who were hourly workers, teachers, clergy members, farmers and members of the military – combined. And it wasn’t simply because poor children struggled in school. Among low-income high-school seniors in 2008 who cracked the top 4 percent of students nationwide, based on grades and scores, only one of out every three attended a selective colleges, one large study found.

In the middle of last decade, Lawrence Summers, then the president of Harvard, called attention to the issue and made Harvard’s financial-aid policies much more generous. Given Harvard’s prominence, other colleges began to look at the situation as well.

Politics played a role, too. Senator Charles Grassley, the Iowa Republican, held hearings in 2007, during which he asked whether affluent colleges were using their endowments to help students. A few years later, President Obama and Congress expanded the Pell-grant program. That expansion means that the number of recipients should have risen even at colleges that did nothing to recruit more low-income students.

One of the early researchers to call attention to the lack of economic diversity was an economist named Catharine Bond Hill. In 2006, she left her post at Williams College to become president of Vassar. When she did, she said, she found a campus where people wanted a diverse student body and believed they had one – but didn’t quite.
WE CAN BUILD BETTER TEACHERS

REAL REFORM: OUR SYSTEM HAS STOPPED PREPARING TEACHERS FOR THE NUTS AND BOLTS OF THEIR JOBS.
For the past half-century, and particularly since the 1983 "Nation at Risk" report, Americans have been heaving great sacks of money at schools. Federal spending alone has tripled since the 1970s. The New York Times calculates that the federal government now spends $107.6 billion on education yearly, which is layered over an estimated $524.7 billion spent by states and localities.

Reformers have urged — depending upon where they stand ideologically — smaller class sizes, more accountability, merit pay for teachers and educational choice. Each year seems to bring a new fad: child-centered learning, new math, cooperative learning and so forth. The No Child Left Behind reform focused on testing. There have been proposals to repeal teacher tenure and to provide every child with a laptop. And always there are fights over curriculum — the Common Core being the controversy du jour.

But perhaps the most promising thinking about education arises from the discovery from economist Eric Hanushek that the most important factor in student performance is the quality of the teacher. Not class size. Not spending per pupil. Not even curriculum.

**Mechanics are important**

Our system produces some great teachers, but only by luck. Each year, 400,000 new teachers enter American classrooms, many knowing little about the nuts and bolts of teaching. As Elizabeth Green argues in her new book, "Building a Better Teacher: How Teaching Works (and How to Teach it to Everyone)," our education schools do not teach the mechanics of teaching, how to control a classroom, how to engage students' imaginations, how to check for understanding. They've been sidetracked by educational psychology and fades at the expense of teaching how to teach.

Green cites "education entrepreneurs" including Doug Lemov, author of "Teach Like a Champion," and Deborah Loewenberg Ball, now dean of the University of Michigan's school of education, who focus on helping ordinary teachers to become great.

Lemov, an education reformer and consultant, was struck by something he found by poring over statistics from the state of New York. While the correlation between ZIP codes and educational success was notable, there were always outliers: schools or classrooms in which even kids from impoverished backgrounds were doing well. Lemov zeroed in on those schools and those particular teachers.
The result is found in the subtitle of his book: "49 Techniques That Put Students on the Path to College." Some of the techniques are inspired; others are quotidian but still important (like how not to waste time pleading for responses). The point is that teaching is a performance every day, which is not easy. Teachers must engage the interest and attention of their students (who bring all kinds of troubles from home), encourage the weak ones along with the strong, maintain discipline and build a sense of team spirit. Lemov doesn’t believe that anyone can be a great teacher, but he does think that with coaching and mentoring, good teachers can become great.

Things teachers should learn

Some of Lemov’s proven techniques will not surprise educational traditionalists. He believes in drill, though he calls it “muscle memory.” A great teacher will drill arithmetic skills, for example, until they are second nature, so that students needn’t stumble over the easy stuff when they get to algebra and geometry. (Education schools had disdained this as “drill and kill.”) Another technique Lemov suggests is “cold calls” — that is, having the teacher choose students randomly rather than just those who raise their hands. Each child, knowing he might be called upon, must be ready. (It works in law schools). A companion technique is “no opt out.” If the child says he doesn’t know, the teacher asks a related question to another student to narrow down the possible right answer and returns to the first child for a second chance.

There are broad suggestions about classroom management and more subtle and difficult challenges like maintaining “emotional constancy” — that is, refraining from showing anger when a child gets the wrong answer. Anger will teach a child to try to hide his ignorance rather than accept it as a normal part of the learning enterprise.

Teaching is a craft. It may be among the hardest to master. Renewed attention to teaching teaching seems long overdue.

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To sell tickets, schools eye Groupon, giveaways

The Associated Press

IOWA CITY, Iowa | In an attempt to keep its student section full, the University of Iowa recently tried a somewhat costly promotion: a raffle for free tuition if a student purchased a book of season tickets.

It illustrated just how far schools such as Iowa will go to get students back into their stadiums.

The raffle didn't quite work — it ran afoul of state raffle laws, so it was extended to all Iowa students — but it's far from the only promotion colleges are using to try and sell tickets. Around the country, schools are trying to boost student ticket sales.

The NCAA says that the average crowd at an FBS game was down 1,300 last year from a high of 46,971 in 2008. Some of that decline comes from general attendance. But athletic directors are targeting student populations in particular to try and fill the seats.

Students, after all, are a big part of the college game day experience.

A student is hoisted above the crowd in the Iowa student section during the first half of an NCAA college football game against Northern Iowa in Iowa City, Iowa, on Aug. 30.

The reasons the seats are emptying vary: Many blame the proliferation of high-definition TVs, the vast increase in national college football broadcasts and the popularity of social media sites like Twitter, which connect fans across the country like never before.

Others mention high ticket prices and restrictions on tailgating, the lack of alcohol sales in college stadiums, updated game day presentations and even spotty wireless service in many stadiums. When surrounded by thousands of your closest friends, proximity isn't enough — students also want to be able to take selfies, text and post to social media.

The SEC is among the leagues that have taken notice, saying that at least eight member schools have improved in-stadium cellphone service in 2014.

Iowa's recent promotion, which offered $8,000 in education-related expenses to five students who bought
season tickets for the resurgent Hawkeyes drew a mild chuckle from the college football community. But it's a serious matter to the campus.

"It's a national trend. This isn't just happening at Iowa," said Hawkeye athletic director Gary Barta, who said he has seen student ticket sales dip from 10,000 in 2012 to roughly 6,500 this year despite higher on-field expectations.

Even though the Hawkeyes also made unsold season tickets available to the general public, they fell about 3,700 shy of a sellout for last weekend's win over Northern Iowa.

Florida athletic director Jeremy Foley sent out an email earlier last month imploring students of a school that has won national titles in 2006 and 2008 years to buy tickets.

Michigan, the winningest program in the history of college football, sold tickets to its opener against Appalachian State on sites like Groupon. It's combatting a roughly 7,000-per-game drop in student sales in just 12 months.

Michigan, whose games against Notre Dame, Michigan State and Ohio State are all away from Ann Arbor, is expecting to sell just 12,000 student tickets after reaching 19,000 in 2013.

Big Ten rival Purdue, meanwhile, went even further: It gave away nearly 8,000 free tickets to its students for last week's opener against Western Michigan and cut prices from $20 to $10 for the next two non-conference games.

At Cal, freshmen get in free all season.

Even mighty Alabama, a perennial national title favorite, has seen student interest wane at times. The Crimson Tide is among many teams that sell their full allotment of student tickets — then watch with frustration as thousands of kids choose to stay home on game day.

Last year, nearly 5,000 student seats went empty for an Alabama game against Georgia State despite initiatives such as electronic ticket swapping and incentives tied to attendance.

Not every school in the country is looking at half-empty student sections.

Tennessee saw its student ticket sales jump from 5,000 to 7,000 last season as coach Butch Jones took over for Derek Dooley, and the Vols sold all of its nearly 12,000 student tickets for last weekend's romp over Utah State.

Struggling Iowa State, the Hawkeyes in-state rival, has also had good student ticket sales — but why is a bit of a head-scratcher.

The Cyclones have sold all of their roughly 8,000 student tickets for the third year in a row — and this year they did it faster than ever despite a 3-9 record in 2013 and scant evidence that things will improve this fall.
pecuting,” Garrison said. “AASB (Alabama Association of School Boards) is coming out with a tool, and I've talked to them about allowing our board to be a pilot for that tool. Obviously, the board and superintendent will have to agree on the tool that we use.”

Another issue Garrison said he had with the evaluation process is that McKendrick and the board have not been handling things exactly according to McKendrick's contract.

“His contract lays out that by December we should agree on the (evaluation) tool that will be used on the evaluation done in the summer of the following year,” he said. “Those dates have never been hit. Then he's supposed to present us certain goals by a certain time period, and the board is supposed to lay out certain goals by a certain time period, and those goals are what the evaluation should be based upon.

“That process has not been followed to the letter of the contract initiated August 2011. One of the goals Dr. McKendrick and I talked about in the last month is that we would like to get on track on both his side and the board’s side.”

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New focus on sexual assault education

College programs bring awareness to sexual violence

The Associated Press

Baltimore | As freshmen descend on college campuses, they enter the "red zone" — a period between Labor Day and Thanksgiving during which they are most vulnerable to sexual assault.

This year is different, though. It is the first since the U.S. Department of Education released a list of colleges and universities under federal investigation for their handling of rape and sexual assault complaints, and many schools are making sexual assault awareness programs mandatory for incoming students.

Johns Hopkins University is under investigation for its handling of an alleged gang rape of a Towson University student at a fraternity house, Pi Kappa Alpha, in the spring of 2013.

The list, which includes 77 schools under investigation, was released in May. It represents one piece of a national conversation that gained unprecedented political momentum in April, when the newly minted White House Task Force to Prevent Students from Sexual Assault released its first report, alongside a website designed to advise colleges on how to combat rape on campus. Since then, Sen. Claire McCaskill, a Missouri Democrat, has introduced a bill to require annual surveys of students and require schools to staff confidential advisers on campus.

Oklahoma State University, which is on the list, announced last month that students who do not complete a new 40-minute online course on sexual assault awareness will be barred from registration. Vice President for Student Affairs Lee Bird said the school took the unusual step of asking to be under federal review.

"Sexual violence has been a huge topic for years, but the politics around it and trying to find remedies is what’s changed," Bird said, adding that the school offers "hundreds" of alcohol, drug and sexual assault awareness programs throughout the year. "This has been an issue for my 36 years, and I imagine it will be an issue on campus for the next 30."

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University of California at Berkeley, which is under investigation, has started two new mandatory programs. Freshmen and transfers must attend a sexual awareness program known as Bear Pact, as well as complete an online course, called Haven, about sexual assault, harassment and stalking. The school has also designated a confidential advocate whose role is to assist students who have been sexually assaulted.

While the U.S. Education Department doesn't release what prompts an investigation, UC Berkeley was the subject of a blistering state audit in June that revealed the school's failure to adequately train resident advisers, athletic coaches and even campus law enforcement on how to handle sexual assault allegations. The audit also found that the administration did not ensure attendance at sexual assault education workshops for freshmen.

"For us, it's looking at what we need to do to be in federal compliance and follow best practices," said UC Berkeley spokeswoman Janet Gilmore. "It's a continuing effort. We've done a lot, and we know that there's more we can do."

Dartmouth College in New Hampshire, another school under federal investigation, also requires its freshmen to complete Haven. The school adopted a policy in June requiring an independent investigation into sexual assault complaints and calls for mandatory expulsion for convicted students.

Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore is one of the most recent additions to the list of schools under investigation for possible Title IX violations. It was added Aug. 12.

Title IX is a federal law prohibiting gender discrimination. It regulates institutions' handling of sexual violence and is the same law that guarantees female athletes equal access to sports.

Johns Hopkins is under investigation for its handling of an alleged gang rape of a Towson University student at a fraternity house, Pi Kappa Alpha, in the spring of 2013. Since the allegation became public in May, more Hopkins students have come forward to share their own sexual assault stories, said Laura Dunn, an advocate with nonprofit organization SuryJustice who helped file the initial complaint.

One of those students is a rising junior who asked that her name be withheld. The Associated Press does not identify alleged victims of sexual assault.

In June, she told AP that she was sexually assaulted in 2012 during her first few days on campus. She said her alleged attacker had taken her keys and phone, dragged her into his room and assaulted her.

A few days prior, the student said she had gone to a sexual assault awareness workshop offered to incoming freshmen.

"At the workshop they said anything after you say no is sexual assault. I said to him, 'Don't you remember what we saw yesterday? This is going to be rape.'"