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U.S. Senate confirms Huntsville attorney Joe Ritch for TVA board

By: Paul Gattis

The U.S. Senate on Tuesday confirmed Huntsville attorney Joe Ritch to serve on the TVA board. He is only the second Alabamian to serve on the board.

Ritch was nominated in September by President Barack Obama and his confirmation came in the aftermath of the Senate passing the fiscal cliff legislation.

Howard Thrailkill, also from Huntsville, was the first Alabamian on the nine-member TVA board and his term expired in 2010.

U.S. Jeff Sessions, R-Mobile, released a statement last month advocating Ritch’s confirmation.

"It's an honor to be nominated and confirmed," Ritch said this morning. "I appreciate the efforts of Sens. (Jeff) Sessions and (Richard) Shelby. I have a whole lot to learn and looking forward to working with the board and TVA and hopefully be something that's good for our area and I can be a productive board member very quickly."

Ritch's term expires in May 2016 but board members frequently serve until their replacements are confirmed by the Senate late in the Congressional session.

"I am pleased that the Senate's confirmation of Joe Ritch and the other nominees approved last night will give the TVA board a quorum at its next meeting," Sessions said in a statement released today. "Joe's confirmation means that Alabama now has a voice on the TVA board.

"In my discussions with Joe and the other TVA nominees, I urged them to support the completion of the Bellefonte nuclear power plant at Scottsboro, which will promote economic development, and to work aggressively to contain the power rates that fall on the citizens of the TVA region."

Ritch said that he hoped to be an advocate for Alabama issues and concerns, saying that about one-third of the state is covered by TVA. TVA provides electricity to about 9 million customers to portions of Tennessee, Mississippi, North Carolina, Georgia, Kentucky and Virginia as well as Alabama.

"You would hope that person would be effective in discussions with the management of TVA and the other board members about things that are relevant to our area. You're not (nominated) from a district but you would hope that you would be in a position that you would be helpful in understanding issues that are relevant to our area."

According to the TVA website, the purpose of the board is to "establish the broad strategies, goals, and objectives, long-range plans, and policies of TVA and to ensure that those are achieved by the TVA staff led by the chief executive officer."

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Also confirmed to serve on the TVA board were C. Peter Mahurin of Kentucky, Vera Lynn Evans of Tennessee and Michael McWherter of Tennessee.

For now, though, Ritch is continuing to educate himself about TVA.

"I'm in the learning stage right now," he said. "The first step, although I have made an effort to become as familiar as I can reading things that are relevant to TVA - both financial and it's operations plans - it's still a long ways from considering myself fully prepared to walk into a meeting as if I had been there a long time. I've got a lot to learn."
State in talks about upping teacher pay

Education group recommends 10 percent over 2-year period

By Jim Cook
The Dothan Eagle

DOTHAN | There's no arguing that Monica Montalvo works hard.

Montalvo starts her work day at 7 a.m. at Grandview Elementary School. After arriving, Montalvo typically spends her time reviewing the day's lessons and preparing her classroom before her students get there.

"I like to get everything ready for class so I'm not searching," she said. "I also pray before we get started."

Once the kids arrive, Montalvo spends a busy day teaching, disciplining and encouraging her students.

Montalvo runs a tight ship. On Thursday, she was quick to pull a student out of line when she caught him misbehaving and moved quickly to resolve the situation before starting class.

Though she's only in her second year as a teacher, Montalvo has already been recognized as Grandview's teacher of the year and is already mentoring a new teacher.

Her day doesn't end at 4 p.m., when she leaves for home. She says she typically spends two hours per night at home grading papers and catching up on paper work. She also spends at least one weekend day staying on top.

“A lot of people don’t see what goes into teaching. They think we have great hours and get weekends and summers off, but we don’t really get weekends off.”

Monica Montalvo, a teacher at Grandview Elementary in Dothan

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of the needs of her class of 22 fifth-graders.

Montalvo said in her time teaching she has noticed an increase in the paperwork required of teachers. Educators have also been required to use more information technology in their record keeping, requiring them to become more familiar with various software programs.

"A lot of people don't see what goes into it," she said. "They think we have great hours and get weekends and summers off, but we don't really get weekends off."

To compensate teachers for increasing workloads, along with higher employee health and retirement contributions, the Alabama Education Association has recommended that the Alabama Legislature vote to increase teacher and support personnel pay by 10 percent over two years. According to the Alabama Budget Office, the pay hike would cost more than $300 million.

AEA spokesman David Stout said the pay increase is necessary to compensate for higher health insurance contributions required of teachers and support personnel. Stout said the raise would barely cover these hikes and inflation since educators' last cost of living raise in 2008.

Compared with the families of many of the students they teach, Alabama teachers do fairly well. According to the Southern Regional Education Board, the average teacher salary is $47,803. The U.S. Census says median household income in Alabama is $42,934, while the median household income for Dothan is $42,836. The national median household income is $52,762.

Compared to neighboring states, Alabama teacher salaries are competitive, according to SREB figures from 2011. The average pay for a teacher in Florida is $45,732; in Georgia, it's $52,815; in Tennessee, it's $45,891; and in Mississippi, the average pay is $41,975.

In Georgia, Florida and Mississippi, average pay for teachers has actually trended downward in recent years. Georgia and Florida have each reduced teacher salaries in recent years because of budget shortfalls.

Nevertheless, Stout said a pay raise is necessary to keep Alabama competitive with other states. He said that without adequate pay, young teachers graduating from Alabama colleges will seek employment where educator pay is higher.

While educators and support employees have not received a cost of living increase since 2008, they have received step raises every two to three years as their years of service increase. Also, educators get raises when they attain higher levels of education.

Stout said these raises are built into the state salary matrix to reward educators and support personnel for sticking with the system and to incentivize getting higher degrees and becoming higher quality educators.

While contributions to health plans have increased for educators in recent years, they continue to pay less than private sector employees for health benefits. Single employees pay $15 per month for health coverage, while family coverage costs $177 per month.

The average amount all employees contributed to a PPO health insurance plan in 2011 was $83.50 per month for single employees and $367.50 for families, according to The Kaiser Family Foundation and Health Research and Educational Trust.

Education advocates have long argued that providing a strong benefits program is essential to recruiting and retaining quality teachers and other education employees.

Should the Alabama Legislature choose to give educators a raise, they'll have to find the money to pay higher salaries. One obvious source of funding is the rolling reserve. The rolling reserve was created by the Legislature in 2011 to prevent across-the-board cuts from ever happening again.

The rolling reserve acts to cap education spending at the average of the last 15 years education budgets. Any additional revenues over this amount are put into a savings account to be used in the event of a funding shortfall. The act was intended to put an end to the feast and famine cycle of Alabama education, in which lawmakers overspent during good years and had to make draconian cuts in bad years.

Stout said that instead of hoarding money in the rolling reserve, the state should be investing it in education, including paying to recruit and retain quality educators.

According to a statement from Gov. Robert Bentley's office, the governor supports looking into raises for educators and support personnel, but says that the state's education system still has a $423 million debt to the Alabama Trust Fund that needs repayment.

"We cannot commit to a specific percentage at this point," said Jeremy King, deputy communications director for Bentley. "We are in the process of developing budget recommendations, and we'll have more details as we submit those recommendations to the Legislature."
The missing piece in Alabama’s education system

By: Thomas Rains Jr.

Alabama’s education system has made impressive gains over the last decade, as we’ve heard from various sources. Ala-bama’s fourth-graders read on par with their peers in other states for the first time in history, according to the National Assessment of Educa-tional Progress.

And our state leads the nation in gains made among students receiv-ing passing scores on Advanced Placement exams in math, science and English. This is great progress.

Additionally, in 2012 Alabama gained promising new leadership in education with Dr. Tommy Bice in the state Department of Educa-tion and Dr. Mark Heinrich in the Department of Post-Secondary Education.

These are all bright spots, but if the state is going to truly create an education system that meets the potential of its students, it needs to continue finding ways to improve.

Alabama is among only a hand-ful of states that does not have any-one — no group, organization, body, or agency — watching the state’s entire education pipeline, from pre-K through colleges and into the work force, in order to find ways to make it better.

One department handles pre-K, the state Board of Education is responsible for K-12 schools and two-year colleges, and separate boards of trustees govern the public four-year universities.

Over the last several months, Bice, Heinrich and the state Board of Education have done an excellent job building bridges across the silos of the K-12 and post-secondary sys-tems, and they are broadening this collaboration to include other lev-els of the education system. This is admirable and necessary, and the state will benefit from this increased collaboration.

Without officials from across the entire education pipeline com-municating consistently, Ala-bama will be unable to identify and solve problems too big for any one department to handle by itself. In the long run, this prevents Ala-bama’s education system from run-ning as effectively as it could to pre-pare students for their futures.

Problems that are too big for any one agency to solve exist across the spectrum:

- In the fall 2011 semester, 34.6 percent of freshmen at Alabama’s two-year and four-year colleges and universities had to take remedial classes in reading and/or math.

- In 2011, only 72 percent of high school students graduated on time (in four years).
According to the most recent data, only 23 percent of the students who enrolled in Alabama’s public four-year colleges in 2003 graduated on time with a bachelor’s degree. After six years, this number climbs to only 47.5 percent.

Despite research that has shown repeatedly the long-term benefits of pre-K, only 7 percent of eligible 4-year-olds in Alabama can access the state’s high-quality pre-K program.

Numbers like this signify problems in the system, or breaks in the pipeline.

However, no one entity or department is responsible for these problems. Education is a progression through the system, and we all must take responsibility.

Critics say society puts too much emphasis on attending college. However, the issue is larger than that.

Of the 40 occupations expected to see the highest increase in demand in Alabama by 2018, only eight are low-skill jobs.

The rest will require some training after a student earns a high school diploma, whether it’s a college degree or technical certification.

The vast majority of jobs expected to see a reduction in demand by 2018 are low-skill jobs that require only a high school degree.

To find clear solutions for repairing breaks in the pipeline and working toward the future, all levels of the education system need to collaborate to determine workable, ambitious and achievable solutions.

Other states and cities provide great models for what this collaboration could look like.

Colorado saw tremendous improvements in its education system effectiveness through the work of its P-20 Coordinating Council under Gov. Bill Ritter. Just next door, Georgia’s Alliance of Education Agency Heads handles similar work. Here in Alabama, leaders from education and business in Mobile County are facing issues and working toward solutions through the Mobile County Education Commission. Recently, A+ Education Partnership released a report on groups like this to begin the conversation about why Alabama needs an education investment council to tackle these and other problems. An EIC would be a collaborative, non-authoritative group of high-level education officials who can work together to find solutions and then return to their own departments to implement them. The name of the council reflects the reality that education is the largest investment Alabama makes with its taxpayer dollars.

A council could lay the groundwork for improving statistics like the ones listed above.

Often, groups like this work to create data systems allowing educators to ensure students don’t fall through the cracks. Or they might collaborate with employers to make sure students finish school with valuable skills and technical certifications needed in that state.
Some states use their councils to improve the process of recruiting and training their teachers.

Whatever councils like this choose to work on, the end goal is always the same: continuous improvement to make sure the system gets better for students.

Let’s make sure Ala-bama manages its largest investment wisely.
A look at West Alabama's year

By: Ken Roberts

At first glance, 2012 might seem a lot like 2011 in West Alabama.

Coach Nick Saban's Crimson Tide earned a spot in the college football national championship game, Sarah Patterson's gymnastics team won a title and Tuscaloosa's recovery from the April 27, 2011, tornado continued to be a big story.

But there was also a terrifying shooting by a gunman with an assault rifle — echoing other incidents in Aurora, Colo., and Newtown, Conn. — elections, signs of economic progress and the demolition of a venerable University of Alabama residence hall.

Here are some of the top stories of 2012 in West Alabama:

Four championships
The 2011-12 calendar year was a banner year for Crimson Tide athletics, with four teams earning national titles.

The parade of trophies started on Jan. 9 in the New Orleans Superdome as the UA football team shut out the LSU Tigers to claim the program's 14th national championship.

Jeremy Shelley kicked five field goals and Trent Richardson's 34-yard touchdown run accounted for all the points in the Tide's 21-0 victory. The win avenged a November 2011 overtime loss to LSU at Bryant-Denny Stadium.

It came down to the last event, the balance beam, but Ashley Priess helped the UA gymnastics team clinch back-to-back national titles April 21 in Duluth, Ga., at the NCAA gymnastics meet.

With the consecutive titles, the UA gymnastics program has six national championships and in December the 2013 team was voted No. 1 in the preseason coaches' poll.

On June 7, the Alabama softball team overcame a rain delay to defeat Oklahoma 5-4 at Women's College World Series in Oklahoma City, becoming the first Southeastern Conference team to win college softball's biggest prize.

Alabama softball seniors chose "Finish It" as the team's theme, putting up signs with those words in the dugout, on T-shirts and in the team's practice facility. Those six seniors — Amanda Locke, Jennifer Fenton, Kendall Dawson, Cassie Reilly-Boccia and local products Jazlyn Lunceford and Olivia Gibson — led UA to its greatest softball season.

On May 24 in Franklin, Tenn., senior Brooke Pancake rolled in a 4-footer on the 72nd and final hole of the NCAA Women's Golf Championships as the UA women's golf team edged two-time earned its first national title. The women's golf team held off two-time champ Southern California to claim the top prize.

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And UA narrowly missed a fifth national title on June 3: the men's golf team came up just short in the finals of the NCAA Men's Golf Championships at the Riviera Country Club in Pacific Palisades, Calif., losing to Texas on the final hole in match play, 3-2.

Copper Top shooting
A gunman armed with an assault-type rifle fired into the Copper Top, a downtown Tuscaloosa bar, in the early hours of July 17.

Nathan Van Wilkins, 45, of Northport is accused of opening fire at the Copper Top in Temerson Square at 12:30 a.m. July 17, injuring 18 people, five of them seriously, who were in the bar. He is suspected of shooting another man at a home in Northport about an hour earlier and then setting fire to his former workplace in Brookwood after leaving Temerson Square.

Chilling black-and-white surveillance video released by the Tuscaloosa police after the shooting shows a man walking along the east side of the Copper Top holding what appears to be an assault rifle at his side. The video was widely circulated online and generated many calls to CrimeStoppers, some of which identified the shooter as Wilkins.

Tuscaloosa Police Chief Steve Anderson said that Wilkins stood on the patio in front of the bar for a few minutes before firing at least 11 shots that left at least 18 people injured. Video shows the shooter turning and walking away in the same direction he approached.

Anderson said that at least one person in the bar was the intended target. “The individuals were very blessed that they were not killed,” he said.

Wilkins turned himself in to authorities at a FedEx store in Jasper in the afternoon of July 17, telling an employee there that he was involved in the Tuscaloosa shooting. He told police that he used an AK-47 to shoot into the crowd at the bar and then disposed of it, but it has not been recovered.

Wilkins faces 19 counts of attempted murder and 19 counts of first-degree assault. He was also charged with 17 counts of second-degree assault and two counts of shooting into an occupied building. He also faces arson and criminal mischief charges.

Businesses return
The tornado-devastated landscape along 15th Street and McFarland Boulevard began to rise again in 2012.

The Boulevard Salon, Krispy Kreme, Full Moon BBQ, Hokkaido, Express Oil Change and Schlotzky's Deli held high-profile grand re-openings in their new buildings on and around 15th Street.

At year's end, developer Stan Pate was nearing completion of a new, 14,600-square-foot building that will house one of the largest CVS pharmacies in the region.

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On Nov. 19, construction of the largest development within the tornado path of Tuscaloosa was celebrated on McFarland Boulevard. The Lofts at City Center is replacing Wood Square Shopping Center, the 13.5-acre shopping center that was leveled by the tornado that ripped a 5.9-mile path across the city on April 27, 2011.

The Lofts will feature an upscale student housing community along with retailers and restaurants.

Meanwhile, two former tenants of Wood Square — Hobby Lobby and Big Lots — found new homes in Northport, while Planet Fitness moved a few blocks away to Midtown Village.

The City Council adopted new rules governing a mix of residential and commercial building in the tornado recovery area and also unveiled the Tuscaloosa Forward Generational Master Plan, which included an overhaul of parks and the installation of a walking trail.

New $1B coal mine
Walter Energy Inc., parent company to Brookwood-based coal mine operator Jim Walter Resources, announced plans in May to develop a new underground coal mine in northern Tuscaloosa County. The Hoover-based energy company that has operations in three countries said it will spend $1.2 billion to develop the mine and support facilities, making it one of the biggest single investments in the state in recent years.

The mine will take five to six years to construct and is expected to create 530 high-paying jobs when it becomes fully operational. Walter Energy officials estimated the average annual pay and fringe benefits will be $120,000 per employee. About 500 of the new jobs will be in Tuscaloosa County, but the company said it will be several years before it starts filling the positions.

“These jobs are going to be around for 30 to 40 years,” said Walter Scheller, Walter Energy’s CEO, who formally announced the project with Gov. Robert Bentley in Montgomery.

Mental health plan
In April, Gov. Robert Bentley detailed his final plan for modernizing and streamlining Alabama’s mental health care system.

Under the plan, two state Department of Mental Health hospitals will close — Searcy Hospital in Mount Vernon and Greil Memorial Hospital in Montgomery — as the state continues to move more patients with mental illnesses and mental disabilities to community-based care.

But it will go forward with constructing the new 268-bed Bryce Hospital on the campus of the former W.D. Partlow Developmental Center on University Boulevard East, and the North Alabama Regional Hospital in Decatur will remain open.

The plan continues to emphasize community-based care for those with mental illnesses and disabilities who do not require acute care. Two other mental health facilities in Tuscaloosa also will remain open — Taylor Hardin Secure Medical Facility, which houses patients whom the courts rule to be criminally insane, and the Mary Starke Harper Geriatric Psychiatry Facility.

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Northport police chief
Northport Police Chief Robert Green retired July in the wake of an operations study of the police department that was critical of his leadership.

According to the study, done by CWH Research of Lone Tree, Colo., Green used coercion, threats and punishments as “power tools of intimidation” to run the Northport Police Department.

Kerry Card was appointed interim police chief.

Rose Towers falls
Rose Towers had housed University of Alabama students for more than 40 years, but at 8 a.m. on July 4 the aging dorm was reduced to a pile of rubble in less than 15 seconds.

The demolition required about 400 pounds of explosives that were detonated with a blast as loud as a rock concert that was audible from a mile away.

“(Rose Towers) was the first place I lived in Tuscaloosa,” said UA alumna Judy Seale as she waited for the implosion on July 4. “It was the first place I lived on my own.”

About 1,000 people, many of them former Rose Towers residents, gathered to watch the demolition.

The 750-bed residence hall was built in 1969 and the demolition was approved in 2011. In its place, the university will construct the second phase of the Presidential Village Residential Community, which is expected to open in August 2014.

Turnover at UA

Guy Bailey resigned as president of the University of Alabama on Oct. 31, after less than two months on the job.

Bailey cited his wife’s poor health as the reason for his resignation and he was replaced by provost and executive vice president Judy Bonner in early November.

The turnover at the top of UA’s power structure began in March when then-president Robert Witt accepted the job of chancellor of the UA System, which includes campuses in Birmingham, Huntsville and Tuscaloosa. Bonner was named interim president as a search committee was formed.

Bailey, who was then president of Texas Tech University in Lubbock, interviewed for the UA job in July. He started as UA president in September, only to resign at the end of October.

Bonner became the first woman to hold the UA presidency on a permanent when she was appointed to the post on Nov. 1.

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But UA wasn't the only local college to have a president depart. Mark Heinrich left Shelton State Community College in September to become chancellor of the state's two-year college system. Steve Fair, the school's dean of technical services, was named interim president as Shelton State began its search for a new president.

Incumbents win
Voters chose to keep the incumbents in the Tuscaloosa County probate judge race and in the Northport mayoral election.

Hardy McCollum, the longest-serving probate judge in Tuscaloosa County's history, was re-elected to an unprecedented seventh six-year term in the Nov. 6 general election.

McCollum, 65, a Democrat, collected 61 percent of the vote to turn back a well-financed challenge by his Republican opponent, Tuscaloosa County Sheriff Ted Sexton.

In the Northport municipal election on Aug. 28, Mayor Bobby Herndon won by a landslide, beating candidates Frank Chandler, former mayor Harvey Fretwell and former Northport City Councilman Robert Thomas with 68.6 percent of the vote.

In 2008, Herndon received 43 percent of the vote in a race that included three of the same opponents. That municipal election resulted in a mayoral runoff in which Herndon beat Fretwell.

Downtown projects
Three separate projects near the intersection of University Boulevard and Greensboro Avenue announced near the end of the year are expected to bolster downtown Tuscaloosa.

The city's three-decade attempt to lure a major full-service hotel to the downtown area took a major step forward in October when the Tuscaloosa Planning Commission approved the developer's plans for a $27 million Embassy Suites.

The Tuscaloosa City Council furthered the deal when it sold the city-owned 2.02-acre tract commonly known as the CityFest lot to Kemmons Wilson of Memphis, Tenn., for $1.855 million on the condition it be developed into the mutually agreed upon hotel, restaurant and conference space.

Kemmons Wilson's plans call for an eight-story, 154-bed hotel that will be on the northwest corner of Greensboro Avenue and University Boulevard.

In November, Heritage Land and Development Co. LLC of Memphis bought the PNC Bank building on the northeast corner of the same intersection and announced that it will convert the top eight floors of the historic, 10-story tower into 100 one- and two-bedroom apartments, representing a $15 million investment.

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The PNC building, the first office tower in Tuscaloosa, dates back to 1925 and has been home to a number of banks since then, with offices on its upper floors.

Also in October, Tin Top Restaurant & Oyster Bar announced plans to move into the Temerson Building on the corner of Greensboro Avenue and Fourth Street at the northwest edge of Temerson Square, behind the PNC building.

Riverfront projects
In May, the Tuscaloosa River Market, formerly the Tuscaloosa Farmers Market, opened on Jack Warner Parkway. The River Market is connected to the new Tuscaloosa Visitor Center and across the road from the Mildred Westervelt Transportation Museum, which opened in 2011, Some of the farmers who sold produce at the former Tuscaloosa Farmers Market opted out of the River Market and made the switch over to a new market in Northport.

RiverWalk Place, the first development to combine residences with retail along Tuscaloosa's Riverwalk, was formally dedicated Dec. 11.

The $14 million development consists of two three-story buildings with 22 luxury condominiums on the second and third floors and more than 16,600 square feet of retail space for shops and restaurants on the ground floor.

Located on 3.3 acres between Jack Warner Parkway and the Black Warrior River, RiverWalk Place was built by Bill Lunsford Construction and Development of Northport. Construction started in fall 2011, but development of the site has been in the works since 2004.

RiverWalk Place's first business, Orange Leaf America's Frozen Yogurt, and Another Broken Egg Cafe, opened in December.

Tide earns SEC title
The Crimson Tide captured its 23rd SEC football title in 2012 and earned a spot in the national championship for the third time in the last four seasons.

The Tide's 2012 season began with a convincing 41-14 win over the Michigan Wolverines at Cowboys Stadium in Arlington, Texas. More big wins followed, including routes over SEC foes Arkansas, Tennessee and Missouri, as the Tide rose to No. 1 in the polls before a tumultuous November.

A last-minute, four-point win over the LSU Tigers in Baton Rouge on Nov. 3 was followed by a last-minute, five-point loss to Texas A&M at Bryant-Denny Stadium on Nov. 10, which knocked the Tide out of the top spot.

But on Nov. 17, two teams ranked ahead of Alabama, Kansas State and Oregon, lost, allowing the Tide to move back to No. 2 behind Notre Dame in the polls.
A 49-0 annihilation of arch-rival Auburn clinched the SEC West, setting up the Georgia-Alabama match-up in the SEC Championship Game on Dec. 1, with the winner advancing to play the Fighting Irish for the national championship in Miami on Jan. 7.

The SEC title game at the Georgia Dome in Atlanta was a thriller, with the Tide topping the Georgia Bulldogs 32-28 in a game that went down to the final play.

Other notable headlines of 2012
Mercedes rolls out its next generation of the GL-Class, which wins accolades; Tuscaloosa gets its first craft brewery; Jim Myers Drugs sold to Walgreens; The Tuscaloosa News wins the Pulitzer Prize for tornado coverage; Kentuck founder Georgine Clarke dies; Man dead after shooting at Binion Creek Boat Landing; Northport bakery told to stop making treats with script 'A'; Workers at Cottondale automotive parts manufacturers Faurecia and Johnson Controls vote to join the United Auto Workers; City says first year of Tuscaloosa Amphitheater made small profit; Danny Ray Smith, 65, indicted on vehicular homicide and other charges in connection with the death of an 8-year-old Chilton County girl after the Tuscaloosa Regional Air Show in March; Woman injured by brick thrown from overpass; Forest Lake drained and tornado debris removed; Land acquisition will enable expansion of county landfill; Funding approved for new tennis complex in Alberta; Construction begins on new Brookwood High School; Student drowns after jumping off Bama Belle; Northport imposes moratorium on certain businesses; controversial Norwegian film shown at Bama Theatre; Tuscaloosa holds memorial for victims one year after the April 27, 2011, tornado.
A time to grow

By Patrick Rupinski
Business Editor

The year 2012 was a time of recovery in West Alabama. Businesses destroyed by the April 27, 2011 tornado came back in greater numbers, and some retailers new to West Alabama joined the scene.

City of Tuscaloosa officials finished mapping out their plans for rebuilding the tornado-ravaged areas.

And West Alabama’s auto industry, which only a few years ago faced an uncertain future as some wondered if it would survive, was racing ahead as Mercedes-Benz U.S. International in Vance prepared to add new vehicles to its production lines and with them additional employees. The same held true for its area automotive parts suppliers.

And the county’s coal industry — one of its oldest and largest employers — was on the move, too. Demand for the rich metallurgical coal that lies beneath much of Tuscaloosa County resulted in Walter Energy moving ahead with plans to open a new underground coal mine in northern Tuscaloosa County as part of a $1 billion investment.

As the year comes to an end, there are predictions and hopes that more good things await in 2013.

That does not mean that there will be some sort of magical occurrence that will make all right in the new year. Major challenges remain.

During the past year, Tuscaloosa County has seen a lower unemployment rate than other West Alabama counties, but even its employment figures show the economic recovery has not taken hold.

“The overall economy of Tuscaloosa County grew by approximately 2 to 2.5 percent” in 2012, said Ahmad Ijaz, an economist with the University of Alabama Center for Business and Economic Research.

At the same time, the number of people working declined by about 2,700 from 2010. Some of that is because of the lagging effects of the tornado, he said, noting that destroyed businesses meant lost jobs. But there were many workers who retired and were not replaced, he said.

Most of the new jobs created in 2012 “were typically in low-wage sectors — retailing, administrative support, social assistance, etc. — or were temporary/part-time with very few benefits attached to them, which is one reason why the personal income and wages and salaries have grown relatively slower compared to the national average,” he said.

A problem for businesses everywhere is none are sure if the economy will continue to recover, he said.

A lack of domestic demand, the Eurozone debt crises, a decline in emerging markets growth, and domestic fiscal policies will all affect the local economy, he said.

In 2013, it is “most likely the economy will grow by about 2 to 2.5 percent with about 0.5 percent increase in employment, as more businesses continue to recover from tornado damage,” Ijaz said. “The unemployment rate will probably inch down towards 7 percent. However, if there is not any meaningful compromise about the fiscal cliff, the economy will most likely go back into a recession.”

Jim Page, president and CEO of the Chamber of Commerce of West Alabama, said he views 2012 as a year of post-tornado recovery.

More businesses that were destroyed or damaged by the tornado came back. But new retailers to the Tuscaloosa economy also came in.

“The Tuscaloosa market has long been underserved, and it is finally getting the attention it deserves like never before,” he said.

The new retailers that came to town this year “are but the tip of the iceberg,” Page said. “I think in 2013, we will see much more.”

Recent developments during the past few months also could influence 2013.

The redevelopment of Wood Square, a shopping center that was destroyed by the tornado, will see construction of a smaller retail development to make room for new apartment-style housing that will set the bar for the city’s new mixed use development, Page said.
2013

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There also will be a growing opportunity for entrepreneurship in 2013. He noted The Edge, a business incubator that was started by UA, Tuscaloosa and the Chamber this fall, is designed to keep innovative talent here, something that he said he hopes to see more of in 2013.

Dara Longgrear, executive director of the Tuscaloosa County Industrial Development Authority, said he looks back on 2012 as the year that West Alabama automotive parts manufacturers expanded their plants and new supplies arrived. All that occurred as the area auto industry ramps up to start making the next generation of C-Class sedans at the Mercedes plant in Vance.

The production of the sedans that will go to dealerships likely won’t start until 2014, but machinery for their production is already being installed, workers are being trained and production of training vehicles will start in mid-2013, according to Mercedes officials.

Longgrear said he believes Mercedes has all its primary suppliers on board, but he said some secondary suppliers — the manufacturers that will make components for the primary suppliers — could still come in during 2013.

And he said his office is starting to get some inquiries from companies that might make parts for a fifth vehicle that Mercedes plans to add to its production at Vance in the future.

“We are seeing the first of that supplier activity right now, and I think we will see some more inquiries,” Longgrear said. He also thinks UA will play a bigger role next year in West Alabama’s economy.

“I think there will be some sort of economic development announcement involving partners with UA,” he said.

Continuing to diversify the county’s mix of industries has been an ongoing objective for the industrial development authority and that will continue, he said. The push to land aerospace industry in the area, which started a couple of years ago, also could see fruition.

“I predict we will see an aerospace announcement,” Longgrear said. “It could be work for an existing company either making a component or a service provider.”

Longgrear said IDA might begin to target smaller industries in 2013 — industries that will need fewer employees but require employees with higher skills. Those employees, in turn, will be higher paid.

Most of the companies TCIDA has recruited have been foreign based, he said, and that will continue.

“We have people who are used to dealing with people from other countries, who speak their language and can work with them,” Longgrear said. “We expect our clientele to be internationally based, and it would not be too far off to see a Chinese auto-related company looking at this area in the future.”

He said he also thinks a pharmaceutical-related company might look at Tuscaloosa next year. “We are seeing some opportunities there.”

But he said there are challenges to reaping that development.

There is a shortage of skilled people to take the jobs that are available. More must be done to train in the skills needed in the high-tech manufacturing of the 21st century, Longgrear said.
Hotel Capstone gets a facelift

Bathrooms and restaurant undergoing modern upgrades

By Patrick Rupinski
Business Editor

TUSCALOOSA | The holidays are a quiet time for the hospitality industry in Tuscaloosa. But this year, things are anything but quiet at the Hotel Capstone on the University of Alabama campus. Construction workers are remodeling while the guests are away.

The 26-year-old hotel is undergoing a $1.65 million interior facelift designed to give it a fresh 21st-century look.

"It's always a challenge to keep an older facility looking fresh," said Cory Jackson Jr., president of Birmingham-based Jackson Hospitality Service, the hotel's managing partner.

Every year, money is spent on maintaining hotels, like the Capstone. Much goes into infrastructure — things like new ventilation, air conditioning, chillers and fire alarm systems, he said.

But this year, Jackson said the investment is going to something he likes to see — improvements that the public notices and gets to enjoy.

The bathrooms in all 150 guest rooms are being gutted and redone. Bathubs are coming out. Spacious, marble and glass-enclosed showers are going in.

SEE CAPSTONE | 7A

Brian Platt of Johnson Kreis Construction works on remodeling Legends restaurant at Hotel Capstone on Dec. 20. The bar inside the restaurant is being moved from the back to the front of the establishment, and seating is being rearranged.
CAPSTONE

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1A

New commodes and furniture-like vanities are going in, and the standard lighting and mirrors are being replaced with full-sized backlit vanity mirrors. 

But perhaps a more noticeable change for the general public in Tuscaloosa will be the redone Legends Bistro, the Capstone's ground-floor restaurant. 

The bistro is now closed. Construction tarps and thick plastic sheets cover its entrance. Inside, workers with jackhammers tore up the concrete floor last week. A smaller first-floor meeting room has been set up for dining for hotel guests. 

The Legends had a small bar with the restaurant. The remodeling will change that. "The whole front third will be the lounge," Jackson said. It will seat about 40 people.

The doorway to the Legends will be removed as part of the renovation to create an open seating area that flows into the Capstone's wide main corridor. 

A new bar will be installed with new seating and lighting, and there will be more private seating away from the corridor. The color pattern will reflect the hotel's ties to UA — crimson, white, black and gray.

The Legends restaurant will be behind the lounge. "When the restaurant closes at 10 or 10:30 p.m., the lounge will still be open and we will have bar food (like brick-oven pizzas, burgers, chicken fingers and tapas) coming from the kitchen," said Peter Schmidt, the Capstone's director of food and beverage and its master chef.

The Legends should be ready to reopen in mid-February, and the last of the guest room remodelings will be finished in spring. The hotel remains open for business throughout the remodeling.

Jackson said the work is being done during the winter months, a slower time for business.

"We have been in the hotel business long enough to see some things naturally change, trends that change and some things that need to change," said Jackson, who noted the hotel opened a few years after he joined the company founded by his father, who is chairman and CEO of Jackson Hospitality.

The hotel's opening was the first project of which he was put in charge, he said. "That's why the Hotel Capstone has always been special for me."
State could get more of tobacco settlement

Amount, conditions for use are not known

By Dana Beyerle
Montgomery Bureau Chief

MONTGOMERY | Alabama stands to get more money from arbitration over disputed funds in the national tobacco settlement, and while the amount is a secret, there already are suggestions how to spend it.

Alabama Attorney General Luther Strange last week announced that major tobacco companies and numerous states had agreed to settle a 10-year dispute over payments under the 1998 tobacco master settlement agreement.

Georgia's attorney general said last week that his state could get $56 million, but Strange's office said it couldn't say how much Alabama will get.

Through the end of 2011, Alabama has received nearly $1.3 billion from the tobacco settlement, money that created new programs and has been used for government spending.

Last year, the Alabama Medicaid Agency got

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Gov. Robert Bentley said Alabama won’t be expanding Medicaid under the proposed federal formula, which would allow for potentially 350,000 new recipients. Percent federal funding starts decreasing.

A study estimated that Alabama would gain $1 billion in Medicaid spending for every $100 million in new state dollars.

Orr had a different idea concerning the Alabama Trust Fund that voters in a September referendum transferred $437 million from to prop up the ailing General Fund. There’s no requirement to repay the trust fund, but Bentley and leading Republicans say the ATF should be repaid.

“Of course we don’t have any new money right now, but one thing being discussed is using some of the funds to pay back the money borrowed from the ATF,” Orr said.

Orr also said the settlement agreement, which hasn’t been finalized, may bind where the money goes. “It’s a little bit too early to speculate taking into account where the money winds up, whether it winds up in another General Fund agency or whether we spend it,” he said.

Bedford, the departing Senate minority leader, said he hopes the money isn’t earmarked to the Attorney General’s Office.

Strange’s office referred questions about new tobacco money to the Department of Revenue, which didn’t have a figure.

Bedford and Orr said an option for the Legislature, which controls spending, is to reduce appropriations to any agency awarded new tobacco settlement money by a judge.

Nearly $4 billion is in dispute, Reuters News Service reported, and Strange mentioned that for each year in dispute for Alabama, $14 million could be involved.

“I have not heard an official amount,” Orr said. “Whether we have restrictions or whether we have AG litigation expenses or whether the settlement agreement will be like the mortgage agreement where the AG determined where the money went … we could recoup some of those,” he said.
Lawyer: Layoffs violate decree

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Jefferson County violated a federal consent decree by notifying 210 workers last week that they would be placed on administrative leave without pay, a Birmingham lawyer said late Wednesday.

Emory Anthony said he has written Jefferson County officials — including County manager Tony Petelos — the layoffs were not done in accordance with federal regulations.

Petelos said the layoffs were done lawfully.

Anthony said in an interview he believes the county "violated the consent decree and inappropriately" placed the workers on leave. In his draft letter, Anthony asks county officials not to place the workers on leave effective Tuesday unless the decision is made in accordance with personnel board rules.

According to a copy of the draft letter dated Dec. 27, Anthony writes that the county's attempts to proceed with the layoffs under a 2010 administrative order "is a violation of the employees' property right, which is set out under the reduction in force section in ... the personnel board's rules."

Last week documents were mailed to Cooper Green CEO and medical director Dr. Sandral Hullett, clerks, staff nurses, patient care technicians and others placing them on administrative leave without pay (ALWOP).

Anthony, who copied U.S. District Judge Lynwood Smith in his letter to county officials, said the layoffs were problematic.

Earlier this month, questions were raised during a contempt hearing before Smith whether two commissioners possibly interfered with some personnel decisions, potentially violating a 1982 federal consent decree.

Petelos said the Cooper Green layoffs were done

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appropriately.

"We worked with our legal office; we worked with our HR office, and I know everything was done appropriately," he said.

Lorren Oliver, director of the Personnel Board of Jefferson County, said that his department had no involvement in the county's decision to place workers on ALWOP.

"Merit system employees who are placed on ALWOP for periods in excess of five days may appeal to the personnel board," he said.

The Jefferson County Commission voted 3-2 in September to end inpatient care at Cooper Green, a decision that has led to continuing protests from hospital advocates.

On Jan. 1, Cooper-Green will become an urgent-care center with primary and sub-specialty outpatient clinics.
Primary care doctors leaving during bumpy transition

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One-third of the primary care doctors working at Cooper Green Mercy Hospital have left or are planning to leave by the time their contract ends Jan. 31, highlighting a concern about the future care of thousands of patients who depend on that care.

Several sources confirmed that five of 15 doctors have left or are leaving because of concerns about future operations as the county's contract with Jefferson Clinic, where they are employed, is being negotiated.

The uncertainty arises as the hospital transitions from a full service health care provider with patients in beds to an outpatient, urgent care provider.

"The limbo that doctors have been left in, not knowing what to expect, has taken its toll," said Jefferson County Health Department director Dr. Mark Wilson, who spent 20 years as a doctor at Cooper Green and works closely with the hospital in his new capacity. "It's very disconcerting to me. What was supposed to be the backbone of the indigent care system is broken."

"There has not been a well articulated vision for what the primary care arrangement is going to look like," said Dr. Andrea Cherrington, who works two days a week at Cooper Green. "We don't know what it looks like, and it's making folks nervous."

While much focus has been on the 20 or so patients that Cooper Green has in hospital beds on any given day, those patients will be easily handled through an agreement with six area hospitals, officials agree.

But last year there were about 30,000 to 40,000 patients visiting Cooper Green 150,000 times to see a primary care doctor, get a lab test or some other outpatient service.

Currently Jefferson County's contract with Jefferson Clinic to provide the primary care doctors ends Jan. 31.

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"It's very disconcerting to me. What was supposed to be the backbone of the indigent care system is broken."

Dr. Mark Wilson
Jefferson County Health Department director

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"Let me say this: We have a contract with Jefferson Clinic and with the emergency doctors (to do urgent care)," said County Manager Tony Petelos said. "We will have doctors in place.

Petelos said there will be an extension to the contract which will be presented at the first commission meeting in January.

But there are still some contentious issues including doctor pay and use of nurse practitioners that both sides are working to resolve. If not, the extension will end, and the contract will be void after May 31.

Petelos said he knows some doctors have left, but that is an issue for Jefferson Clinic. "It's their responsibility to find the doctors," Petelos said. "For our primary care doctors, nothing is going to change for them unless they decide to move on."

Danielle Brown, the Jefferson Clinic's business administrator, acknowledged losing doctors but said she felt confident the bumps in the transition would be smoothed out.

"I remain very optimistic that things will work out, and the patients will have their needs taken care of," she said. "We have a group of doctors willing to do whatever it takes, and we are more than willing to move forward with the county as they transition into their new model of health care."

Wilson said that while it was a difficult decision to close the inpatient portion of Cooper Green, "there was a commitment to maintain a robust outpatient service that was at least as good or better than it was before."

The health department, he said, has relied on Cooper Green for some specialty outpatient services — CT scans and mammograms, for example.

Dr. Will Ferniany, CEO of UAB Health System, said UAB has committed to providing specialty back-up care but really can't help with primary care.

Ferniany agreed that putting that primary care element in place is the most pressing concern at Cooper Green.

"The (in-patient) services are easily being absorbed," Ferniany said. "The important thing is that we got to make sure we have adequate primary care and specialty back-up in place."

Cherrington, who works two half days a week seeing patients at Cooper Green and the rest of her time doing research at UAB, said she's dismayed over the loss of good doctors and worried about attracting new ones.

She said there are patients who are upset, because they don't want another doctor, she said.

And patients should be the focus, Ferniany said.
Area has recovered many jobs since the last recession

TOTAL EMPLOYMENT TREND BY AREA

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The best place for jobs in Alabama is in the Florence-Muscle Shoals metro area. Sure, that's a lofty claim. And there are so many factors that go into matching a prospective employee to an expanding firm that needs new workers, making this a difficult race to call.

But Florence stands out as one important metric: jobs recovered since the beginning of the last recession.

All 11 of Alabama's metro areas have fewer jobs today than they did before December 2007, just as the so-called Great Recession started to take its toll on economic conditions across America. But some metro economies have held up better than others, including the state's northwestern hub.

Between December 2007 and March 2010, the Alabama economy as a whole lost 169,000 jobs, the state Department of Labor estimates—a 9.2 percent drop. Birmingham-Hoover was hit even harder, losing 9.2 percent of its jobs (49,700 positions); and employment in Decatur shrank by 12.3 percent.

But Florence held fast, at least relatively, keeping 95 percent of its jobs.

Of all other metros, only Huntsville did a better job of maintaining its employment, boosted largely by the addition of roughly 3,000 government jobs over the course of the recession, a 6.8 percent gain.

Today, four Florence industries support as many or more jobs now as they did at the pre-recession peak. Education/health services employment is up 9.6 percent (550 jobs); manufacturing is up 6.8 percent (550 jobs); leisure and hospitality is up slightly (400 jobs); and financial activities employment is right back where it was.

And while Alabama has lost 20,000 retail trade jobs over the past five years, Florence has kept all 8,300 of its jobs in that industry, according to Labor Department data.

Florence's manufacturing recovery is what truly sets it apart from the rest of the state. Over the past five years, Alabama's manufacturing employment is down roughly 17 percent, with nearly 50,000 jobs lost. But Florence manufacturing grew slightly over that same time period.

If you look a bit further back, however, the picture isn't nearly as rosy. Florence manufacturing employment peaked in June 1995, the DOL estimates, at 14,400 jobs—then shrank by more than 50 percent over the next 10 years. Across the state, 73,000 manufacturing jobs were lost over those 10 years, including the losses in Florence, a 20 percent reduction. But while statewide losses continued through the Great Recession—another 52,000 jobs were shed statewide—Florence manufacturing held up.

Overall, employment in Muscle Shoals is at 97.9 percent of what it was before the recession. Alabama employment is at 93.2 percent; Birmingham-Hoover is still at 91.2 percent.

Above, a list of employment trends seen by each of Alabama's 11 metro areas, as well as the statewide trends.
County to lay off 210 workers

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Dr. Sandral Hullett, CEO and medical director of Cooper Green Mercy Hospital, was notified today she will lose her job effective Dec. 31.

Hullett has been CEO at the county owned hospital for the poor since 2001.

Hullett was among 210 employees who received layoff notices Thursday.

"I wasn't shocked," Hullett said. "I understand how changes are made and they often change the person" at the top.

The layoffs are the latest move by the county to end inpatient and emergency room services at Cooper Green on Dec. 31 and begin operating as an urgent care facility on Jan. 1.

Hullett said she was told by County Manager Tony Petelos and Human Resources Director Demetrious Taylor that her position was being eliminated.

"It wasn't a long conversation," Hullett said. "I regret that we came to a point of separation. I worked hard to make a difference, and I felt I made a difference. I'm still concerned about the patients and what will happen to them after this transition. That hurts me."

Hullett said she's already received multiple offers from providers in the healthcare rich Birmingham medical community.

Petelos said, "I and the county would like to thank her for her years of service at the hospital and in this community. As I have said, this is an unfortunate, but necessary process during the transition of Cooper Green Mercy Hospital to an urgent and primary care center."

Letters were mailed Thursday afternoon to medical clerks, staff nurses, patient care technicians and other workers placing them on administrative leave without pay.

About 100 workers have been cut at the county owned hospital for the poor since March. The hospital employs 528 people.

State Rep. John Rogers, D-Birmingham, said laying off more than 200 workers four days before Christmas was "mean-spirited."

"Why are they rushing to destroy the lives of hardworking moms and dads when the county commission has no agreements and no contracts..."
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with UAB Health Systems; St. Vincent’s Health Systems and Brookwood Health Services to “make available” quality inpatient care for Cooper Green patients.

Rogers said those MOUs don’t represent an agreement.

“Those memorandum of understandings are nothing,” Rogers said. “All that means is they’re going to discuss if further and try to see if we can come up with a contract ... they still don’t have a plan. The only plan is to cause these folks unnecessary heartache during the holidays. Let us hear one statement from another hospital saying they have reached an agreement with the county.”

Efforts to reach St. Vincent’s and Brookwood officials for comment were unsuccessful.

UAB officials have said they will continue to work with the county and Cooper Green.

The Jefferson County Commission voted 3-2 in September to end inpatient care at Cooper Green, a decision that has led to continuing protests from hospital advocates.

On Jan. 1, Cooper Green will become an urgent care center with primary and “subspecialty” outpatient clinics.

Petros said the urgent care center will be open seven days a week from 8 a.m. to midnight. Primary and subspecialty care clinics will continue to operate as they do now, he said.

A U.S. bankruptcy judge on Wednesday ruled that the county had the power to decide how to operate Cooper Green and the City of Birmingham and the mayor do not have the power under state law to interfere with the county’s operation of the hospital.
Honda plant achieves record output for 2012

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Honda's Alabama auto plant has set a record for annual production this year, as the company bounced back from a sharp downturn in output during 2011.

The Talladega County factory was projected to produce a total of 336,601 vehicles and the V-6 engines that power them when its assembly lines shut down for the holiday break Saturday. That's 158,527 Odyssey minivans, 156,920 Pilot SUVs and 21,154 Ridgeline pickups, according to preliminary counts.

The previous production record was about 313,957 vehicles, set in 2007.

It's been a year of recovery for the Japanese automaker's operations across North America. Last year, production slowed due to a parts crisis caused by an earthquake in Japan and flooding in Thailand, both of which damaged supplier operations.

"Honda experienced a tremendous resurgence in production in 2012 after recovering from the natural disasters of the prior year," Tom Shoup, president of Honda's Alabama operations, said in a prepared statement.

Other Alabama automakers also are experiencing record years, amid continued strong demand and recovery for the U.S. auto market.

The Mercedes-Benz plant in Tuscaloosa County also is ending the year with record high output, at about 182,000 vehicles. Hyundai's Montgomery plant has not released its year-end total yet, but the company had already broken its previous record by the end of November.

At Honda, it's been a busy two years, as the company has been in an expansion mode, with nearly $400 million in new investment and more than 350 new jobs. The plant's annual capacity is growing to 360,000 vehicles per year, and it is adding production of a fourth vehicle — the Acura MDX SUV — in 2013.

The $2 billion, 4,000-worker Lincoln plant will resume operations on Jan. 2. At that time, there will be a major shift change to meet the growing demand. Employees will move to a two-shift work schedule of four 10-hour days per week (Monday through Thursday) for most vehicle assembly operations.

Under the new schedule, the day shift will run from 6 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. and the night shift will run from 6 p.m. to 4:30 a.m. Fridays will be open for overtime work — another 10-hour shift — which will be scheduled as necessary.
Tuscaloosa Mercedes plant plans hiring wave

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The Mercedes-Benz auto plant in Tuscaloosa County plans a major hiring wave next year, as it will fill the bulk of the 1,000 jobs that are being added for production of the C-Class sedan.

The car is expected to officially join the German automaker's Alabama assembly lines in early 2014. The plant is coordinating with other Mercedes factories in Germany, South Africa and China to launch the redesigned C-Class.

Construction for the project also is picking up speed.

"We are on track," said Markus Schaefer, head of Mercedes' Alabama operations. "We're working through the Christmas holidays to install C-Class equipment."

The plant's annual holiday shutdown starts today, and it is being extended by a few days this year so more construction work can be done. Automaking operations resume Jan. 7.

Over the holidays, construction activity is expected to swell — up to 1,000 workers on some days — to get as much work done as possible before the plant starts up again.

Construction will continue into 2013, with major equipment installation and trials planned for the rest of the year. At the same time, Mercedes suppliers are doing their own upgrades to prepare for the C-Class. Schaefer estimates several thousand jobs are being created in the Birmingham and Tuscaloosa areas, as new supplier projects and expansions of existing ones take shape. More announcements are expected in 2013.

As for employment at the Mercedes plant itself, hiring for some of the 1,000 jobs tied to the C-Class has already happened, but most will be filled later next year.

There are about 100 Alabama workers in Germany, where they are learning to build the new C-Class.

They will be home for Christmas, then go back for more training. Next year, they will become the trainers in Alabama as they teach their fellow employees about the new model.

The Mercedes plant in Bremen, Germany, will produce the first customer-ready versions of the updated C-Class in 2014, and the other plants will follow.
Mayor strikes out on $3M pitch for ballpark

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Mayor William Bell appears to have struck out with the City Council on his $3 million pitch to pay for extra amenities at the new Regions Park.

An overwhelming majority of council members reject the proposal to give the Birmingham Barons cash for extras at the ballpark including furniture, artwork and a possible "beer garden" and ice cream shop at the stadium.

"This is absolutely ridiculous," said Councilwoman Kim Rafferty.

Council members last week said they wanted more information before deciding the issue. But objections grew even louder this week after the council received details.

Seven of the nine council members, including those who have solidly supported the $64 million project underway, say no to the extras. Several called it an unreasonable request considering the city's sizable investment in the project near Railroad Park.

Rafferty, Council President Rodrick Royal, Jay Roberson, Valerie Abbott, Lashunda Scales and Steven Hoyt all oppose the latest proposal.

"So you're going to do $64 million, then you're going to come up with $3 million more?' said Royal, an early and vehement critic of the ballpark. "That's just too much. It's a crummy deal, and it was a crummy deal from day one."

The $3 million would come from another proposal to sell city-owned land near the site for a new apartment building. In that proposed transaction, Inland American Communities Group Inc. would pay $3.1 million to build a $33 million 245-unit apartment complex near the ballpark.

Chuck Faush, Bell's chief of staff, called the proposal a compromise with the Barons owners to add more amenities to the facility.

Faush said Bell rejected an earlier proposal for direct cash, but was open to assistance if it didn't mean additional spending from city coffers. The proposal to pay the $3 million from a property sale was more amenable.

Efforts to reach Faush for comment about the council's latest rebuttals were not successful with phone calls not returned.

The City Council earlier this month approved selling a block-long parking lot in the vicinity to Alabama Power for $2.95 million. City officials said earlier that proceeds from that sale would fund the Barons agreement, but now said the Inland sale would finance the arrangement.

Councilwoman Valerie Abbott said she had reservations about both the proposed land sale and the Barons' $3 million request.

She said the city has an obligation to provide parking for the near Parkside District that's expected to bustle with activity from the Railroad Park and the new stadium. Abbott wanted more information about the city's plan to provide more parking at the same time Bell proposes selling property that could be used for parking.

In addition, she questioned the extra costs for a stadium already financed with $64 million in city-backed bonds.

"I'm having difficulty understanding that we're building a $65 million facility and did somebody forget it had to be furnished," Abbott said. "What else are we going to be hit up to pay for beyond this? Now we're being nickedeled and dimed to death."

Councilman Steven Hoyt offered the harshest criticism of the proposal, calling the terms "baseball pimping."

Hoyt said the $3 million would be better spent improving the infrastructure in city neighborhoods rather than paying for bells and whistles on a brand new stadium.
UA hits bumps but arrives safely for national championship

By Chase Goodbread
Sports Writer

FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla. | The University of Alabama’s arrival at Miami International Airport on Wednesday didn’t exactly go off without a snag, but the Crimson Tide was none-the-worse for the issues.

Reserve offensive lineman Arie Kouandjio became dehydrated on the flight and was treated by medical personnel upon the Delta charter flight’s landing, but the older brother of starting left tackle Cyrus Kouandjio had no further complications. Another reserve, tight end Harrison Jones, was not on the flight but will join the rest of the football team today.

“We had one player that could not travel today for medical reasons, but he should join the team tomorrow,” UA coach Nick Saban said. “That’s Harrison Jones.”

Notre Dame’s team flight landed shortly before Alabama’s.

Alabama held Wednesday’s workout at its on-campus practice facility before the team flight, which arrived shortly after 4 p.m. local time. The team will hold three practices in Miami at Barry University.

“It’s good to be back in south Florida at the Orange Bowl. I’m sure these people here are going to do a great job of providing tremendous hospitality for our players and our entire family,” Saban said.

Saban was asked twice by local Miami media in a four-minute news conference about the way he handled his oft-criticized departure as coach of the NFL Miami Dolphins when he came to Alabama in 2007.

“I’ve made my comments about all that. We all learn things about ourselves as we go. Some things we all would like to be differently,” Saban said. “We’ve said what we have to say about it. We’re happy to be here and we’re focused on the opportunity we have with our team, with this team.”

SEE ARRIVAL | 5A

ARRIVAL

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Team captains Barrett Jones, Damien Square, and Chance Warmack each spoke about keeping the team focused on the game despite the various distractions available in Miami’s party-centric South Beach area.

“I don’t think it will be hard. I think a lot of our guys know we’re here for the national championship,” Jones said. “While this is going to be a fun trip, for us it’s going to be a business trip. We’re really not here to have fun. We’re here to win the game.”

Reach Chase Goodbread at chase@tidesports.com or at 205-722-8196.

Reach Chase Goodbread at chase@tidesports.com or at 205-722-8196.
UA faculty members make predictions for 2013

By: Kim Eaton

They may not be fortune tellers with crystal balls and Tarot cards, but they are still able to predict the future.

Several University of Alabama faculty members recently offered insight into what might come to pass in the new year during the 32nd annual Educated Guesses project. Presented by UA’s Office of Media Relations, the project gives faculty members an opportunity to make predictions in their areas of expertise. While the guesses do not always come true, the professors have established a decent track record.

“We ask faculty to go out on a limb a bit,” said UA spokeswoman Cathy Andreen. “We let them know they won’t be held to it if it doesn’t come true.”

From self-driving cars becoming more prevalent to more states legalizing marijuana because of revenue, the 2013 predictions touched on a variety of topics. The 12 UA professors gleaned this information not by any magical means, but by researching and studying current events.

Kristy Reynolds, a Bruno professor of marketing at UA, has made predictions the past several years. With a focus on retail shopping behavior, Reynolds said she stays current on all of the business news.

“A lot of people want to know what to expect from consumer spending because it drives our economy. It’s a very hot topic,” she said. “Just keeping up with what is going on in the business world provides interesting topics for class discussions and helps build a foundation for what I think might come to pass in the next year or so.”

Next year’s prediction: Consumers can expect to see retailers sharpening their online services, as well as adjusting expensive storefront footage.

Her prediction builds from past years guesses that have come true. Mobile shopping and consumers using apps to check prices are just two past predictions that Reynolds said were right on the mark.

Not all of the predictions made are realized that next year, but quite a few have eventually happened. UA spokesman Chris Bryant said there have been numerous technology-related predictions. Several years ago, one of the communication professors predicted that more people would read the morning paper online before reading the print edition, and in 2002, a computer science professor predicted handheld devices would give people great ability to do things, like reading email in public places.

“Remember, this was 10 years ago,” Bryant said. “For some of us, that was a wave that had not yet arrived, and it seemed a bit out on a limb.”

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Paul Drneich, an associate professor of strategic management who predicted that "we will go over the fiscal cliff in some capacity next year and it will not be that bad," said the predictions he remembers most are the ones that turn out to be completely wrong.

"Ten years ago, none of us would have predicted Apple would be the raging success that it is," he said.

Some professors, like Ronald Reagan Endowed Chair in Broadcasting Andrew Billings, have been "arguing" their predictions for years. Using data points to study patterns and future trends, Billings predicted that sporting event attendance would drop next year as more people decide to watch events from the comforts of their home.

"This is a really great project. Sometimes, you can get too myopic with your research and just describe what's happening now. What you want to do is take the past and present and project for the future," he said. "I know people will say that's just someone's opinion, but if you take enough data points and research, you can have a pretty reliable opinion."

Here are some of the expert's predictions:

Self-driving cars to take off: Cars able to drive themselves will become more prevalent as the first versions are introduced to consumers during 2013, according to Bharat Balasubramanian, a UA professor with joint appointments in mechanical engineering and electrical and computer engineering. European automakers will begin introducing autonomous cars in the top-tier luxury vehicles in the coming year, marking the first time consumers will be able to buy self-driving cars.

Cycling scandal to reverberate throughout sports: "The Lance Armstrong doping scandal is likely to ripple into other major U.S. sports," said Lance Kinney, associate professor of advertising and public relations at UA. "Not only is Armstrong currently a pariah among his former sponsor brands, Armstrong's sponsors are suing him to have their already paid sponsorship fees returned."

This could result in more athletes choosing to forgo questionable behaviors that could result in loss of sponsorship money.

Fiscal cliff won't be all bad: As Drneich explains it, going over the "fiscal cliff" may not be as bad as most fear and likely could be a net positive in the longer term for the U.S. economy. It could force real cuts in federal spending and raise taxes on everyone, which would increase revenue collected by the government. Without real reductions in spending coupled with increases in tax receipts in the coming year, real unemployment will increase, underemployment will increase, food and fuel costs will increase and the national debt will exceed $20 trillion and remain well over 100 percent of Gross Domestic Product, he predicted.

Revenue to prompt more states to legalize marijuana: "Once states start enjoying increased tax revenue and having a budget surplus instead of a deficit because of taxing legalized marijuana
sales, more states are going to follow suit,” said Mark Lanier, chair of the UA criminal justice department.

Along with the prospect of increased revenue, Lanier said states will re-evaluate marijuana laws because of the heavy burden of keeping drug offenders in prison. Lanier also noted that research suggests the cost of marijuana use to society on the whole is less than the costs of alcohol abuse.

Rural hospitals face tough choices: Rural hospitals in Alabama will need to combine and coordinate their services — or some will close, said Dr. Richard H. Streiffer, dean of UA’s College of Community Health Sciences.

“We have several rural hospitals that are hanging on by a thread because they are trying to maintain the old, autonomous model of hospital, provide full service and be on their own,” he said. Having rural hospitals focus more on primary care and appropriate first-level care is one part of an even broader trend Streiffer predicted for health care across the state and the nation.

International intervention in Syria unlikely; Iran to simmer: The civil war in Syria likely will continue throughout 2013 with the international community looking on, said Emily Hencken Ritter, UA assistant professor of political science and an expert in armed conflict. “The two sides don’t trust each other,” she said. “In particular, they have little reason to trust that an agreement, which would require that either the rebels lay down their means of self-protection or that the government would change or both, would be honored once made. Thus, this is likely to be a very long war … as most civil wars are.” In addition, Ritter predicted that the standoff between Iran and an international alliance, including the United States, over Iran’s purported attempt to build a nuclear weapon will continue in 2013. But the chances of Iran finishing a nuclear weapon is low, as is a long-threatened aerial attack by Israel or other forces on Iran’s nuclear program.

Health care reform to bring “Five Stages of Grief”: The upcoming year will bring significant changes in health care, according to Marilyn Whitman, assistant professor and coordinator of the undergraduate health care management program at UA. “Arguably, the country is largely in shock over the upcoming changes,” Whitman said. “In many ways, we are paralyzed and numb to the news, and many states are still in denial about the changes. Inevitably, 2013 will see the remaining stages of anger, bargaining, depression and, finally, acceptance. How soon we move though the stages will determine how successful we will be in the coming year.”

No decreases for Pell Grant funding: Though new restrictions left thousands without their anticipated funding in fall 2012, Stephen Katsinas, director of UA’s Education Policy Center, said he is confident the federal government won’t axe Pell Grant funding if and when it hammers out a new budget in the coming year. “Mr. Romney supported Pell grants in the second presidential debate; while President Obama benefited from a substantial youth vote, which was concerned about Pell Grants,” said Katsinas. “I think we’re coming to grips with the notion that more of our people need to be educated if we’re to again be No. 1 in the world in higher education. There’s also realization that we’re not going to balance the federal budget on the backs of college students. So, I think prospects are good.”

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Retailers to keep storefronts, sharpen online services: “Retailers are adopting very sophisticated analytics to monitor competitor pricing,” said Kristy Reynolds, Bruno Professor of Marketing at UA. “They know if they are competitive and whether they need to raise or lower the price.” Another trend Reynolds foresees is stores offering more hands-on experiences using their products and more emphasis on in-person experiences unavailable online.

Bad economy to be good for your diet in 2013: Swings in the economy will fuel a continued trend toward shopping at farmers markets as the local or “slow food” movement gains momentum in the coming year. This could help many save money while eating healthier in 2013, said Kristi M. Crowe, assistant professor in the department of human nutrition in the UA College of Human Environmental Sciences.

Sporting-event attendance to drop in 2013: “The confluence of high ticket prices, better at-home media viewing and the desire to share athletic experiences with others via social media will result in more tickets being discounted and more seats being empty,” said Andrew Billings, the Ronald Reagan Endowed Chair in Broadcasting in UA’s College of Communication and Information Sciences’ telecommunication and film department.

Look for bump in state’s GDP, employment in 2013: Alabama’s gross domestic product, the market value of goods and services produced and often considered an indicator of the state’s standard of living, should grow by about 1.5 to 2.0 percent in 2013, said Ahmad Ijaz, an economic analyst at UA’s Center for Business and Economic Research. Transportation equipment manufacturing, which includes auto manufacturing, will be one of the thriving industries.
Alabama professors study science behind shopping

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Now that the holidays are over, relax, take a breath, and think — did you feel like this year’s gifting was easier than ever?

If your answer is yes, then you likely benefited from a global trend that on its face runs counter to what we all learned in grade school: Many academics — including some currently doing research in Tuscaloosa — are now saying that the world is flat.

That’s from an economics perspective, at least, the idea being that instant communication and improving supply chain technology are bringing countries and companies closer together than ever before.

The trend is having a profound impact on the work of Alex Ellinger and Glenn Richey, two logistics experts conducting research at the University of Alabama’s Culverhouse College of Commerce. The two are co-editors of the International Journal of Physical Distribution and Logistics Management, one of the science’s leading academic publications.

Now that the bulk of the shopping and shipping rush is over, the two experts collaborated on questions from The Birmingham News about how logistics continue to change, and how those changes will affect shoppers in the future.

What is logistics management?

Logistics is the management of the flow of products and information between the point of origin (raw materials and manufacturing) and the point of consumption (customers).

What was the last big change, revelation or major technological event that affected logistics management?

The biggest change is the globalization of the business world. We have to move product next door, next state and around the globe overnight.

The revelation is that CEOs have discovered that much of their cost reduction and service opportunities lay solely in the often overlooked area of logistics. Companies are changing from single firm business strategies, born out of the 1980s, to a supply chain-encompassing strategy with partners. Business schools have been relatively slow to keep up with that change, but we are trying to be different at UA.

As for technological changes, there are four: the arrival of instant communication, the development of Internet commerce, the advancement of distribution robotics and the inclusion of RFID technology in traditional barcoding environments.

What part of logistics management are academics and industry experts focusing on now? What’s changing?

There are six key areas of focus right now:

1. Security and Risk: protecting the customer, the business partner, and all confidential information. This includes
1. Value: protecting food, water, volatile chemicals, etc.

2. Integration: joining business partners as seamless working units.

3. Globalization: speed to market, outsourcing, off shoring, & near sourcing.

4. Green, Sustainability and Reverse Logistics: the process of moving goods from their typical final destination for the purpose of capturing value, or proper disposal. Think recycling, remanufacturing and refurbishing.

5. Humanitarian support: Ever wonder who coordinates the response to major weather-related events, such as Hurricane Sandy? Logisticians are the ones who make sure the necessary equipment, supplies and skilled technicians arrive quickly and with the right tools at their side.

6. Partner based loss prevention: protecting against damage, theft, shrink.

How are changes to logistics management affecting the U.S. and global economies?

The U.S. is a land bridge between Asia and Europe. It has a huge ongoing impact on our lives in terms of cash inflow. When you see those trucks on the road, many are bound for Europe.

Do you see companies shifting a larger share of their supply chain operations into the U.S. in the near future?

Yes, just based on wanting to be nearer to the customer and to control the cost of energy.

If online retailers continue to grow, will there be an impact on Alabama’s economy?

Yes, and massively so. Online retailers compete largely with Alabama brick-and-mortar companies like Wal-Mart, Target, Academy and Home Depot (and some mom-and-pop stores) where we earn a healthy amount of tax revenue. The state could do a better job of collecting taxes on the online companies to balance the playing field for local businesses.

Another example is that the state is in the stone age on beer and spirits importing (online ordering of wine, beer and liquor), which could provide a huge tax increase, but is currently illegal. Alabama residents instead have those orders imported to friends and relatives in Tennessee or Louisiana — and guess who doesn’t get the revenue... that’s right, Alabama. Finally, online is the trend, so Alabama should be looking to bring these distributors here (e.g., Amazon).
Lawyer, Bama fan gets his wish

Trial delayed for BCS game trip

Kent Faulk
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Birmingham lawyer Marcus Jones III got the miracle he was looking for Friday — the delay of a trial so he could go to the BCS National Championship game in Miami on Jan. 7.

His attendance at the game had looked doubtful. A judge had denied his first attempt earlier this month to have the trial delayed.

Jones has been a self-described "fanatic" of University of Alabama football since his father took him to football games in the early 1960s as a young boy. He said he still has a beer can Joe Namath drank from at a bar the night it was announced the star Alabama quarterback

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would be joining the Jets.

"We're just die hard Alabama fans," he said of his family.

So when he was finally assured that his University of Alabama football team would be going to the BCS National Championship game on Jan. 7, he bought tickets and had one major obstacle to overcome: He needed to get a civil court trial rescheduled that was set to begin the day of the game.

On Dec. 6, five days after Alabama was propelled into the BCS championship after its win in the SEC championship game, Jones asked presiding Jefferson County Circuit Court Judge Scott Vowell to continue the trial in which Jones was a defense attorney.

"The undersigned (Jones) is an Alabama football fanatic and has been since being a young child, attending games with great players such as Pat Trammell and Joe Namath, with a strong belief that football in Alabama is special," Jones wrote in his motion.

Jones explained to the judge that he waited so close to the trial to ask for a continuance "due to superstition and the uncertainty of how the season would play out."

Jones also explained in his motion that one of his daughters was getting married in mid-December — which she did — and was postponing her honeymoon until the week of the BCS bowl game. She will be in the vicinity of the bowl game and had made arrangements to meet the family to attend, he wrote.

Vowell, however, on Dec. 17 denied that motion without explanation.

Jones said he was "shocked" and in "disbelief" after the ruling. But he wasn't giving up.

"I haven't gotten rid of my tickets yet ... I'm still planning on a miracle," Jones said early Friday.

That miracle happened a few hours later after Jones approached the judge with another plea.

Vowell, who will be retiring next year, said this in an email to The Birmingham News that he would delay the trial after all. The judge referenced previous trials he had postponed for fans.

"As you know, we went through an Alabama national championship game in 2010 and an Auburn national championship game in 2011," Vowell said. "In both cases, I continued one trial which was set for the same week as the games in order for the attorney-fan to attend the game."

"Knowing one of the lawyers in this case, Marcus Jones, to be an avid Roll Tide, I thought that if the case would settle if I kept it on the docket of Jan. 7," Vowell explained of his original denial of Jones' motion.

"The case went to mediation, but it did not settle. I have a strict continuance policy, and it helps keeps See next page
the docket current."

"While I remain an Auburn fan, even after this dismal season, I hate to see an Alabama man cry. I have therefore reluctantly agreed to grant the lawyers a short continuance," Vowell stated.

As Vowell referenced, Jones' request wasn't the first he or other judges in Alabama and other states have had from football fanatic lawyers wanting to attend a national championship game.

Vowell used rhyme to respond to a request by a lawyer wanting to see Auburn in the championship game two years ago. The lawyer had made the motion to the rhyme of "Twas the Night Before Christmas" by Clement Moore.

Another judge also granted a continuance for another lawyer Auburn fan that year. Judges also have granted continuances in trials for lawyers who are LSU and Alabama fans in the past few years.

Recently, a federal judge in Indiana granted a lawyer, who is a Notre Dame fan, a continuance in a trial.

While the requests can seem benign, there are some serious considerations, a few legal experts say.

John Carroll, dean of the Cumberland School of Law and a former federal magistrate judge, said the issue of a lawyer asking for a hearing or trial continuance based on a football game is a question of how it affects that attorney's client.

If it's a case that has been pending for years, and it's a firm trial date, then it might be a problem, Carroll said. But it might not be a problem if it is a simple dispute and can be easily moved without disruption, he said.

"A lawyer would be ethically bound not to go to the game if it adversely affected the client," Carroll said.

The judge also has to manage his docket and scheduling of court cases in a decision of whether to grant a request, Carroll added.

Paul Greene, who recently retired as chief U.S. Magistrate Judge for the northern district of Alabama, said January is usually a time where many of the trials and hearings postponed because of the holidays are held.

Sometimes lawyers and witnesses are scheduled for the hearings or trials and a continuance could be costly, Greene said. "It's not minor," he said.

But he said if both sides don't have a problem, then a continuance is usually granted.

Jones said that the other side in the civil court trial he was asking to be delayed did not have a problem with the request. Also it was the first time the lawsuit — filed in February of this year — had come on the docket for trial.

While the opposing attorney is not an University of Alabama football fan, he "understands the excitement the fans in the state of Alabama have at this time and he does not oppose said continuance," Jones wrote in his Dec. 6 motion.
Ready for the celebration

Many local stores plan to open after game if Alabama wins

By Kim Eaton
Staff Writer

Wade Farris was born and raised on Alabama football, so to have a hand in providing Alabama fans with their beloved championship game T-shirts, hats and other memorabilia is quite rewarding for the Academy Sports store director. "We're Tuscaloosa's hometown Academy and we're very proud of that," he said. "We take a lot of pride in being the place everyone talks about the next day when asked where they got their hat or shirt, or where they went after the game and how long they stood in line." Academy Sports and Outdoors is once again preparing for a late-night after-game opening of its 12 Alabama stores, as well as its Pensacola, Fla., location. Farris said.

"It's amazing, just one big party," he said. "We'll put a CD on with Alabama game-day music, and we'll have associates outside to keep the crowd pumped. The line is even longer than Black Friday lines, but it's very organized and there's a steady

Shoppers walk by Alabama merchandise and signs at Academy Sports and Outdoors saying that the store will open to sell championship merchandise immediately after the game if Alabama wins the national title.

Stay open "as long as there is product to sell and customers pulling into the parking lot," Farris said.

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Hibbett's Sporting Goods in Northport and Belk's in University Mall also plan to open their stores, in the event of an Alabama win on Jan. 7, to sell national championship merchandise.

After planning three of these "hot market events" in the last four years, Academy has it nearly down to a science. Tables stocked with various Bama gear and souvenirs are set up at the front of the store, while Academy employees stand behind tables to help customers find the right sizes. The line moves from the first table to the last, and then on to checkout and out the door. Because only the front part of the store is open, Farris said they bring in about 25 to 30 customers at a time in order to make it a pleasant experience. He said that employees keep the lines moving and people do not seem to mind waiting.

The store will offer Championship Locker Room T-shirts for men, women and youth, Championship Locker Room hats, Championship Locker Room fleece hoodies, exclusive back-to-back Championship T-shirts (adult sizes only), National Championship Tervis mugs, koozies, bumper stickers and other novelty items. Farris was unable to give a price range for the items.

While not knowing how many people to expect this year, Farris said he anticipates higher numbers because of the back-to-back championship wins. The merchandise, which is pre-bought, will help several thousand fans get their Alabama gear, he added.

There are also more items coming during the remainder of the week. While the big "celebration" is right after the game, Farris said they will open the doors before the scheduled 8 a.m. opening to allow customers in to start shopping the Alabama tables.

"The next-day shoppers are more of the people who didn't want to get in the madness of the after-game crowd," he said. "But that night there are so many different kinds of people. College students, couples, households who just load up the van after the game and come down. We also have a lot of spectators who drive by, engaging in the excitement, honking their horns and yelling 'Roll Tide.'""}

In the event Alabama does not win, the championship gear will be returned to the vendor, Farris said, adding that he was unsure what the vendor does with the merchandise.

"(Pre-ordering) is a risk, but you do what you have to do to make sure fans have a place to get their championship gear right away. We want people to think of Academy as that place," he said. "Fortunately, we've been able to open those stacks of boxes the last two times. We're hopeful we'll be able to do that again this time."

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Millions watch video of BCS ticket gift

By Bran Strickland
The Anniston Star

OXFORD | The night before Daniel Buckhannan exchanged gifts with his father, he could barely sleep.
"I woke up in the middle of the night thinking about it," he said.

After he gave the gift—a ticket to the BCS National Championship Game between the University of Alabama and Notre Dame—he's had a little more trouble with restful nights.
"I had to get up in the middle of the night and turn my phone off because I was getting so many direct messages and whatnot," Buckhannan said Wednesday afternoon.

And that's been the Oxford resident's life since he uploaded the 90-second video of his father, Don, finding that ticket tucked inside a Bear Bryant-style fedora.

At first, he was excited about modest YouTube views and a Twitter mention by writer and radio show host Clay Travis. As of Thursday night, the video was at more than 5.2 million hits, and early morning phone calls started coming.

To see the video of the ticket gift, visit www.tuscaloosa-news.com.
GIFT
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from New York television producers.
"We thought it was hilarious when it had 5,000 views on YouTube," Don said.
Added Daniel, "We never thought about something like this."
Travis, a writer at Southern sports website Outkick the Coverage, said he knew almost as soon as he heard Don exclaim the first "Hot diggity dog," just for getting the hat. Then 23 seconds in when Don's smile broke and he was engulfed by a tsunami of emotions, Travis was certain the viral sky was the limit.
"I think I've got a decent internal thought process," Travis said of a video's viral appeal after the countless numbers he receives from his followers. "It's that great essence of why people love sports. It's that rare unvarnished emotion."
At about 11 p.m., Travis tweeted, "Bama grandpa gets BCS title tickets, Merry Christmas," with the video to his more than 63,000 Twitter followers, and the rest is Internet history.
About 24 hours later as Christmas was winding down, the video stood at around 37,000 views and Daniel said his phone was "going ballistic." Then it hit, sports network giant ESPN and its bellcow, SportsCenter.
It was at 1.8 million before they left home Wednesday for an early supper at the Oxford exchange. It'd gained more than a million views before they'd gotten up from the table.
"I'd already been a little teary eyed sitting there watching the kids because they were so excited," Don said. "They were just making me so happy."
"When that other happened, the volcano just kind of erupted."
That shaky smartphone video where Don chokes back tears and trades words for yips of joy continues to make its rounds and captivates countless people ranking as the most-read story on Yahoo on Christmas day.
The whole thing though is just another chapter — albeit more widely read — in the story of the life of this 20-year Alabama season ticket holder and his family. The smiles are clustered in the faces of Don and Daniel when they talk about the family outings to Tuscaloosa on those hallowed Saturdays in the fall. Even when his job with the railroad took him outside the confines of the state where he was raised, they still had their Saturdays.
Don, 59, didn't see his first Iron Bowl until he was 41. He took his oldest grandson, Mason, 4, this year.
When Alabama and Notre Dame exchange blows in Miami for that crystal football, this will be the family's first bowl trip. Just another reason it's so special.
"On Feb. 13, 1979, I held my newborn son right up here at RMC, held him in my arms and told him how much he and I were going to enjoy Alabama football," he said. "Almost 34 years later, I'm reaping those benefits."
Christmas spirit in Haiti

UA grad students make third trip to poverty-stricken country

By Kim Eaton
Staff Writer

Santa came a little early to a couple of hundred Haitian children this year.

While many students were taking a much-needed break from school, visiting with family and enjoying the holidays, University of Alabama graduate student Haley Beech, 28, and her husband, a fourth-year pharmacy student at Samford University, Lucas Beech, 23, spent some of their winter break bringing a little Christmas joy to 200 children in Boucan, Haiti.

The Christmas goody bags included notepads, crayons, toys, candy and more. Many of the items were school supplies because those things are hard to find in the poverty-stricken country, said Haley Beech, a second-year graduate student in UA's School of Social Work.

"This is the young couple's third trip to the small, rural community high in the mountains, about two hours outside of Port-au-Prince. About 500 people call the mountain village their home and they survive there without running water and electricity. The Homewood residents said they had their first experience in Boucan shortly after Christmas in 2010.

"We really had a heart to go right after the earthquake in January (2010), but there were so many people and organizations pouring into the country, it was really hard to get in," she said. "But many months later, after the hype and media died down, there were still so many needs."

The couple began searching for an organization they could work with, but to no avail. Then they found Hope in the Light Ministries, a nondenominational, Christian, nonprofit organization that works with Haitians in the smaller mountain villages. The nonprofit connected the two students to a missionary couple who had been working in those areas, and

ABOVE: Haley and Lucas Beech, seen here in Haiti, recently returned to Alabama after their third mission trip to Haiti.

LEFT: Lucas Beech cares for a toddler in Boucan, Haiti.

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HAITI

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plans were put in motion for their first trip, where they handed out hygiene supplies, and spent some time visiting different parts of Haiti and seeing the poverty the people live in.

“We didn’t really plan on going back when we left the first time, but we just fell in love with the people of Boucan,” Haley Beech said.

They took their second trip to the same village in July 2011 and ran a medical clinic with doctors from Texas. The team saw more than 400 people in three days, an experience that was unique and life-changing for the couple.

“The medical aspect is where our interests really lie and what our background is in,” she said. “We were able to use our skills and the education we’ve been learning and apply that to the field.”

That experience really helped shape their future professional career goals. Haley Beech decided to pursue international social work, focusing on advocacy and social development, while Lucas began leaning more toward disparity work in areas of great need.

“It is very sobering to come back and have running water. You almost want to give it all away, take bucket showers for a while,” Lucas Beech said. “And it’s only a three-hour plane ride. It’s so close and there’s such poverty.”

The couple returned from their third trip on Dec. 22. This visit included not only delivery of Christmas goody bags, but also about 65 hygiene packets, which included shampoo, conditioner, soap, lotion, hand sanitizer, toothpaste and a toothbrush. Some had razors and other similar items, all of which are expensive, Haley Beech said. The couple collects the items in a variety of ways. Their two biggest donors for this trip were Birmingham Community Church and Treasures Thrift Store in Pelham. Family sponsorships helped with the trip’s costs.

While the two plan to graduate in the spring, they hope to continue their efforts in Boucan.

“These experiences have really forced our perspectives to change, to view things in a different light,” Lucas Beech said. “We have really learned a lot about how to live life while we’re here.”

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Notre Dame athletes helped after Ala. tornado

Volunteers came to Tuscaloosa to clean up after 2011 storm

By John Zenor
The Associated Press

TUSCALOOSA | David Jones saw the best of Alabama’s community in the worst of times.

Jones, a Notre Dame cheerleader, was part of a group of two dozen Fighting Irish athletes that came to Tuscaloosa during fall break in 2011. They visited for a week of cleanup and hard work in a grieving town where more than 50 were left dead because of a tornado a few months earlier.

Now, a year and a half after that week of bonding and goodwill, Notre Dame and Alabama are getting ready to play each other in the BCS National Championship Game on Jan. 7 in Miami.

“With the hospitality I had down in Alabama, it became one of my favorite schools,” Jones said. “There’s no hostility, but more karma. You meet all these different faces of the Alabama community. You’re just amazed by them and now you’re playing them.”

SEE TORNADO | 5A

Notre Dame track athlete Natalie Geiger, left, and fencers Michael Rossi and Gabriel Acuna help carry a large tree branch to the road in Tuscaloosa on Oct. 19, 2011.

STAFF FILE PHOTO | ROBERT SUTTON
TORNADO
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1A

There were no football players during that weeklong service project dubbed "Fight for Tide." They were preparing for the 2011 season, after all. It wasn't about football, anyway. Or basketball. Or softball. The service project began with a call from Tim Cavanaugh, assistant director of Alabama's ticket office, to Notre Dame program coordinator Sarah Smith seeking donations. The two intermingled together in South Bend. That call resulted in clothes shipped to Tuscaloosa, and ultimately the 675-mile bus ride and weeklong trip.

"It's one of those things that when special things arise we try to do something if we have the resources and the interest from the student-athletes," said Smith, adding that a group had traveled to New Orleans following Hurricane Katrina. "It all just kind of came together for the Alabama trip. A lot of kids were talking about it. We sent a bunch of clothes down there but then the conversation kind of snowballed to, 'Why don't we go down there?'"

Other school's students and fans also offered a hand in Tuscaloosa, including those who pull for Auburn.

Tragedy trumps rivalry any day.

"I think it speaks volumes for the kind of character and leadership that those people have, from whatever schools they come from," Tide football coach Nick Saban said. "People came here from Auburn, which we appreciated. They came from Kent State. I think a willingness to serve other people who are in need at the time for whatever reasons, I think that speaks volumes for what kind of person somebody really is. We certainly appreciate that and certainly appreciate anything the Notre Dame students did for our community."

The Notre Dame group cleared out lots, hauled debris and dug a ditch. There was also lots of listening.

"Everyone had a story. Whether they were, who in their family was affected." Smith said. "I think it was kind of healing for them to tell their story to others and that we were down there showing that we cared."

"It's kind of created this bond between us and everyone we met, this kind of appreciation that we were there in solidarity. That was pretty cool to feel."

Tide softball coach Patrick Murphy and some of his players worked with the Notre Dame athletes on a site a few miles from campus in Alberta City and took them to dinner.

"I think they made a lot of fans in Tuscaloosa because that night when we went to eat, there were several people that came up to me and asked what was going on," Murphy said. "This is a group of Notre Dame student-athletes. And people gave me a look like, 'Notre Dame?'

"I can remember reading in the newspaper, people wrote and said that, 'Our opinion of Notre Dame has changed tremendously.' Just a wonderful gesture by these student-athletes. All of us were really touched by it."

Alabama athletic director Mal Moore, a former Notre Dame assistant football coach, asked to meet with the group from South Bend. He gathered them at midfield in Bryant-Denny Stadium during a stadium tour.

"I told them about my days at Notre Dame and how much I loved my time there ... and how much it meant to me personally that they chose to come here to support Tuscaloosa and the university community after the tragic tornado came through," Moore said Friday. "I thanked them for that, and we had a good visit, made a bunch of pictures and had a good time. It was very inspiring to me that they chose to come down and give several days of their time to the community here."

Smith, meanwhile, said she was taken aback by the southern hospitality. They got a few cultural lessons on things like the meaning of "Roll Tide" and the houndstooth gear popularized by iconic Tide coach Bear Bryant.

"It was just so cool to share some time together," Smith said. "I definitely have a soft spot for Alabama."

"Any time humans are being kind and caring for one another and have that kind of spirit of hospitality, how can you not respect that?"
Nick vs. Notre Dame

Greg Garrison
ggarrison@al.com

When Notre Dame plays Alabama in the BCS National Championship game on Jan. 7, the most famous Catholic university will battle the most famous Catholic coach.

"Being a Catholic kid growing up, I always watched Notre Dame and everybody in my family was interested in what Notre Dame did," Alabama Coach Nick Saban said.

Saban attends Mass at St. Francis of Assisi University Parish in Tuscaloosa, less than two blocks from the Crimson Tide football practice fields.

"He goes to church every Sunday," said Bishop Robert J. Baker, head of the Catholic Diocese of Birmingham.

Construction is under way on a large new sanctuary for the campus church. Saban and his wife, Terry, who just celebrated their 41st anniversary on Dec. 18, helped raise money for the multi-million-dollar project.

Baker said that when the congregation moves into the new building next year, the current sanctuary will be renovated into a student social hall.

"That'll be made into the Saban Center, in his honor," Baker said.

The coach may never be known as St. Nick, but at least he'll have a church named after him.

Saban has long been known for having a Mass before every game. His pastor, the Rev. Gerald Holloway, serves as team chaplain and leads the team in reciting the Lord's prayer, or

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"Our Father," before and after games.

Saban talked last week about the importance of faith in football, although he said it's not about him being Catholic.

"I don't think it's my faith necessarily, but I think having faith is something that helps us all sort of keep our moral compass in the right direction," Saban said. "I think it reinforces a lot of things about being good, serving other people, trying to do the right things. So regardless of what your faith is, I think that would be of significance to who you are, and I think that is of significance to who I am or who I try to be, and why we do some of the things that we do, in terms of influencing our players to do the right things, to serve other people, to be compassionate, and to be all they can be. I think those are things that we try to emphasize with our players, we try to set an example for in terms of how we go about how we do what we do, and what we do."

A prayer has recently been making the rounds among Alabama fans on social media:

"Hail Mary, full of grace,
Put Notre Dame in 2nd place.
Roll, Tide!"

But the players know winning football games doesn't come from just a prayer. It's about practice, playing hard and following the process that Saban instills.

Asked if he thinks God cares whether Notre Dame or Alabama wins the National Championship, Alabama's All-American center Barrett Jones said he doesn't think so.

"It's not about that," Jones said. "It's about who executes better."
2012 was full of bright spots, dark clouds

Exactly why people believed that a Stone Age culture could accurately predict the day on which the world would end, we're not sure. We're not surprised that the Mayans were wrong, and life goes on as dawn breaks on 2013. Thus, handed the luxury of continued existence, we choose to take one last look back on 2012.

Nationally, Republicans are still arguing over whether the world actually did end. The Democrats seemed gift-wrapped for the taking with a faltering economy that usually spells doomsday for the party in power.

But the backlash against President Barack Obama's Affordable Care Act that led to Republicans seizing control of the House of Representatives in 2010 peaked and then receded. Obama seized on gaffes that appeared to make wealthy businessman Mitt Romney, his Republican challenger, appear out of touch and parlayed his overwhelming popularity among young people, minorities and single women into a victory. He will attempt to use that momentum to propel his legislative agenda.

Republicans might be on shaky ground nationally, but in Alabama and throughout the South, they have taken over. Republicans hold every statewide office and control the Alabama Legislature with a supermajority. Democrats continue to lose ground, and Alabama is essentially a one-party state again.

In local elections, voters were reluctant to change. For the first time in several election cycles, Northport voters returned the mayor and a majority of the City Council to office. County voters returned Probate Judge Hardy McCollum to office for his seventh term as he defeated Sheriff Ted Sexton in a landslide. Countywide offices remained unchanged, and the two new county commissioners replaced retiring officeholders.

Tuscaloosa County residents marked the first anniversary of the devastating April 27, 2011, tornadoes. Most of the debris has been hauled away, and some notable reconstruction efforts are under way. But noticeable holes in the landscape remain, particularly in Alberta and Holt, where progress toward rebuilding is slow, and some criticism has been directed toward city officials over their efforts to regulate the rebuilding process.

It was an exceptional year for the University of Alabama's athletic teams. UA began and ended the year winning championships. In January, the 2011 edition of the Crimson Tide capped the story of its rise from the tornado's devastation by winning the BCS National Championship Game in a shutout over LSU. In December, the Tide crowned the year by winning the SEC championship in a squeaker over the University of Georgia in Atlanta.

Between those two big football games, the women's gymnastics team, the women's softball team and the women's golf team all won national championships for a record-setting year. It was a bright spot during a year of dimming economic hopes and bitter political partisanship.
Former UA basketball star dies at age 61

By Jamon Smith
Staff Writer

TUSCALOOSA | Charles Cleveland, one of the first black basketball players at the University of Alabama, died last week. He was 61.

Cleveland's basketball coach at UA from 1971-75, C.M. Newton, said he was a great player and a good person.

"He was All-American and every-
thing," Newton said after leaving
Cleveland's funeral in Brent on Thurs-
day. "We won two conference champi-
onships while Charles was on our
team. He was All-National Invitational
Tournament, which rivaled the NCAA in terms of talent back then."

Newton said Cleveland was the fourth black basketball player to come to UA. During his time playing for the school, he was a three-time first-team All-Southeastern Conference selec-
tion. He scored 1,312 points in three seasons, averaging 15.8 points and 7.5 rebounds with 271 assists in his career.

Alabama went 66-17 in his three sea-
sons and helped lead UA to its first-
ever NCAA Tournament appearance in 1975. Cleveland scored 18 points and grabbed 13 rebounds against Ar-
izona State in a first-round NCAA Tour-
nament game.

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PLAYER
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Wendell Hudson, UA women's basketball coach and for-
er teammate, said Cleveland was one of the best.

"Charles may have been the best athlete to ever come through Alabama," Hudson said. "Because of the three point line not being in effect, people may have not known how good he was as a player. He had such great range. Aside from basketball, he was also a good friend for many years. He was really a great person."

Cleveland also won a state championship at Bibb County High School.

"He played high school bas-
sketball, football and baseball at Bibb County High School and was recruited very heavily in all three," Newton said. "He chose to come here and play basketball and he had a great career."

After college ball, Cleveland went to the NBA to play for the 76ers, Newton said. After that, he came back to Tuscaloosa to work for the UA Police Department. He took a job in Birmingham for a while, Newton said, then came back to Tusca-
loosa to work with disadvantaged youth in Holt. He was later hired at UA's Brewer Porch Children's Center, where he continued to work with disadvantaged youth until he died.

"He was employee of the month several times out there and just did a good job all around," Newton said. "He was a good friend. He'd call and check on my health several times. He had a good heart."

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UA student indicted for stalking, threats

By Stephanie Taylor
Staff Writer

TUSCALOOSA | A suspended University of Alabama doctoral student accused of sending disturbing emails to university staff and administrators has been indicted on several charges.

Zachary Burrell, 28, has been held since Nov. 30 on charges of making terrorist threats and stalking. A 15-member grand jury returned an eight-count indictment against him on Thursday, charging him with stalking, two counts of making terrorist threats and five counts of harassing communications.

Burrell has been held at the Tuscaloosa County Jail since Nov. 30 with bond set at $500,000.

According to court documents, the graduate student in physics sent “erratic” emails, including video clips of a movie depicting violent acts toward university officials, between Nov. 5 and Nov. 28. Burrell was dismissed from the school in mid-October for various behavioral issues, according to the deposition.

Emails were sent to UA President Judy Bonner, Dean of Students Tim Hebson, an associate director for academic affairs, an assistant director for judicial affairs and an astronomy professor.

Portions of emails sent to an assistant director for judicial affairs were included in the grand jury’s indictment.

“You may want to pass this to the top, I promise you, I mean promise, if it is my dying deed that I will re-pay the University for all it has done to ruin my life. This is supposed to be a university, not a ‘let’s see how much like everyone else we can be’ society.”

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Zachary Burrell has been held since Nov. 30.

JURY
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If the university never realizes that then they don’t deserve to be called university,” according to the indictment.

“I am about two seconds from saying to hell with the University of Alabama. I’m not playing games and I will sue the university for extortion, defamation of character, slander and harassment among other things if you try to force me to go to a rehab program which I do not need and this idea is a gross oversimplified solution anyway. I am losing patience with your office and would like to get back to work on my dissertation which explains where all matter in the universe came from. A topic much, much more profound and deeper than your petty public speaking and throwing stones.”

The indictment also alleges that Burrell sent a YouTube trailer for the movie “Dark Matter” to one email, with a comment to the effect of “Think about it.” The 2007 film is based on a 28-year-old physics and astronomy student at the University of Iowa who killed four faculty members and a student before taking his own life in 1991.

Stalking and making terrorist threats are felonies. A charge of making terrorist threats differs from harassment or menacing charges.

Alabama law states that an action can be classified as a terrorist threat if it causes disruption of school activities, causes the evacuation of a building, place of assembly or public transportation or causes a serious public inconvenience.

Reach Stephanie Taylor at stephanie.taylor@tuscaloosa news.com or 205-722-0210.
Defense: UA fan competent for trial

Harvey Updyke is accused of poisoning Auburn University's landmark oak trees

By Jay Reeves
The Associated Press

OPELIKA | Defense attorneys said Thursday that a University of Alabama fan is mentally competent to stand trial on charges of poisoning Auburn University's landmark oak trees, but they still plan to use an insanity defense.

Harvey Updyke, 64, understands the charges against him, the role of the court and can assist with his defense, said Margaret Brown, one of two lawyers representing Updyke.

But his mental health now and his mental health at the time of the offense are "completely different" issues, Brown told a judge. Lawyers still plan to argue that Updyke was suffering from mental problems when the trees were poisoned about two years ago.

With two doctors waiting in court to testify about Updyke's mental condition, Lee County Circuit Judge Jacob A. Walker III canceled a scheduled competency hearing. Walker said he would meet with attorneys in the case on Jan. 9 to discuss a trial date for Updyke, possibly in the spring.

Updyke, wearing a crimson shirt in court, didn't speak during the 30-minute session except to whisper to his lawyers. He previously pleaded not guilty by reason of mental disease or defect to charges that include criminal mischief and desecrating a venerable object.

The judge said it was "very important" for Updyke to maintain a health regimen recommended by experts that the state-run mental health facility that evaluated him, and defense lawyer Andrew Stanley said Updyke

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was taking medications and doing other things recommended by doctors.

Updyke is accused of poisoning the Toomer's Corner oak trees with a powerful herbicide during Auburn's national championship run in the 2010 football season, which included a 28-27 win over his beloved Alabama team. Auburn football fans roll the trees with toilet paper after a big win, but the oaks are now gnarly and brown; the school already is making plans to replace them.

The judge said Updyke can remain free in the care of a daughter with restrictions that include not driving, but District Attorney Robert Trent said his office still wanted the judge to revoke the bond for Updyke.

In September, Updyke was charged with terrorizing after allegedly making a threatening comment at a Lowe's store in Hammond, La., when workers refused to give him the amount of money he wanted when returning a lawn mower. He is free on bond in that case, and Alabama prosecutors asked the judge to revoke his bond in the tree-poisoning case because of the arrest.

Updyke was once a state trooper in Texas, and Brown said the defense needs mental health records from that state in planning Updyke's court strategy. Brown said the defense also will need to hire an expert to evaluate opinions and demographics in Lee County since statistical evidence could be a key part of a continuing defense bid to move the trial elsewhere.

"I'm not a statistician. I have an opinion but I don't have the statistics to prove it," Brown told the judge.

The judge stopped Updyke's trial in the summer during jury selection after the student newspaper at Auburn reported that Updyke admitted poisoning the trees in remarks during a break outside the courtroom. Updyke's lawyer later said he denied making the confession.
Notable Alabama deaths of 2012

By: Dana Beyerle

Notable deaths of people in 2012 with ties to the state of Alabama included a cast member of "The Andy Griffith Show" and a key player in the George Wallace's "Stand in the Schoolhouse Door" in at the University of Alabama.

University of Alabama at Birmingham basketball coach Gene Bartow died Jan. 3 in Birmingham. He was 81. Bartow succeeded legendary UCLA basketball coach John Wooden and later started UAB's athletic program. He was the winningest NCAA Division 1 basketball coach with 647 wins over 34 seasons. A university spokesman said he had stomach cancer. He coached UAB from 1979-96.

Alabama community and weekly newspaper publisher and owner Kim Price died Jan. 16 in Alexander City, of cancer. He was 57. Price published the Wetumpka Herald and was president, publisher and editor of The Shelby County Reporter from 1990-2001 and president and publisher of the Alexander City Outlook from 2001-2003. He was past president of the Alabama Press Association. His company also owned the The Eclectic Observer, The Tallassee Tribune, Elmore County Living Magazine, Gallery of Homes real estate magazine; and Covey Rise, a magazine about quail hunting.

Former Alabama Sports Hall of Fame chairman Larry Striplin died Jan. 23 in Birmingham. He was 82. Striplin was the Hall of Fame's chairman for 13 years and on the board for 23 years.

Former state Sen. Wendell Mitchell of Luverne died Feb. 4 in Montgomery, of congestive heart failure. He was 71. Known as "Walking" Wendell Mitchell for his campaigning style, the Democrat represented Senate District 30 from 1974-2010. He was an attorney and was dean emeritus of Jones School of Law at Faulkner University in Montgomery.

Auburn University and professional football player Wayne Frazier died March 11 after a brief bout with brain cancer, in Mobile. He was 73. He played center for the Kansas City Chiefs in Super Bowl I. He lettered at Auburn in 1959, 1960 and 1961. He also played for San Diego Chargers, Houston, Kansas City and Buffalo.

Former Alabama High School Athletic Association executive director Herman "Bubba" Scott died March 11 in Montgomery after a brief illness. He was 84. He was the second full-time head of the AHSAA. He was inducted into the National High School Sports Hall of Fame in 1990 and into the Alabama Sports Hall of Fame in 1996. The Navy veteran lettered in football at Troy University.

Huntsville electronics company owner and University of Alabama board of trustee member Olin B. King died June 16 in Huntsville. He was 78. The Korean War veteran worked as an engineering manager at the Army Ballistic Missile Agency and founded SCI Systems Inc. in 1961. He served as a member of the board of trustees for the University of Alabama System.

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University of Alabama and professional football player Billy Neighbors of Huntsville died April 30. He was 72 and had suffered a heart attack several days before his death. The College Football Hall of Famer played offense and defense for Paul W. “Bear” Bryant's first national championship team at Alabama. He played eight years for the Boston Patriots and Miami Dolphins and was twice named All-Pro.

Georgine Clarke, founding director of Kentuck, died May 2 at 71. Where others saw a simple downtown Northport street fair, celebrating the city's centennial in 1971, Clarke looked further down the road, specifically to an overgrown park. From 20 artists on Main Avenue in 1971 evolved the Kentuck Festival of the Arts, drawing 30,000 visitors to Kentuck Park each third weekend in October. From that grew the year-round arts center featuring display space, a gift shop, working artists’ studios, outreach programs, monthly multi-media events including Art Night and ala eARTe, and more.

Former Alabama Supreme Court Justice Reneau Almon died April 30 in Birmingham. He was 74. A friend, Bob Martin, said Almon died from Alzheimer's disease and other health problems. The Moulton native was elected to the Alabama Supreme Court in 1974 and retired in 1999.

Actor George Lindsey died May 6 in Nashville. He was 83. The Jasper native played the mechanic Goober Pyle on the “The Andy Griffith Show” and was an accomplished actor and comedian. Starting in 1964, Nabors played Goober for seven years and then three years for the sequel, “Mayberry R.F.D.” He played football for Florence State Teachers College, now the University of North Alabama, and raised money for Alabama Special Olympics.

Former Attorney General Nicholas deB. Katzenbach died May 8 in New Jersey. He was an attorney who shaped civil rights for the John F. Kennedy administration in the 1960s. He was 90 and had been in failing health after breaking a hip, his wife said. In June 1963, the towering attorney confronted diminutive Gov. George C. Wallace in a doorway at the University of Alabama to register two black students. The World War II veteran's plane was shot down and he was held as a prisoner of war.

Former University of Alabama quarterback and SEC and NFL official Robert “Bobby” Skelton, died June 3, in Montgomery. He was 74 and had suffered from cancer. Skelton played for Bryant and led the Crimson Tide to a comeback win over Georgia Tech after Bryant had just told him during the game that he had played his last down at Alabama, only to be sent back in when starter Pat Trammell got hurt. Skelton officiated Southeastern Conference football from 1972-85 and NFL games on-field from 1985 until 2002. He officiated the 1989 Super Bowl between the San Francisco 49ers and the Cincinnati Bengals.

Longtime Tuscaloosa attorney Barry Mullins died June 13. He was 60. He worked for the Tuscaloosa County Commission from 1985 to 2010 and was a special assistant attorney general for more than 10 years with the Alabama Department of Transportation.

Alabama athlete family member Ed “Sipsey” Lary died June 14. He was 85 and had suffered from Alzheimer's disease and Parkinson's disease. He played football and baseball at the University of Alabama. Seven Lary brothers played athletics, including brothers Frank, Al, and

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Gene, who played professional baseball. Lary enlisted in the Navy while in high school during World War II and returned to graduate.

Decatur attorney and former Auburn University board of trustee member Robert "Bob" Harris died Aug. 2 in Decatur. He had battled cancer. He served two terms in the state Senate and ran unsuccessfully for lieutenant governor in 1978. The Goodwater native served in the U.S. Army and earned degrees from Auburn and the University of Alabama.

Auburn University's 12th president, Henry Hanley Funderburk Jr., died Aug. 4. He was 81. He was president from 1980-83. The Carrollton native graduated from Auburn in 1953 and served in the U.S. Army. Funderburk was the first chancellor of the expansion Auburn University Montgomery. In 1985, he was named president of Eastern Kentucky University.

Former Alabama Court of Criminal Appeals Judge Francis "Frank" Allen Long Sr. of Florence died Aug. 18 in Birmingham. He was 84. He graduated from law school in 1985 after a business career and practiced law in the Shoals. He was appointed a circuit judge in Florence in 1991, was legal advisor to Gov. Guy Hunt and was elected in 1994 to the Alabama Court of Criminal Appeals.

Jordan-Hare Stadium announcer and Auburn University football show host Carl Stephens died Aug. 2 in Montgomery. The Gadsden native was 77. Stephens announced Auburn and Southeastern Conference athletic events for five decades. He was producer and host of Auburn coach Ralph "Shug" Jordan's television show. After Stephens' introduction, Jordan would say, "You're so right, Carl."

Former Department of Public Safety Director Mark Peevy of Eclectic died Aug. 6. He was 67. He was a state trooper and retired as public safety director. He served as director in 1993.

Former Department of Public Safety Director Michael B. Sullivan died Sept. 10 at age 66. He was director for Gov. Don Siegelman and was a retired state trooper.

The personal chauffeur and assistant to legendary University of Alabama football coach Paul W. Bryant died Oct. 1 after a long illness. Billy Varner was Bryant's driver and had served on the University of Alabama's police force. Varner first met Bryant as a bartender at the Tuscaloosa Country Club.

Former Alabama first lady Jamelle Folsom died Nov. 30. She had cancer, a family friend said. The Berry resident was married to Gov. James E. "Big Jim" Folsom and was mother of Gov. Jim Folsom Jr.

Former legislator and Public Service Commission member Charles Martin of Decatur died there on Dec. 8. He was 81. He served in the House, Senate, and for 12 years on the Public Service Commission.

State Rep. Yvonne Kennedy of Mobile died Dec. 8 in Birmingham. She was 67. Kennedy was president of Bishop State Community College and a long-

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serving member of the Alabama House of Representatives.

On Dec. 22, Charles “Logan” Patrick, a 6-year-old boy, whose battle with spinal muscular atrophy led his mother to organize an annual fundraising walk in Tuscaloosa, died at Children’s of Alabama hospital in Birmingham.

Charles Cleveland, one of the first black basketball players at the University of Alabama, died Dec. 22. He was 61. During his time playing for the school, he was a three-time first-team All-Southeastern Conference selection.
UAB stroke study renews
$28 million, five-year grant

Mike Oliver
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A decade-long quest to understand why African-Americans and Southerners are at greater risk for stroke ill-ness and death got a big boost with a $28 million, five-year, grant going to the University of Alabama at Birmingham to continue its landmark study.

"We think we've made substantial advancements in understanding why these disparities exist," said the study's principal investigator, George Howard, professor in the Department of Biostatistics in the UB School of Public Health. "We are very excited to be renewed for another five years."

The study, dubbed REGARDS for Reasons for Geographic and Racial Differences in Strokes, was the first of its kind, partnering with people who do insurance physicals for in-home visits to get medical information from 30,239 people nationwide between 2005 and 2007.

The renewal of the grant from The National Institute for Neurological Disorders and Stroke will help pay for a second round of in-home visits, Howard said. The baseline age was 45, and due to deaths and some dropouts, the second wave of medical information will come from about 20,000 of the remaining participants.

The study has already generated 100 scientific papers, Howard said.

"One thing we've found is that about half of the racial disparity is from known risk factors, hypertension, diabetes and such," Howard said. "If we want to eliminate the disparity, we have to better understand why African-Americans are hypertensive."

Virginia Howard, one of the lead investigators and spouse of George Howard, said in a release that the project ultimately is aimed at developing community-wide strategies to eliminate these disparities.

"We want to provide information for policy makers to use at the state and national levels; the information from REGARDS allows people to take it and say, 'We've learned this, so how can we transform this into an intervention in our community?" said Howard, a professor in the UAB Department of Epidemiology.

UAB Interim President Richard Marchase said identifying where and why stroke incidence is higher is key to developing effective prevention and treatment strategies.

"UAB is very excited and grateful that funding for REGARDS, this groundbreaking national study which over the years has been and will be responsible for more than $100 million of grant activity on campus, will continue," Marchase said.

REGARDS is a partnership that includes UAB's departments of Epidemiology and Biostatistics, the Division of Preventive Medicine, UAB's Center for Aging and Center for the Study of Community Health, the University of Vermont in Burlington, the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences in Little Rock, the University of Cincinnati, Indiana University in Indianapolis and Wake Forest University School of Medicine in Winston-Salem, N.C.
Birmingham's million-dollar question

Research community concerned about funding fallout with fiscal cliff

BY YANH RANAIVO | STAFF

The last-minute debate in Washington, D.C., over the fiscal cliff has Birmingham's research community on edge.

At stake is millions of dollars in funding - and the jobs that money supports - at the University of Alabama at Birmingham, Southern Research Institute and biotech firms that depend on federal grants.

At UAB, the state's largest employer, the fiscal cliff could cost the school $25 million in research funding and result in several hundred lost jobs, according to interim UAB President Richard Marchase.

UAB and its health system have a combined $2.3 billion budget, with about $300 million of that being federal research dollars, school figures show.

The cuts to federal programs would cause an 8 to 9 percent across-the-board cut at the school, Marchase said. The projected $25 million in cuts for UAB has "several components," including pay to research employees, animal technicians, junior faculty and bookkeepers, he said.

"Of the $25 million, a very large percentage of that goes toward salary," he said.

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UAB's Erik Westin studies blood disorders, such as sickle-cell anemia. The school could face cuts to its federal research funding due to the fiscal cliff.
FISCAL CLIFF: Southern Research Institute, local biotech firms may take hit from NIH funding cuts

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“...We would have faculty with more secure contracts, but now we would have to have a portion of their salary shifted back to the university, and additionally, we would lose money for facilities and administrative costs. It would put a remarkable strain on the university budget.”

Marchase said 5,000 UAB employees receive at least a portion of their salary from federal grants.

The cuts would not affect Pell Grants for 2013, but it could lead to cuts in 2014, according to a UAB statement. About 4,500 UAB students received Pell Grants during the 2011-2012 school year, university figures show.

UAB projects there will likely be 8 percent cuts to the Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant, Federal Work Study and Perkins Loan Programs.

“Approximately 100 of our neediest students could lose funding from these programs,” the statement said.

Another Birmingham research entity that expects to take a hit from the fiscal cliff is the Southern Research Institute, a nonprofit organization that conducts research for cancer drugs, space exploration, national defense technology and several other areas.

SRI CEO John A. Sechrist III said he’s still unsure about the exact impact the fiscal cliff would have on his organization. NIH, one of SRI’s largest funding sources and UAB’s largest contributor of federal research dollars, has yet to decide how it will make cuts, he said.

“Our situation in life science would be very similar to the university’s (UAB),” he said, “but my question is, ‘How would the fiscal cliff affect NIH contracts?’ It’s unknown at this point, but it will have a very negative impact.”

NIH and the U.S. Department of Defense provide the largest chunks of federal funds at SRI, with each of the agencies comprising 30 percent of the $71 million the organization has in government revenue, SRI figures show. Another 15 percent of that budget comes from NASA.

Some of SRI’s well-known research over the years has included testing materials at extreme temperatures, building devices that provide a clear view of the ground from 60,000 feet in the air and searching for ways to capture carbon dioxide.

Several Birmingham biosciences and engineering companies also benefit from NIH funding.

Discovery Biomed, Vista Engineering and Vivo Biosciences received $1.6 million in total funding from NIH during the 2012 fiscal year, according to an awards listing on NIH’s website.

Devon Lane, chief operation officer of the Innovation Depot, a Birmingham business incubator, said he’s unsure about the exact impact of the fiscal cliff on the businesses, but knows it would create a negative impact.

“Our perception is that any time you have a decrease in funding, it’s going to impact a company, especially in biotech, which is where we see the most NIH funding for companies in biotech,” he said.
Rice: Education a ‘national security issue’

By: Alex Walsh

For America to continue to improve, access to education must be advanced and immigration law must be addressed, said Birmingham native and former U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice in remarks given at the Birmingham Business Alliance’s 2012 Annual Meeting.

“Education is a national security issue,” Rice said, lamenting the fact that a person’s zip code is as good an indication as any that that individual will have had access to adequate educational resources. We also need to be more welcoming to immigrants, Rice added, particularly those who can help create jobs and spur innovation. “Without immigration, we have the same sclerotic demographics as Europe and Japan,” she said. Both issues will be crucial in the global economy of the 21st century, where neither natural resources nor industrial capability are the determining factors for a nation’s success. In today’s economy, “It is about human capital, “Rice said. “The $18-an-hour unskilled labor job is gone forever.”

To that end, Birmingham is already making some progress: Rice gave kudos to the achievements being realized at the University of Alabama at Birmingham, where visitors have a chance to see “the leading edge of medical technology” first-hand.

Across all industries, the Birmingham Business Alliance says it will have assisted in the addition of nearly 3,000 jobs across the seven-county area by the end of this year, according to BBA president and CEO Brian Hilson. Hilson complimented the region’s progress, saying that those outside the state see an area with “improved workforce, strong community leadership,” and “an improving transportation network.”

But challenges remain. Jefferson County government continues to work to find its way out of bankruptcy; controversy continues to surround the future of Cooper Green Mercy Hospital and job growth continues to be slow, if not non-existent.

Earlier Wednesday, the Brookings Institution identified the Birmingham-Hoover area as having the 99th-best rate of job growth out of the 100 largest metro areas in the U.S. Since March 2010, when the economy finally stopped shedding jobs, employment growth has been a paltry 0.04 percent, data from the Department of Labor show.

Still, Birmingham is looking forward to recognizing what progress it has made since 1963, a pivotal year in America’s civil rights history. Rice will return to the area next year to be a part of that recognition, serving as co-chair of the events scheduled.
Common to speak at UAB for Black History Month

By: Mary Colurso

Get ready to listen. Com-mon — a Grammy-winning hip-hop artist, actor and author — will give a lecture in Birmingham on Feb. 25.

The 7 p.m. event, at UAB’s Bartow Arena, is part of the university’s plans for Black History Month. It’s also linked to 50 Years For-ward, the City of Birmingham’s commemoration of the civil rights movement.

Tickets for Common’s appearance are $5 in advance, $10 on the day of the speech. Admission is free for students, teachers and staffers at the University of Alabama at Birmingham.

Common, 40, born Lon-nie Rashid Lynn Jr., has released nine albums since his debut in 1992, including the top-charting “Univer-sal Mind Control,” “Find-ing Forever” and “Be.” His music combines rap with R&B, social consciousness with street poetry.

Common’s best-known radio singles include “One-Nine-Nine-Nine,” “Soul By the Pound,” “Take It EZ” and “The 6th Sense.”

His acting career includes films (such as “American Gangster,” “Just Wright,” “The Odd Life of Timothy Green”) and tele-vision. Currently, he stars in the AMC’s “Hell on Wheels,” a Western about the building of the first transcontinental railroad.


His Twitter feed abounds with inspirational quotes and philosophical sayings, such as: “The true test of character is not how much we know how to do, but how we behave when we don’t know what to do. — John Holt” “I don’t measure a man’s success by how high he climbs but how high he bounces when he hits bot-tom. — George S. Patton.”

Tickets for Common’s talk will be available to the public on Feb. 1 at the Hill University Center front desk, 1400 University Blvd. Call 205-934-8225 for more info.

Final note: This isn’t Common’s first appear-ance in Birmingham. He performed here in 2005 at the City Stages festival, on the main stage with Kanye West.
UAB will close campus this week to save money

Alex Walsh
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The University of Alabama at Birmingham will close its campus this week, from Monday through Jan. 1, following through with a plan announced by former president Carol Garrison this summer.

On July 24, Garrison sent an email to UAB staff explaining that non-hospital employees would be given the last week of the year off, "in order to close the campus." The move should save the university on utility costs, and will give workers time to "simply recharge (their) batteries," Garrison said.

The bonus time off is intended to make up for employees not getting raises this year, according to Garrison's memo. "This year's budget doesn't allow us to offer a general salary increase program," she said.

UAB's hospitals will remain staffed into 2013. "Our hospitals and clinics must operate on a different schedule to provide consistent, high-quality patient care," Garrison said, stating that hospital workers would instead receive "merit raises," as well as "market adjustments" to their pay.
Life After Prison

By: Kent Faulk

An estimated 10,000 inmates — about twice the population of a city the size of Adamsville — are released from Alabama prisons back to their home counties each year. Twenty percent or more return to Jefferson County.

When they return to their communities, they need a place to live, a job, transportation, and where they can find a doctor to help take care of a chronic health problem.

To address those problems and keep ex-offenders from committing new crimes and returning to prison, the Northern District of Alabama Reentry Council in recent months has targeted more than 25 programs or projects to help inmates quickly re-adjust to life on the outside.

“My hope is that much of the work you all are doing we will be able to package in a form so it can be used in other jurisdictions so they will not have to go through all the hard work that we have done here,” U.S. Attorney Joyce White Vance said at a recent meeting of the council.

Vance had pulled together the council with members of law enforcement, prisons, probation and non-profit groups just over a year ago.

One of those new programs is tackling the chronic health problems of ex-offenders.

Ex-offenders often return to their communities with chronic health problems, such as diabetes, with little or no idea where they will get their medicine or medical care.

Beginning early next year, a program through the University of Alabama at Birmingham, funded by a national grant, will evaluate chronic health conditions of ex-offenders returning to Jefferson County and help them find the medical care they need.

That program is one of the sites in the Transitions Clinic network benefitting from a $6.8 million grant from the federal government’s Center for Medicare and Medicaid Innovation. The City College of San Francisco, in partnership with the University of California San Francisco and Yale University, received the grant targeting ex-inmates in Alabama, five other states and Puerto Rico.

Research shows that recently released inmates have a higher risk of death within two weeks of release, said Dr. Nicole Redmond, an assistant professor in the division of preventative medicine at UAB. “The Transitions Clinic model has been shown to increase primary care access and reduce emergency department use.”

The grant will be used to hire a community health worker, who will help the ex-offender locate a doctor and medicine, Redmond said. The physician services are covered through traditional billing of insurance or charity care, such as those provided by free clinics in the area or at Cooper Green, she said.

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Redmond said she wants the community health worker to be an ex-offender who has had to deal with chronic health problems themselves and can relate to the ex-offenders. She said she hopes to have that person on board in early 2013.

“So any ex-offender — local, state or federal — that can be connected to a primary care provider potentially will be eligible,” Redmond stated.

Social workers

Another project aimed at helping inmates leaving prisons is a pilot project starting Jan. 13. As many as three social worker interns from the University of Alabama will be sent to a 300-bed facility at Limestone Correctional Facility where inmates are prepared for release.

Alabama Department of Corrections Commissioner Kim Thomas said that each of the state prison system’s 26,000 inmates has unique needs. But of the 4,000 prison employees, six are social workers and 29 are re-entry coordinators to work with the 10,000 inmates being released each year, he said.

Thomas said prison officials began meeting in September with University of Alabama officials about the idea of sending interns to work at the Limestone Correctional Facility program. The interns will work alongside the prison social workers to help inmates preparing for release.

The program will help the prison system and inmates, and give experience to the student interns, Thomas said. “We will be potential employers for these social workers,” he said.

Project Hope

Another effort, called Project Hope, involved the development of a print and electronic directory of services available to inmates leaving prison and returning to communities in the 31-county area of north Alabama.

Project Hope is a joint effort between the University of North Alabama and The Dannion Project, based in Birmingham.

Kerri Pruitt, executive director of The Dannion Project, said that nearly 12,000 potential resources were identified in the 31 counties.

Services cover a wide range of needs, from alcohol and drug abuse, child-care and food, to services for the homeless.

“Alabama is very blessed. We are resource rich,” Pruitt said.

TASC

See next page
Birmingham-based Treatment Alternatives for Safer Communities — or TASC — also has gotten two grants aimed at helping ex-offenders who will be returning to Jefferson County.

One of the grants TASC got is a three-year $1.2 million grant from the Substance Abuse Mental Health Administration. "It will provide training for offenders in institutions about how to cope with the challenges they have when they are released back into the community," said TASC Director Foster Cook.

The program directed at inmates at the Bibb and Staton correctional facilities will include risk and needs assessments, Cook said.

Those assessments will identify the threats to inmates success when they come back out of prison "so that we can put together an individualized plan for them based on those assessments," he said.

Once they leave prison, the grant will help provide case management services, some money for temporary housing, and support services with peer mentors who are ex-offenders.

TASC also has another grant to develop a prisoner re-entry plan for Jefferson County, which will be on file with the U.S. Department of Justice so the county can apply for federal grants in the future, Cook said.

That plan will basically pull together in a formal way what has already been done, he said.

"Jefferson County sends more people to prison than any other county (in Alabama)," Cook said.

"Jefferson County sends more people to prison than any other county (in Alabama)."
Huntsville close to setting mark for warmest year on record

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No matter how cold it may feel outside, Huntsville is within days of having the warmest year on record.

"It's looking like it's going to be really close," said Chris White, a meteorologist at the National Weather Service office in Huntsville.

The record of 63.8 degrees was set in both 1922 and 2007. If it happens, Huntsville will be part of what's expected to be the warmest year on record for the contiguous 48 states.

According to the National Climatic Data Center, 2012 is "virtually certain" to break the record of 54.3 degrees set in 1998 for the warmest year. Through November, the average temperature in the 48 states was 57.1 degrees.

But don't trace the warm weather record back to the summer heat wave. Instead, go back to March: Nationally, the average temperature was 50.3 degrees — 6.55 degrees above normal. In Huntsville, the average temperature of 63.4 degrees was 9.9 degrees above normal.

"January through May were very warm. But the center of that was March and it was very much above normal. It was warmest March we've ever had."

John Christy
State climatologist and director of the Earth System Science Center at UAH

"March was the month that drove the whole year basically," said John Christy, state climatologist and director of the Earth System Science Center at the University of Alabama in Huntsville. "January through May were very warm. But the center of that was March and it was very much

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above normal. It was warmest March we've ever had."

However, experts said the Christmas Day tornado outbreak was not a direct result of the high average temperatures.

"Severe weather outbreaks have always happened," Christy said, "those severe weather events don't really relate to the overall average temperature. Although, if you look at the reason why those tornadoes occur, it's because it's very cold to our west and warm to our east. It's just the contrast."

White agreed.

"We do have tornado outbreaks in December," he said. "They've happened a bunch in the southern part of the state. There were a number of those on or around Christmas Day. We can certainly get tornadoes here in December, even in January."

As for the issue of global warming, the high temperatures are a reflection of climate change. But only to a certain extent.

"Is our climate changing? Yeah, the data sure suggests it is," White said. "I think that's pretty indisputable. In the southeast, temperatures here haven't changed here in this little part of the world that much over the last hundred years or so."

Indeed, looking at the top 10 warmest years in Huntsville, the variance is only 1.3 degrees. And four of the top 10 years were 1931 or earlier.

"You can't take one year, one point location or even a small percentage of the earth like the United States (which makes up less than 3 percent of the earth's surface area)," White said. "What you have to do is look at large areas over large periods of time and you look at the trend. And sure enough, the trend is that it's going up."

But the headline is about warm weather, Christy said he sees the potential for a cold winter on the horizon. A neutral weather pattern is emerging after an El Nino weather pattern faded earlier this year.

"The one characteristic of a neutral condition is it has a tendency for cold air outbreaks in the southeast," Christy said. "We'll watch to see if we have one of those arctic blasts that take the temperature way down to below zero in parts of the southeast."

In case you were wondering, Christy said the last time the temperature fell below zero in Huntsville was 1989.

"But I'm not saying it's going to go below zero," he said.
Personal trauma spurs biologist to probe PTSD

The gun jammed, the shooting stopped and Joseph Ng survived.

As Amy Bishop fled the small third-floor conference room at Shelby Hall on the campus of the University of Alabama in Huntsville, she left behind a chilling scene — three professors dead and three faculty members injured.

It was Feb. 10, 2012 and Joseph Ng — one of six people in the room who was not shot — quickly removed his shirt and applied it to a wound of Stephanie Monticello, who survived.

Almost three years have passed and now Ng (pronounced Ing), a molecular biologist at UAH, has launched himself into the aftermath. Specifically, the subject matter is post-traumatic stress disorder.

The premise is that there are blood markers in each person’s DNA that may make them more resilient or more susceptible to PTSD. It’s a study that could, if Ng’s theory is correct, allow for more effective diagnosis and treatment of PTSD. It could also help screen a person

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PTSD
From Page 1A

who is going into a potentially traumatic situation, such as combat in a war zone or working as a first responder.

The research has also captured the attention of the Alabama National Guard.

"I would not study this if it wasn't more of a personal interest," Ng said. "I found myself visibly feeling very different. I see colleagues responding differently, for better or worse. As an underlying goal as a biochemist, my behavior was slaved to chemistry and that's kind of how I've been trained and how I perceived it.

"After the incident, if life throws you a lemon, you make lemonade. If life throws you a tragedy, you study it."

Not just combat

Just outside Ng's roomy office in Shelby Hall with the picturesque western view is his personal Ground Zero. Every time he arrives or departs from his office, he passes the now closed-off conference room where a routine scheduling meeting turned into indescribable horror.

Ng's objective is to peel back some of the mystery to PTSD, a serious anxiety disorder typically associated with soldiers in combat.

More than 8,000 cases of PTSD have been diagnosed in returning soldiers in Alabama, making it the state's top mental-health issue, according to Veteran's Affairs.

But PTSD could result also from surviving a tornado, a hurricane or a car wreck. Or a shooting in the workplace.

"The worst-case scenario, that trauma experience may have triggered some event that prevents them from going back to their normal lives," Ng said. "We had asked the question, this cannot be just a psychological aspect. There must be a physiological or even a biochemical reason behind this.

"The main question is, why are certain people resilient to PTSD while some are very sensitive?"

According to Eric Seemann, a psychology professor at UAH who is working with Ng on the research project, most PTSD candidates never develop it. He estimates that only 10 to 20 percent are appropriately diagnosed with PTSD and that other candidates gradually recapture normalcy or suffer from lesser issues than PTSD.

"Most of the time, 85 percent, people do not develop PTSD," Seemann said. "Why is that? Joe's hypothesis is based on biological markers of resilience.

Ng said the theory linking PTSD and biomarkers is not itself unique. Other, inconclusive studies have been done. But Ng said none of the studies have taken so broad a look for possible biomarkers.

Working with genomics experts at the HudsonAlpha Institute of Biotechnology in Huntsville, Ng said he is studying the thousands of genes associated with the immune system.

"Every one of us has a different experience in terms of building up our immune system," Ng said. "The day you were born, even by virtue of whether born by natural birth or C-section, will give you a different biome. So every human individual will have a different type of biome. That defines your immune system.

"So that means, why are some people more prone to getting sick? Or even to the extreme of being very sensitive to cancer? We said if that's the case, if your immune system can be compromised or defined, is there a pattern of gene expression for immunity that may be associated with PTSD?"

Seemann brings an additional perspective to the study. In addition to possible biomarkers that Ng is searching for, Seemann said he believes environment plays a role, as well, in how PTSD affects a person.

Studies have shown that an adjustment period upon returning from a combat deployment often is enough to cure a majority of soldiers who exhibit symptoms of PTSD, according to Seemann.

"I want to know what's different about that 15 per-

See next page
cent who are developing the disorder versus those 85 percent who aren’t,” said Seemann, who Ng described as an expert in diagnosing PTSD. “I don’t believe it’s purely biological. I believe it’s epigenetic, meaning it’s a function of the environment working on the person.”

**Work drawing interest**

Ng’s study is drawing interest. Donna Marsh, the director of psychological health for the Alabama National Guard, said guard officials have talked with Ng about his research.

That interest fits into what Marsh described as a comprehensive effort by the National Guard to nurture its soldiers and ensure they are always at “operational readiness.”

But, as Marsh points out, that goes beyond simply being prepared for a combat deployment. Guard soldiers were activated throughout the state in wake of the deadly 2011 tornadoes, were deployed to the Gulf Coast in wake of Hurricane Katrina and are routinely on call for other natural disasters.

If Ng’s research could provide a breakthrough insight to PTSD, it could help the National Guard be more efficient in maintaining that “operational readiness.”

“Even if somebody is not deployed, we’re teaching them how to be resilient, how to problem-solve and deal with everyday issues,” Marsh said. “Our soldiers went for the tornadoes in Tuscaloosa. It wasn’t a deployment, per se, but they saw a lot of things in that period of time."

“The focus is on keeping them ready all the time to keep them trained so they can be resilient.”

Ng has seen a problem first hand and is trying to solve it.

“We’re trying to respond to a current problem with such a high occurrence of PTSD,” he said.

“We’re trying to find a treatment and maybe even early detection - not so much as a policing tool but really like any other disease, can we detect it early? Can we prevent it? If we can’t prevent it, can we treat it?”
Real-life experience can lead to a degree

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A new Department of Defense Memorandum of Understanding is designed to make it easier for veterans and students serving in the military to use real-life experiences towards degree credits while protecting them from overly aggressive and, in some cases, deceptive recruiting practices.

Colleges and universities participating in the Department of Defense’s Tuition Assistance Program — commonly called the GI Bill — have until March 1, 2013 to sign the new agreement. It is the latest revision of the memo which some schools had refused to sign earlier in the year, saying it took too much authority away from the colleges and universities.

“The new version ensures schools are providing the education they said they would provide,” said Andy Weaver, director of financial aid programs and grants at University of Alabama in Huntsville. “It was really precipitated by some for-profit institutions with marketing aimed directly at veterans.”

Cooperating schools agree to not participate in high-pressure recruiting tactics aimed at service members or offering bonuses to employees for enrolling students who receive tuition assistance from the military.

The latest version leaves it up to the school to decide how much credit will be applied for military service.
DOD agreement calls for tighter regulations on marketing to veterans, greater flexibility for transferring credits

By: Leada Gore

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Cooperating schools agree to not participate in high-pressure recruiting tactics aimed at service members or offering bonuses to employees for enrolling students who receive tuition assistance from the military.

The latest version leaves it up to the school to decide how much credit will be applied for military service. However, it does require the schools to disclose its credit system, as well as all tuition and fees, transfer policies, academic residency requirements and rules concerning dropping classes because of military service.

Even as schools sign the new agreement, another one is in the works. DOD is working on another memo based on President Obama's April executive order calling for even greater protections for veterans returning to school. That memo is expected later in 2013.
Auburn University to narrow list of 101 trustee nominees next week in Montgomery

By: Evan Belanger

Auburn University's search for two new trustees will resume next week in Montgomery.

Due to term-limit and age restrictions, District 8 Trustee John Blackwell and at-large Trustee Samuel Ginn are due to step down from the board no later than February and March respectively.

The board's Trustee Nominee Selection Committee will meet at 2 p.m. Tuesday in Montgomery to determine which nominees will be invited for interviews.

Auburn has already announced the names of 101 nominees vying to succeed the two outgoing trustees.

AU Director of Public Affairs Brian Keeter said today the committee will not make any appointments during the Tuesday meeting, which will be in the Lt. Governor's Conference Room in the state capital building.

The interviews, he said, will likely be held "toward the end of the month."

According to a letter from Gov. Robert Bentley, who serves as president of the AU board by virtue of his elected position, no more than three candidates will be interviewed for the two positions.

The Alabama Senate must approve the committee's final appointments during its 2013 session, which begins Feb. 5.

The selection committee members are Bentley, Auburn Alumni Association representatives Bill Stone and Gaines Thomas, and trustees Raymond Harbert and Jimmy Rane.

The new trustees will serve terms of seven years for a maximum of two terms. The positions are not paid.
Moody’s downgrades A&M’s credit rating

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A credit ratings agency downgraded Alabama A&M’s bond credit rating last week for the second time in two years, dealing the university another financial setback.

Moody’s Investors Service changed Alabama A&M’s bond credit rating to Baa2 with a stable outlook from Baa1 with a negative outlook, according to a report posted on the Moody’s website.

The Moody’s rating limits the school’s options for moving forward with making significant investment in improvements to campus facilities. Alabama A&M President Andrew Hugine has said, however, that the university has no plans to enter the bond market in the next 12 to 18 months.

A spokesperson said Hugine was out of town and could not be reached for comment.

The downgraded credit rating has offset work by the university to restore its credit rating that was at A3 before the 2010 downgrade to Baaa. Alabama A&M announced last month that Moody’s, after review, had not changed its credit rating from 2010.

The change stemmed from, among other reasons, issues with the Alabama A&M Foundation, according to Moody’s. The company wrote in its report that the foundation “has been noncompliant with its bylaws, primarily not meeting as frequently as prescribed and meeting without a quorum.”

The foundation manages about $41 million in university assets, “which represents 77 percent of Moody’s calculation of university financial resources,” according to the report.

At the urging of the university board of trustees, Hugine has been charged with bringing the foundation back into compliance. Among changes ongoing at the foundation, Hugine said, is the process of selecting new members of the board of directors and reviewing the foundation’s bylaws.

Moody’s also cited the chance of Alabama A&M facing higher bills relating to debt service on student housing for which the foundation issued bonds.

“The Baa2 rating and stable outlook incorporate the university’s relatively weak student market position with declining enrollment, very low unrestricted liquidity, challenging state funding environment, significant capital plans dependent on limited fund-raising or debt, and the potential for recent complaints against the university foundation to garner attention from its regional accreditors, possibly leading to an inquiry or a sanction,” Moody’s wrote in its report.
ALABAMA STATE UNIVERSITY

Audit will cost the state $500,000

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The state expects to spend more than $500,000 getting to the bottom of concerns raised over "contracts and other matters" at Alabama State University, a spokeswoman for Gov. Robert Bentley's office said Monday.

The announcement comes after trustees at the school approved a plan Dec. 21 to pay former President Joseph Silver $685,000 to resign, 25 days after placing him on paid administrative leave.

While university officials have declined to explain the rationale behind Silver's departure, the former president alleged at the time that he was being punished for asking questions about school contracts he considered suspicious. The exchange prompted the trustees — at Bentley's behest — to tap Warren Averett LLC to audit the school's contracts. But Bentley announced two weeks later he was ordering a broader forensic audit by Forensic Strategic Solutions Inc. of Birmingham.

Jennifer Ardis, Bentley's press secretary, said Monday the state expected the audit to cost more than $500,000, with most of the funds to come from the Governor's Emergency Fund and the remainder to come from the Alabama Commission on Higher Education.
School, president reach deal for his departure

Silver will get $685,000; supporters angry at board

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Embattled Alabama State University President Joseph Silver will get $685,000 to resign his position, according to a settlement agreement released Friday afternoon by the university.

The agreement cuts short Silver’s contract, which said he was to serve until Aug. 31, 2016. Silver was hired by the school on June 8.

With a single dissenting vote from trustee Kathy Sawyer, the board voted Friday to accept the agreement.

Sawyer, who had asked Chairman Elton Dean to delay the meeting, called the resolution “a disgrace to the university. I think it does not represent the faculty and the students and all of those who are part of this family,” she said during discussion.

Silver made no comment. The agreement, negotiated by attorneys for Silver and Alabama State, requires the embattled president to vacate the president’s on-campus residence no later than Jan. 6 and cooperate with any “pending and/or subsequent audit, investigation or lawsuit involving his employment” at the school.

Stating “the relationship between Silver and the board of trustees has been strained to the point of entering this agreement,” it includes a provision barring the parties from disparaging each other, which will likely preclude the board from stating why it placed Silver on paid leave on Nov. 30.

Silver has claimed publicly he has been targeted by the board for asking questions about what he believes are suspicious contracts at the school. He has declined to

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ASU President Joseph Silver was cheered as he arrived at Friday's board meeting. (Evan Belanger/ebelanger@al.com)

provide more detail, though. Gov. Robert Bentley, who serves on the board and pushed the board to agree to two audits, made no attempt to stop the vote Friday, but he restrained the board when a motion was made to imme-

diately begin searching for a new president.

"Since I was not made aware of this coming up, I will

appoint the search committee and bring this back to the board," he said, evoking cheers from Silver supporters at the meeting.

The negotiated separation was not popular with students and alumni who attended in support of Silver. They wore silver ribbons and stickers that read "The People are Watching."

"We've been through this! Ya'll ain't focusing on us!" yelled student Mark Myles when Bentley said it was time to "continue focusing on the students."

After the meeting, Myles said Bentley should have asserted his power to stop the board from removing Silver and that students would continue fighting for his return.

"It might take a while, but we will prevail in the end," he said.

Only about five students were present at the meeting, which was held during the Christmas break, when most students and faculty members are not on campus."
President: Racist tweet will follow former football player

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A racist tweet issued by a University of North Alabama football player will "linger for years," University President William Cale said.

In a letter to all university employees, Cale called the words of third-string long snapper Bradley Patterson "absolutely deplorable."

Patterson was ejected from the UNA Lions football team less than an hour after tweeting "Take that (racial slur) off the TV, we wanna watch football!" in response to NBC preempting Sunday Night Football to broadcast Obama's speech at the memorial for victims of the mass school shooting in Newtown, Conn.

"At times such as this one, I strain to find some educational value that might emerge. Here, the lesson is to all our students who use social media, "Incidents such as this one will linger for years, will be seen by prospective employers, teachers, church members, acquaintances old and new. It is not a legacy anyone should create for themselves."

William Cale
University of North Alabama president
Enrollment declines at public universities

By: Evan Belanger

As universities across Alabama fight to grow enrollment in the face of reduced state funding, the Alabama Commission on Higher Education reports headcounts fell slightly last semester from the same semester the year before.

Overall, enrollment in the fall of 2012 was down at nine of 14 four-year public universities tracked by ACHE, with enrollment gains at the University of Alabama and the University of Alabama at Birmingham offsetting much of the decline statewide.

Total enrollment at four year public school statewide fell by just 440 students compared to the same semester in 2011. Without the increases at UA and UAB, it would have fallen by 2,721 students.

The minor enrollment declines are somewhat unexpected given the increased emphasis colleges across the state have been placing on enrollment growth to make up for decreased state funding brought on by the Great Recession.

Trustees at the University of Alabama approved a plan this month to grow its freshman class by 10 percent in the fall of 2013, citing declining state support for higher education and the need to find alternative revenue sources.

“We’re not going to be able to rely on state support going forward in the way that we have for much of our history,” Senior Vice President of Academic Affairs G. David Johnson said at the time.

Despite recent increases approved by the Legislature, state funding for post-secondary education remained $440 million less during the 2011-12 school year than in 2008 — before the recession took its toll — at $1.32 billion statewide, according to ACHE.

Possible explanations for the enrollment decline could be rising tuition. According to ACHE, the median annual tuition at four-year public universities climbed 5.2 percent in the 2012-13 school year to $8,275.

It climbed 5.1 percent for out-of-state students to $15,950 a year.

Additionally, changes to the federal Pell program, which provides tuition assistance for low-income students, could be making college education unattainable for some students.

According to a study by the Education Policy Center at the University of Alabama and commissioned by ACHE, 4,731 Alabamacollegestudents lost Pell support and another 12,057 students are within two semesters of losing Pell eligibility because of the changes approved by Congress in June.

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Those losses affect some universities disproportionately. At Troy University, where enrollment fell by 1,407 students in the fall of 2012, Chancellor Jack Hawkins Jr. said about that many students lost Pell eligibility because of the changes.

According to Hawkins, 12,000 students at Troy are eligible for Pell grants, making the program critical to the university’s future enrollment and finances.

A total of 157,470 students were enrolled at four-year public institutions statewide in the fall of 2012, according to ACHE.
UNIVERSITY OF NORTH ALABAMA

School asks more from state; tuition up

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University of North Alabama officials say they're trying to be reasonable by requesting a comparatively small 8 percent funding increase from the state for fiscal 2014.

"We're trying to stay within the realm of reality," UNA President William Cale said.

The school is seeking $26.7 million from the state, up nearly $2 million from its appropriation for fiscal 2013, which started Oct. 1.

But that's well below the appropriations being sought by other universities from the cash-strapped state government.

The University of Alabama System is seeking a 36 percent appropriation increase for the upcoming fiscal year in hopes of restoring 2008 funding levels — before the Great Recession slashed funding for higher education statewide.

UNA would need a 31 percent increase to get back to the $33.9 million state appropriation it garnered in 2008.

Despite the more modest request, UNA officials are not optimistic they'll get the full increase sought.

"I've never seen a university get the funding they requested," W. Steven Smith, UNA's vice president for business and financial affairs, told board members recently.

Meanwhile, as state funding for higher education remains diminished, tuition continues to climb.

The state's median tuition for in-state undergrads at four-year public colleges climbed 5.2 percent to $8,275 annually for the 2012-13 school year, according to the Alabama Commission on Higher Education.

UNA's 7,049 students will pay $8,148, up 8.4 percent from the year before.
No tuition hike at BSC next year

By: Evan Belanger

Students at Birmingham-Southern College may be surprised to learn their tuition will not increase next year, despite national trends.

Faced with declining enrollment, Birmingham-Southern officials announced Tuesday it will not increase tuition for the 2013-14 academic year.

The move goes against national trends, with the National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities reporting tuition at private colleges edged up 3.9 percent last year.

Since the 2009-10 academic year, tuition and fees at the elite liberal arts school has climbed 10 percent, from $27,846 to $30,690, according to data from the National Center for Education statistics and the college’s website.

Meanwhile, BSC enrollment has fallen 14 percent, from a record-setting 1,521 students in 2010-11 to 1,305 in 2010-11.

University officials predicted the fall in enrollment early last year, based on attrition and the transfer of students whose majors were dropped to cut costs after an accounting error cost the school millions.

Officials attributed the decision to keep tuition rates static to concern about the challenges of paying for college in difficult economic times.

“The board of trustees and I want to make it possible for our current and prospective students to benefit from the extraordinary education BSC offers without the worry of a hike in tuition and fees next year,” said President Charles Krulak.
GETTING INTO THE SWING OF THINGS

Ex-Vestavia Hills standout Jordan Swing showing his versatility in addition to being leading scorer for Blazers

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Former Vestavia Hills standout Jordan Swing nearly had a triple-double in Saturday's 83-65 UAB win over Northeastern.

Now, the Blazers (7-6) will try to build off what head coach Jerod Haase called the most complete performance of the year. UAB hosts Georgia Southern (6-7) today at 7 p.m.

Swing, a 6-foot-6 junior, had 15 points, nine rebounds and seven assists against Northeastern. Preston Purifoy and Terence Jones scored 17 each and Rod Rucker double-doubled with 12 points and 10 rebounds.

"I had that feeling at halftime, knowing I had a pretty good amount of assists and knowing I was getting my rebounds up," Swing said. "When you get that feeling, you start pushing and you want to get that extra assist. It didn't happen, but I feel like I'll get other opportunities this year."

Swing has stepped up as UAB's leading scorer, getting 15.4 points per game. His versatility shows in that he's pulling down 5.9 rebounds per game and dishing out 2.3 assists per game. Swing is hitting nearly 50 percent of his 3-pointers and 85.4 percent from the free throw line.

"(Saturday), I was more aggressive than anything. When I'm trying to create myself, it... automatically creates (opportunities) for others. I did a good job of finding my man and they did a great job of knocking down the shots."

UAB has won two straight home games, and tonight's game finishes off a three-game home stretch. UAB is 6-0 at Bartow Arena, but 1-7 away from Birmingham.

"When we're at home, we feel like a completely different team," guard Terence Jones said. "I don't know what's the reason for that, but we have a different mindset and a different mode. Everything was going our way (against Northeastern). The pace was how we wanted to play. Offensively, we were aggressive and getting after it."

Georgia Southern's season has been marked by inconsistency. The Eagles won at Virginia Tech, an ACC team with a 9-4 record, but lost at 3-11 Samford earlier this season.

Eric Ferguson, a 6-foot-7 junior forward, averages 14.9 points per game. Rucker is UAB's other double-digit scorer at 13.4 points per game. Fahro Alihodzic, Robert Williams, Jones and Purifoy are scoring between 8.8 and 9.7 points per game.

Haase said senior guard Jekore Tyler has been dismissed from the team after three disciplinary suspensions this year.

Sophomore guard Isaiah Jones missed the Northeastern game because of an ankle injury, but could play against GSU.
UAB looks to climb over .500 against Northeastern

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After a nine-day break, UAB is back at Bartow Arena on Saturday for a 2 p.m. game against Northeastern.

The Blazers (6-6) are coming off a 76-69 win over a UL-Monroe team that played just seven players because of injuries and low scholarship numbers.

Northeastern (5-6) is coming off an 82-63 win over Central Connecticut on Dec. 22 where guard Joel Smith scored 27 points and Northeastern got double-doubles from Jonathan Lee and Reggie Spencer.

Lee, a 6-foot-2 guard, is averaging 17 points in two games since returning from a back injury. Spencer, a 6-foot-7 forward, played high school basketball at Hillcrest-Russellosa and is scoring 11.8 points per game. Smith, a 6-foot-4 senior, is scoring 17.8 ppg.

Quincy Ford, a 6-foot-8, 212-pound sophomore forward, is scoring 12.5 ppg.

A pair of ULM guards had big days against UAB. Trent Mackey hit five 3-pointers and scored 20 points. Kyle Kosuta, a freshman guard, scored 15 after coming into the game having scored just 0.9 ppg in limited action.

"A lot of it was we were overhelping and giving them wide-open shots and wide-open opportunities," UAB guard Preston Purifoy said. "We've got to do a better job of not letting that happen."

UAB head coach Jerod Haase said the Blazers must pay better attention defensively to keep unknown players from having high-scoring nights.

"We probably are a little bit unlucky of somebody going off with a guy averaging one point making 15," Haase said. "At the same time, he probably got some shots that were uncontested and we need to do a better job defensively."

UAB forward Rod Rucker is coming off a big game against ULM where he had 22 points, nine rebounds, three assists and three turnovers. Haase said the game plan was to go through Rucker, and UAB scored several times because of Rucker's play.

"I'm an unselfish player," Rucker said. "I like to play team basketball. When they doubled, I think I've got a good IQ. I've played a little point guard in my lifetime."

"I think we shared the ball most of all. No one on the team played selfish. That's the main thing we do that we do great is that we share the basketball no matter what."

Senior guard Jekore Tyler was suspended for the game against ULM. Haase said on Dec. 20 that he was having ongoing discussions with Tyler about his future on the team. The coach's next media availability is today.
When the time comes

By: Drew Champlin

UAB head coach Jerod Haase doesn’t put a designation on starters and bench players.

In his system, if you’re playing well, you’re going to play a lot regardless of whether you start or come in as a reserve.

That’s holding true lately with Preston Purifoy. The 6-foot-5 junior can bang down low or shoot from the outside. He’s also able to guard smaller players, or mix it up with the bigs in the paint.

After going scoreless in eight minutes at North Carolina, Purifoy has scored in double figures in each of UAB’s last four games. The Blazers (6-6) host Northeastern (5-6) from the Colonial Athletic League on Saturday at 2 p.m.

Purifoy scored double digits just twice in the first eight games and one was in a blowout win over Division II Young Harris. After starting during the last half of last season, Purifoy has come off the bench in the first part of this year.

But he’s played 27 or more minutes in three of the last four games, scoring a career-high 20 in an 88-79 loss at Rutgers.

“T’ve been in the gym a lot trying to get shots up,” Purifoy said. “I know at the beginning of the season, I wasn’t shooting the ball very well. I’ve been trying to bring my percentage up as well. My teammates found me a lot, especially Rod Rucker. When we passed it to him in the post, every time he’d see me open, he’d get it to me because he had confidence I could hit the shot.”

UAB held on to a 76-69 win over UL-Monroe last Thursday. Purifoy played 28 minutes, while starting center Fahro Alihodzic played just 16.

“I think Preston’s doing a nice job,” Haase said. “He adds a lot of versatility to us. Obviously, he can shoot the basketball. He can guard smaller, quicker guys as well.

“The bottom line is if you’re playing better, you’re going to play more minutes. It’s not about who starts the game, it’s about who plays the most in the game and who finishes the games as well. He’s been doing some nice things and I’ve been praising him in practice. We need him to continue and we need other guys to pick it up as well.”

Purifoy, who is sixth on UAB’s team in scoring at 8.2 points per game, said he’s started to find his groove in his “sixth man” role.

“It’s basically getting comfortable with the offense and defense and finding your position on the team,” Purifoy said. “Coach does a great job of putting me in the right spot to capitalize on my strengths, as he does with everybody else, and I think I’m doing a better job of that right now.”
Purifoy was also a SI.com cover boy, as his attempted dunk over a North Carolina player was captured in a photo. He was called for a charge on the dunk and he missed it, but it did bring attention to the UAB basketball program.

“It was a pretty good picture,” Purifoy said. “It would have been better if I had made it. I believe that dunk was meant to go in, but it didn’t.”
Thin roster not helping Tide men's basketball

By: Cecil Hurt

These are hard times for University of Alabama men's basketball, mired in a slump, losing the sort of nonconference home games that used to be certain wins. A season that started with promise, including a pair of nice wins at Madison Square Garden, is on the brink.

How did it happen? Theories abound. Some blame injuries. Some blame coaching. Some blame a thin roster that limits Alabama's options for turning things around, and that theory deserves a closer look. How did Alabama, in Anthony Grant's fourth year, end up with eight scholarship players available for action?

Part of the answer lies in the unique nature of college basketball recruiting, with its November signing period. Part of the answer seems to derive directly from Grant's character and how it applies to roster management, some of it to injury, some of it to gambles that haven't paid off.

The roots of today's Alabama roster situation go back to November 2011, when the current roster was being formed. At that point, Alabama was at a full allotment of 13 scholarship players, with only one senior. JaMychal Green would be departing and the UA staff had clearly targeted Mississippi prep star Devonta Pollard to fill his spot. The rest of the roster, it must have been assumed, would return.

The concept of "oversigning" is debated occasionally in college football circles. But the practice is common enough in college basketball that it attracts little attention. Basketball is a vagabond sport. Players transfer frequently. Coaches often count on such attrition in assembling their recruiting classes. Grant, whether through a personal ethos or the fact that his staff missed on a player or two, chose to stand pat in November 2011.

Was that wise? Should the coaches have assumed that everyone would come back, healthy, for the next year? Should anyone have assumed that the volatile Tony Mitchell would mature enough to return as a senior, when the two likely outcomes seemed to be that he would have a good season and turn pro, or, as was the case, that he would have a career-ending meltdown?

A good freshman class, along with point guard Trevor Releford, formed a strong nucleus. Pollard (who ultimately signed in May) was a strong recruit. But much else in the outer orbit went spinning out of control as last season ended. Mitchell proved unsuitable for team play. Two reserves, Charles Hankerson and Ben Eblen, decided not to return for their own reasons. Suddenly, a 13-man roster was down to 10, and it was spring, with most of the best talent having been gleaned (most top basketball players sign in November).

Rather than reach for players that were not SEC-talented, or character-suited (the suspensions that marked the 2011-12 season had to take a toll on Grant), Alabama came into the season with no signees other than Pollard, and a 10-man scholarship roster. That group included three foreign players. There is nothing wrong with that, except that all three (Carl Engstrom, Moussa Gueye and Retin Obasohan) are still, to be frank, projects. Engstrom seemed to have come along in the

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early part of the season but sustained a knee injury in the UA loss at Cincinnati and is gone for the year. The injury-prone Andrew Steele was injured yet again, this time with a sports hernia. And Alabama is left with a very limited roster, in terms of inside scoring and ability to pressure the ball, two good ways to spark an otherwise stagnant offense.

Should Alabama have pursued more players, had better fall-back options when it missed on recruits? Should it have looked at junior-college transfers? Did viable options exist? Grant had no way to see the future, but is paying the price for, depending on your viewpoint, sticking to principles, or failing to have insurance.
Class of 2014 receiving some national attention

By: Andrew Bone

The class of 2014 prospects in the state of Alabama is already receiving a lot of national attention, with a lot of names you will hear early and often during the course of the next recruiting cycle.

Marlon Humphrey, Rivals.com five-star cornerback from Hoover High School, is rated the state’s top prospect. The 6-foot, 180-pound defensive back has scholarship offers from schools across the country. He recently named his top three of Alabama, Florida and South Carolina. Humphrey has attended Alabama games his entire life with his father, Bobby Humphrey, who was an All-American running back for the Crimson Tide and was also a first-round draft pick in the 1989 supplemental draft. Marlon Humphrey has already accepted an invitation to play in the 2014 Under Armour All-America game. He helped lead the Bucs to an undefeated season and Class 6A state championship.

“Alabama has great tradition and good coaches,” Marlon Humphrey said. “They make good corners down there. I want to be a lockdown corner in the secondary.”

Bo Scarbrough, four-star running back from Northridge High School in Tuscaloosa, was a pleasant surprise for Crimson Tide fans when he gave an early commitment to Alabama in September.

Scarbrough is considered among the premier athletes in the country. The 6-foot-2, 220-pound prospect burst on the scene when he was a freshman. Scarbrough will rank among the state’s top three prospects.

“I love T.J. Yeldon and I can see myself sharing that running back spot with him,” Scarbrough told TideSports.com “I just think Alabama fits me perfectly as a running back. Me and T.J. are about the same height. If I put the work ethic into it, I can do the same thing he’s doing.”

Jaevon Walton, linebacker from Tuscaloosa Academy, is also receiving early attention. The son of former Alabama All-American, John Copeland, helped his team win a state championship this past year. Alabama and LSU are showing interest.

Racean Thomas, four-star running back from Oxford High School, is will also ranked among the state’s best 2014 prospects. He has several scholarship offers, including one from Alabama.

Thomas, a 5-foot-11, 197-pound prospect lists Alabama as the favorite. An early decision is expected, which might come soon after next February’s National Signing Day.

“I like how close to home it is,” Thomas said. “My family can make it to the games. They produce very good backs. There aren’t any backs who go there and don’t become better. They add weight and muscle to them. They make them better physically and mentally.”

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Tre Williams, four-star linebacker from St. Paul’s Episcopal in Mobile, is also a prime target for several schools. The 6-foot-2, 220-pounder has several scholarship offers from schools including Alabama, Auburn, Clemson, Florida, Florida State, LSU, South Carolina and Tennessee.

Williams has several friends on the Alabama team, including his cousin, Jarrick Williams. Alabama and Auburn are on the list as early favorites.

“The coaches are really cool,” Williams said of Alabama. “They are hard. They keep the players on track. They make the players gain weight, which is what I need to do. They don’t try to sweet-talk you. They tell you it’s going to be hard and you have to push through it.”

Several other prospects who will receive plenty of attention in next year’s class include Ronnie Clark, four-star safety from Calera High School, who has scholarship offers from Alabama, Auburn, Clemson, South Carolina, Tennessee and LSU; Shaun Hamilton, four-star linebacker from Carver High School in Montgomery, who has generated offers from Auburn, Clemson, Florida, Florida State, Miami, Tennessee and Vanderbilt; and Rashaan Evans, linebacker from Auburn High School, who has offers from schools including Alabama, Auburn, Clemson, Clemson, Georgia, LSU, Nebraska and South Carolina.

E.J. Moss, quarterback from Asheville High School, has earned early scholarship offers from Alabama, Auburn, Mississippi State and Vanderbilt. The 6-foot-3, 220-pound athlete could play several positions at the next level and is looking for a shot to play quarterback.

DeMarcus Bingham, wide receiver from Foley High School, had a great junior season. The 6-foot-3, 205-pound prospect is receiving interest from schools across the country. T.J. Posey, linebacker from Gadsden City High School, and Deshaun Davis, linebacker from Vigor High School in Prichard, are two of the best at their position in the state. Posey has early offers from Arkansas, Mississippi State, Purdue and Tennessee.

Jermarcus Brown, running back from Pickens County High School in Reform, had a remarkable junior season. He rushed for 2,570 yards and 33 touchdowns. He helped lead Pickens County to the semifinals before losing to Marion County in the state playoffs.

The class of 2013 will sign national letters of intent on the first Wednesday in February. TideSports.com will continue the countdown to signing day with who Alabama is likely to sign for its remaining slots. The class of 2014 becomes a much hotter topic when many travel to combine starting in early January in Orlando and San Antonio. High school coaches and players should also look for the South Showcase Combines, which start in February for athletes across the Southeast region.
Crimson Tide likely back in Cowboys Classic in 2015

By Chase Goodbread
Sports Writer

TUSCALOOSA | The University of Alabama will likely return to Arlington, Texas, in 2015 for its season opener in the Cowboys Classic, according to UA athletic director Mal Moore.

UA's opponent is undetermined at this time.

The annual game sets up a marquee nonconference matchup at the nation's premiere football venue, Cowboys Stadium. In September, the Crimson Tide made its Cowboys Classic debut with a 41-14 win over Michigan.


"We've got all that coming again with Virginia Tech next year, the following year West Virginia. Then back to Dallas. It's exciting," Moore said. "I think the fans love it."

Last week, ESPN and the Dallas Cowboys extended their broadcast agreement on the game through 2024.

LSU and Texas Christian will play in the 2013 game. Florida State and Oklahoma State have reached an agreement to play at Cowboys Stadium on 2014's opening weekend, while Texas and UCLA are tentatively scheduled to play there two weeks later. Moore said he has come to prefer the one-time, neutral-site matchups to the more traditional two-year, home-and-home contracts.

"The one-game stand at a neutral site has been really good. You get 30,000, 35,000 tickets," Moore said. "When we played Penn State, it was 5,000. Of course, they got 5,000 when they came here. But it's just better with a neutral site."

Since UA coach Nick Saban arrived in 2007, Alabama has compiled a 5-1 record in its nonconference matchups of the season. UA lost to Florida State in 2007, but has since beaten Clemson, Virginia Tech, Penn State twice and Michigan.

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Bring on the Badgers

By: Chase Goodbread and Tommy Deas

The University of Alabama's 2015 opponent in the annual Cowboys Classic is expected to be Wisconsin, Tidesports.com has learned.
Although the deal is not believed to have been finalized, indications are that the schools have informally agreed to play in what would be the Crimson Tide's second appearance in the game. Since 2009, the Cowboys Classic has produced marquee out-of-conference matchups at Cowboys Stadium in Arlington, Texas, including Alabama's 41-14 thrashing of Michigan in the 2012 season opener.

UA athletic director Mal Moore told Tidesports.com this month that Alabama would be returning to the venue.
Wisconsin athletic director and interim coach Barry Alvarez said months ago that a 2015 game against Alabama had been discussed but did not confirm it was a certainty or that it might be played at Cowboys Stadium.

However, Cotton Bowl officials, who help organize the Cowboys Classic, believe the matchup is all but set.

An Alabama-Wisconsin matchup would be just the second between the Southeastern Conference and Big Ten powers. The Badgers defeated Alabama 15-0 in 1928.

On a roll The Alabama women's basketball team will take a four-game winning streak into Southeastern Conference play. The Crimson Tide will start its conference schedule Thursday at Texas A&M in a 6 p.m. game.

Alabama (10-3) defeated Hawaii 44-43 on Sunday in Honolulu to win the championship in the Rainbow Wahine Invitational. Junior guard Shafontaye Myers was the tournament MVP and was joined by senior Alicia Mitcham on the all-tournament team.

"This was just one of those games we needed to grind out," Alabama coach Wendell Hudson said. "We started off real sluggish, but I have to give Hawaii credit. The best thing I can tell you is we hung in there and found a way to win. Nobody really had a great game, but this was a good team win."

Jasmine Robinson led Alabama with 13 points. Myers added 10 points. Sophomore Kaneisha Horn pulled down a team-high eight rebounds and was also 7 for 10 from the free throw line.

Alabama started its winning streak in the wake of a 58-52 home loss to Wofford on Dec. 17. The Crimson Tide defeated Virginia 73-70 in double overtime at home, then reeled off three victories in Hawaii to win the tournament championship. UA beat Cincinnati, 58-47, and Long Island, 80-58, before defeating host Hawaii in the championship game.

UA's next home game will be Sunday at 2 p.m. at Foster Auditorium against Kentucky.

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Looking for answers The UA men's basketball team (7-5) is coming off a 53-50 loss to Tulane on Sunday and has lost five of its last six games. Alabama has lost its last three home games - to Tulane, Mercer and Dayton - and includes road losses at Cincinnati and Virginia Commonwealth during the slump. The Crimson Tide's lone victory in the month of December came at Texas Tech.

Alabama's five losses came against teams with winning records. The teams that beat UA have a combined 51-17 mark, with Cincinnati and VCU either ranked or receiving votes in the Associated Press Top 25 at the time they played Alabama.

Alabama has used seven different starting lineups in 12 games, and different lineups in seven of the last nine games. Only sophomore guards Trevor Lacey and Levi Randolph have held onto starting jobs for the entire season.

Alabama will finish out its non-conference schedule Saturday at 3 p.m. at home against Oakland. The game will be televised by CSS.

Nearing milestones Alabama junior guard Trevor Releford is 40 points short of the 1,000-point mark for his career. Releford has 960 points and can become the 46th player in UA men's basketball history to reach the milestone. He would also be just the seventh player in Crimson Tide history to reach at least 1,000 points and 140 steals in a career (he has 146).

Gymnasts prepare Alabama's two-time defending national champion gymnastics team took a short holiday break, with gymnasts returning to practice last weekend to prepare for the Jan. 11 season opener at Missouri.

Alabama enters the 2013 season with one of its most experienced teams in recent memory, with 15 veterans, including seven All-Americans. The Crimson Tide's four seniors, six juniors and five sophomores are joined by UA's smallest freshman class in more than a decade, comprised of rookies Lauren Beers and Carley Sims.

Alabama goes into the new season following another stellar semester in the classroom. A total of 15 gymnasts posted grade-point averages above 3.4 during the fall semester, and seven gymnasts - Beers, Ria Domier, Marissa Gutierrez, Kim Jacob, Ashley Priess, Ashley Sledge and Kayla Williams - earned perfect 4.0 GPAs.

Alabama will host two open practices during the first week of the New Year, including a balance beam and uneven bars workout on the main floor of Coleman Coliseum at 1:30 p.m. Thursday and a full practice at 1:30 p.m. Sunday in the Crimson Tide's newly renovated Frances Smith practice facility. Access to both practices will be through the doors nearest the track and field stadium on the west side of the coliseum.

After its trip to Missouri, Alabama will open its 2013 home slate Jan. 18 at 7:30 p.m. against LSU. Season tickets are on sale now through the Alabama Athletic Ticket Office (205-348-2262) in the lobby of Coleman Coliseum, and online at RollTide.com.
Ray Perkins remembers the play as if it happened yesterday — Notre Dame quarterback Steve Beuerlein faking a handoff and rolling right on a bootleg, directly into the path of hard-charging Alabama linebacker Cornelius Bennett. The resulting collision is legendary in this state. It’s immortalized in one of Daniel Moore’s most popular paintings. It’s known, simply, as The Sack.

“I see it right now,” said Perkins, Alabama’s coach during that 1986 game. “It’s on my wall in my home today.”

For many, the rest of Alabama’s 28-10 win over Notre Dame in 1986 — the Tide’s only win in six meetings with the Fighting Irish — was academic. Bennett’s bonecrushing hit was made with no score in the first quarter, but it set the tone and sent a message. After that hit, some believe, the outcome was a formality.

“The game was over,” said ESPN’s Rece Davis, then a student at Alabama who was in the stands that day at Birmingham’s Legion Field.

“That was like a knockout punch. Name your favorite boxer — Joe Louis, Joe Frazier, Muhammad Ali, Thomas “The Hit Man” Hearns, (Manny) Pacquiao, whomever — landing the devastating blow, and the fight was over. It’s rare in a football game that one play can do that, but that game was done after Bennett hit their quarterback.”

The buildup

Four times Alabama had played Notre Dame and four times the Crimson Tide had lost. Beating the Fighting Irish was one of the few things that legendary Alabama coach Paul “Bear” Bryant, who passed away in 1983, had not accomplished. Perkins, who played for Bryant from 1964-66 at Alabama, had been hired away from the NFL’s New York Giants to succeed Bryant as the Crimson Tide’s coach.

His first couple of years were a roller-coaster ride, as he followed an 8-4 season in 1983 with a 5-6 mark in 1984 — Alabama’s first losing season since 1957.

After bouncing back with a 9-2-1 season in 1985, Perkins’ 1986 team looked to be his best yet. The Crimson Tide was 4-0 and ranked No.

2 in the country and already had a pair of wins over top 15 teams in Ohio State and Florida. Although Notre Dame was 1-2 under firstyear coach Lou Holtz and still pulling itself out of a hole dug by Holtz’s predecessor, Gerry Faust, Perkins and the Tide looked at the game as an important test — and a chance to make Alabama history.

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“I’m sure there is going to be a lot said and a lot written about our four previous defeats against them,” Perkins told the Birmingham Post-Herald as the game approached. “It’s something our players are already well aware of.”

It wasn’t just the Crimson Tide’s 0-4 series record against the Fighting Irish that motivated them. Bobby Humphrey, Alabama’s leading rusher in 1986, said the Tide was “on a mission” for an undefeated season and a national championship. On top of that, Humphrey said, they didn’t particularly like Notre Dame.

“We didn’t really like Notre Dame because they got so much more credit,” Humphrey said. “More people watched them, they had the TV contract. It was like (they were) God’s gift to college football. They may not have carried that air, but we felt like they carried a little bit of an air about themselves, because they were so dominating and so good.

“So when you’ve got a team like that coming in with that kind of tradition against a team that’s on a mission for an undefeated season as well as a quest for a national championship, it just fuels your fire.”

The game

The game was still scoreless in the first quarter when Bennett changed it for good.

Later, he would say his sack of Beuerlein wasn’t the hardest hit or biggest play he ever made. In Tommy Hicks’ 2006 book, “Game of My Life Alabama: Memorable Stories of Crimson Tide Football,” Bennett described it as “just reaction.” “The defensive play — the sack — was called ‘tight dog cover plus one.’ It happened just as fast for me as it did for the fans. It was just reaction.

It was almost like (Beuerlein) took the snap, and there I was. It almost happened too fast. In my entire football career I had hit guys with less of a lick than I hit (him), but that was the first time I was worried I had really hurt someone. He never saw it coming.”

Beuerlein reportedly suffered a mild concussion on the play and split time the rest of the day with backup Terry Andrysiak.

“I’d been hit hard before, but not when I didn’t see it coming,” Beuerlein told the Chicago Tribune after the game. “When I got up, I saw mouths moving, but I heard no voices.”

Alabama linebacker Randy Rockwell said the Tide’s defense knew Notre Dame liked to use the bootleg and had a defensive wrinkle prepared for it.

“That was the first time all season that Cornelius and I lined up on the same side of the field,” Rockwell said.

“When they called that front, we all felt like that was the play they were going to run.

See next page
... The poor old guard they asked to pull from the backside and block Cornelius, that wasn’t going to happen.

“All I had to do was run with him. But I was more in tune to watching the train wreck that was coming. I had a bird’s-eye view.”

Perkins, now the coach at Jones County (Miss.) Community College, would not go so far as to say that one 8-yard loss determined the outcome of the game, but he wouldn’t deny that it had an impact.

As big as the sack was, however, Bennett would later say he made an even bigger one three plays later, as he threw a downfield block on a punt return that helped spring Greg Richardson for a 66-yard touchdown and the game’s first score.

Crimson Tide quarterback Mike Shula took care of the rest, throwing touchdown passes of 52 and 22 yards to Al Bell and 11 yards to tight end Howard Cross as Alabama never trailed.

“It was a breakdown, a mistake,” Notre Dame safety Steve Lawrence said of Bell’s 52-yard score in the Chicago Tribune’s game story. “Bell split the safeties, but there was a missed assignment.

On his other touchdown, though, it was just a great pass and catch.”

The Fighting Irish tried to keep pace in the second quarter, getting an 8-yard touchdown pass from Beuerlein to Tim Brown and a 22-yard John Carney field goal to trail 21-10 at the half.

But Shula’s 22-yard thirdquarter scoring toss to Bell would be the only points of the second half, as Bennett and the defense clamped down to seal the win.

Shula finished 15-of-23 for 191 yards and one interception to go with the three touchdowns. Bell caught five balls for 99 yards and the two scores, and Humphrey led the Crimson Tide on the ground with 73 yards rushing.

“We had a lot of big plays,” Humphrey said. “We were clicking on all cylinders in ’86. We were a machine in ’86. We had great receivers, running backs, had a good offensive line, defense was really good with Derrick (Thomas) and Cornelius Bennett. They did have a Heisman Trophy candidate in Tim Brown, but it really wasn’t a match for us in ’86.

We were really on a mission.

We were just playing such good football.”

Epilogue

Alabama did not complete its mission of winning the national title in 1986.

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After pushing its record to 7-0 with wins over Memphis State and Tennessee, the Crimson Tide lost three of its last five regular-season games, falling to Penn State, LSU and Auburn before ending the season with a win over Washington in the Sun Bowl. Perkins resigned after the season in order to become head coach of NFL’s Tampa Bay Buccaneers.

Notre Dame limped to a 5-6 record in 1986, but it would be Holtz’s only losing record in 11 years as the Fighting Irish’s coach. Two years later, he led Notre Dame to a national title.

But he never got Beuerlein to run that bootleg again. “I called that play 11 times the rest of the year,” Holtz said during a 2004 interview. “Steve Beuerlein checked out of that play every time.”

Looking back, Perkins said that while the Crimson Tide’s 0-4 record against Notre Dame played a role in the big victory, he believes his team would have been pumped up for the game regardless.

“There’s always a first time for everything,” he said.

“Whether it was an added incentive for us, yeah, I think you’d have to say it was. But I think our players just considered it a pleasure and honor to be playing the Fighting Irish and rose to the occasion, prepared well during the week, played well on game day and won the game.”

For fans at Legion Field that day, the win — and the hit that punctuated it — was 13 years in the making. As Bennett sent Beuerlein crashing to the turf, it seemed to many as payback for the previous four losses in the series.

“It was almost cathartic, I think, for most of the people in that stadium,” ESPN’s Davis said of the sack. “It was as if he unleashed, in one violent explosion, a decade and a half of frustration.”

The play forever cemented a special place in Alabama football history for Bennett, who went on to a 14-year NFL career with the Buffalo Bills, Atlanta Falcons and Indianapolis Colts.

At his College Football Hall of Fame induction in 2005, which was perhaps fittingly held in South Bend, Bennett said that while he’s honored at the place that hit has held in Alabama football lore, he hopes he was being remembered for more than just one play.

“There are people that support our team that can recall many games and plays from the last 50 years.

For them to remember me for that one play is a great honor,” Bennett said during a 2005 interview on rolltide.com. “I also feel like they remember me for more than that one play, too.

“I just happened to be the one that got to the quarterback. I had a job to do and the ability to do the job.”
Playing on the big stage
nothing new for Crimson Tide

By Tommy Deas
Executive Sports Editor

TUSCALOOSA | The 2012 University of Alabama football team has never been to Miami Gardens, Fla., home to Sun Life Stadium and the BCS National Championship Game.

This edition has never played Notre Dame before. Alabama has, however, been here before.

Here as in preparing to play for the Bowl Championship Series national title.

Here as in navigating the layoff of more than a month before playing the biggest game of the season.

For the third time in four seasons, the Crimson Tide is going through the process of getting ready to play for the national title. To Alabama players, it has become a familiar routine. UA coach Nick Saban has perfected that process, having won three national championships in his coaching career, and UA players believe having been through it before gives them an edge.

“The way Coach Saban puts it out there, I think it works. It’s been working well for us in the past and we’re going to keep doing it,” senior tight end Michael Williams said.

It starts with what is, essentially, a second version of preseason camp, a rerun of the start of August practice — because that, more than any-

BCS NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP GAME

No. 1 Notre Dame vs. No. 2 Alabama

- When: 7:30 p.m. Monday, Jan. 7
- Where: Sun Life Stadium, Miami
- Records: Alabama 12-1, Notre Dame 12-0
- TV: ESPN
- Radio: 95.3 FM, 790 AM

INSIDE

COLLEGE FOOTBALL:
Jones, Golic Jr. have Notre Dame dads on mind for title game | 5C

...thing, is what the first week of bowl preparation was like. Alabama started practice last Tuesday for its national title showdown with Notre Dame and worked through Saturday. UA players will have a three-day break before returning to campus to enter the next phase of practice.

"It’s good to get back into the regular flow of things, get started on the fundamentals, just like we started back in camp. It’s just like starting all over again, it’s like a one-game season," Williams said.

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If you didn't know, preseason camp wouldn't win a popularity poll with players. It's hard and physical, viewed more as a necessity than a joy.

"We understand, going through it last year, how important this week is by itself," senior linebacker Nico Johnson said. "We took it and ran with it and had a good week of practice."

The first week was an exercise in fundamentals—blocking and tackling basics. And while it didn't involve full-on tackling, it serves the purpose of getting players used to hitting and being hit.

"I think it's very important because either coming off the last game of the season (like in 2011) or the SEC championship (game) it's a long time since you've played a game or since you've tackled somebody, so the way we do it I feel like is good because you get to feeling contact," Williams said. "You're not just out there running around and tagging off or something like that. The way we do it, I feel like that contact you have to learn to absorb again—that's why it's like a one-game season."

The next phase, post-Christmas, will involve installation of the game plan until the team departs Jan. 2 for Miami. The final phase will be practices in South Florida.

To veteran Crimson Tide players, there's no difference between Miami, New Orleans (where UA won last year's national championship) and Pasadena, Calif. (site of the 2009 national title game). They will spend far more time in the team hotel and practicing than they will exploring the host city.

After all, wherever the game is played, they've been here before.

"It doesn't matter," Williams said. "We don't do too much anyway. We have our team functions and you have a curfew every night and it's not too much different no matter where you go. Every one I've been to it's almost the same thing every time.

"You're there for one reason. You don't want to be there to party anyway. You go to Miami and you do your job."

Once the game started, Alabama's upperclassmen will have the comfort of having played on the big stage before— in national championship games, this year's Southeastern Conference title game, in highly-hyped regular-season games against LSU the last two seasons.

"I don't think will have that much anxiety about the game," Johnson said. "We'll be able to treat it as another game and go in calm and focused in more on what we have to do.

"And I think we understand what we have to do to win a national championship and we're going to have to do it even more than the first two times because Notre Dame is a dang good team. We're going to have to play our butts off for 60 minutes."

Reach Tommy Deas at tommy@tidesports.com or at 205-722-0224.
WORKING FOR TRADITION

University of Alabama athletic director Mal Moore spoke to The Tuscaloosa News recently to discuss his history with Notre Dame, both as an assistant coach with the Fighting Irish and as an Alabama assistant in some of the games between the two historic programs.

By Chase Goodbread | Sports Writer

Q: How did your move from Alabama to Notre Dame come about, and what was the experience like?

A: Great memories for me. I guess, having been at Alabama with Coach (Paul W. “Bear”) Bryant 24 years — played for him five, coached for him 19 — maybe I had lived a sheltered life in the coaching profession that I had not moved around a lot. I actually didn’t know anyone there. I went up and interviewed for the job and got the job. It was like an adventure moving there, and taking the family there. Such a change, a drastic change. The weather, the people, not knowing anyone. But it was a great experience for me. I realized there are very good people everywhere — and there certainly were there. I made great friends and enjoyed my time there. I realized, too, for the first time to be away from Alabama, to look back at what I had been a part of here, what I’d experienced here. I think you get where you kind of take things for granted. I didn’t realize what we had here, having coach Bryant for 25 years, the great success we enjoyed.

I went from Alabama, one of the great names, to Notre Dame, one of the great names. It was very exciting, that part of it.

Q: You coached for Gerry Faust, who was hired from Notre Dame out of the high school ranks. How did he handle that pressure?

A: Coach Faust had been there two years when I joined the staff. It would have been tough for anyone to go from high school to the head coach of Notre Dame. He loved Notre Dame. They’ll never have another coach that loved the place like he did. And still does. I talk with coach every now and again. I saw him a couple years ago when I went up for Marty Lyons’ or Woodrow Lowe’s (College Football Hall of Fame) enshrinement. I went to a party they had for Tim Brown, who won the Heisman. I got to see a lot of the players that I coached. There were quite a few there, and Coach Faust came.

Q: How are the traditions at Alabama and Notre Dame similar?

A: They’re very similar, I think. Both have great success through their years. Alabama from

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the '20s, Knute Rockne and the great success Notre Dame had through those years. It's powerful across the country. What really shocked me when I went there, I just thought it was a huge university. But when I was there in '83, '84, '85, I think the enrollment was less than 8,000. And it's probably not over 9,000 now. It's unique, very small, but such a great reputation academically and such a great tradition and success athletically. Alabama through its history has had great success and championship success at different times all through its history. The two are very similar. Their alumni expect success and greatness, and I hope that never changes.

Q: Who were some of the offensive weapons you coached at Notre Dame?
A: (Running back) Allen Pinkett was a great one. He set some records while he was there. The tight end, Mark Bavaro, who played for the (NFL's New York) Giants, what a great player. Very capable players. ... Steve Beuerlein was the quarterback. Beuerlein came and played in a golf tournament here about six years ago. We had Cornelius (Bennett) here. As one of our gifts, we gave a helmet, half Notre Dame and half Alabama, and Cornelius signed the Alabama half and Beuerlein signed the Notre Dame half. It was pretty neat.

Q: Had you stayed at Notre Dame for one more season, you would have coached a game against Alabama. What would that have been like?
A: That would have been strange. I've never experienced that. I guess I never will.

Q: Tell us about your experiences coaching against Notre Dame as an Alabama assistant.
A: I was involved in those first three that were such good games. They were outstanding football games. The first one was a Sugar Bowl. Then the next one was an Orange Bowl, and the one after that was in South Bend. We lost the first one by one, the second by two, the third one by three. The first game in '73, we were a very good football team that just had opportunity after opportunity to win the game and didn't make the plays we needed to make. Which is usually the case in the close games - the one who makes the plays wins. I think we were good enough to win but didn't pull it off. It was every game with Notre Dame, they were all so close.

Q: What about the 1980 game that Notre Dame won 7-0?
A: Again, several missed opportunities to win it ourselves. Each time they've played, both teams have been very good teams, very competitive, in close games. And both defenses always set the tone.

Q: What was your reaction upon learning of the Alabama-Notre Dame matchup this year?
A: When we won the (Southeastern Conference championship) game in Atlanta, that was so exciting. An unbelievable game. To win that and know that we were in the championship game, it was a thrill. What a moment. I got a few phone calls from Notre Dame. They of course knew they were in it. Jack Swarbrick (Notre Dame's athletic director) of course called me before the SEC Championship Game. We missed each other. But he and I talked (later). We have tried now for three years, four years, since he's been the AD, to put a game together. I said, 'Hell, you and I couldn't do it, but the players did it.' What a stage.

Q: How did you grow as a coach at Notre Dame?
A: When I went to the Cardinals (of the NFL after leaving Notre Dame), I realized ... I knew one way, the option game I'd been exposed to for so long. I was way behind a lot of the things going on in football. It moved pretty fast. My exposure on the offensive side was in the wishbone for so long, it's a great offense, it's easier to run it than a lot of offenses because of the way it's structured. I didn't realize how sophisticated the pro game was compared to the option. It's a totally different game. I think you move around, coach in different places, there are a lot of ways to get a job done. At Notre Dame, it was more the I-formation. Pinkett was very good in it.

Q: What were your impressions of the Notre Dame fan base while you were there?
A: They were very supportive, always big crowds. The stadium then seated maybe 60,000. The stadium that Rockne built. They've since built around it, took the seats up to 70-some thousand. But when you walk in, you still feel like it's the old stadium.

Q: Notre Dame has always played a tough, national schedule as an independent. What was that experience like as a coach, facing tough teams week after week?
A: We played Southern Cal every year. We played them twice on campus and once there. We played LSU in Baton Rouge. We played in New York, I think we played in Chicago. We played Michigan, Michigan State, while I was there. I don't think we played Ohio State while I was there. Pretty impressive. It was quite a challenge.
Moore Memories

By: Don Kausler Jr.

A little more than one month after he tearfully had worked his last game as an assistant coach on Paul Bryant’s staff, and two or three weeks after the legendary Alabama coach had died, Mal Moore wasn’t sure where to go or what to do.

“I didn’t have a job,” he recalled. “I was also looking to get out of coaching. I talked with (former Alabama teammate) Benny Nelson in Huntsville about some possibilities with him. There were a lot of uncertainties in my life.”

Then the home phone rang.

It was Notre Dame coach Gerry Faust.

“I didn’t know him well,” Moore said. “I was shocked when he called. He called on a Sunday morning to see if I would be interested in talking to him and coming up for an interview.”

Moore flew that afternoon from Birmingham to Chicago, then went on to South Bend, Ind., but before he left Tuscaloosa, he had some third thoughts about his second thoughts about continuing a coaching career.

“I told (wife) Charlotte when I left that if they offered a job, I was going to take it,” Moore said.

A few days later in February 1983, three memorable years began as the Fighting Irish’s running backs coach.

Now Moore is Alabama’s athletics director, and perhaps nobody can better understand and appreciate the history and tradition at both of the programs that will meet on Jan. 7 in the BCS Championship Game in Miami Gardens, Fla.

Moore thought his alma mater was special, but he learned it wasn’t unique. He has a soft spot now for Notre Dame because he learned that it had a soft spot then for Bryant and Alabama.

“I had kind of led a sheltered life in the coaching profession,” Moore said. “Very seldom do you stay at one place as long as I did. I played five years and then coached 19 years for Coach Bryant, so I was with him for 24 years. It’s very difficult to leave that way of thinking, that way of doing things, the comfort of that.

“But when this came up, it hit me about the opportunity to coach at Notre Dame. To coach at Alabama and then to coach at Notre Dame would be pretty neat.”

Faust recalls some initial reservations that Moore had.

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“I think he was a little dubious at first, because he was from the South, coming north, to a Catholic university,” Faust said. “That might have first caused him to hesitate a little. He came and he fit in perfect. He was a great hire. I couldn’t have asked for a more loyal, hard-working, knowledgeable, good person than Mal Moore.”

Irish and the Bear

It took coaching at Notre Dame to understand and appreciate what Moore had helped Alabama accomplish.

“We had so much great success, we had all kind of taken Coach Bryant for granted,” Moore said.

His first day at Notre Dame made him realize how special the times had been at Alabama. He went to meet Gene Corrigan and was introduced to the athletic director’s secretary.

“I looked behind her desk, and there’s a nice picture of Coach Bryant autographed to her and framed,” Moore said.

Corrigan took Moore to Heritage Hall in the Athletic Convocation Center, where trophies are displayed.

“And there’s a picture of Coach Bryant, framed, and a letter next to it, framed, that he had written Father (Theodore) Hesburgh after the Sugar Bowl in ’73, saying congratulations on the win and what a great game it was and how much Alabama and Notre Dame play- ing meant to college football,” Moore said, referring to Notre Dame’s president. “A very impressive letter.”

The second day was just as revealing. Assistant coach George Kelly took Moore to Pat’s Pub.

“It was a famous Notre Dame hangout,” Moore said. “On one wall, Pat had all the pictures of all the current Notre Dame players, and right in the middle he had a big picture of Coach Bryant. Coach might have been dead, like, a month. They had a light shining on it, and a caption under it that said, ‘Notre Dame fans will miss you, too, Bear.’ And the date of his birth and his death.”

These experiences kept coming through Moore’s third and final year. He recalled a 1985 victory over Southern Cal in South Bend.

“We were all whoop-ing and hollering in the locker room, and in walks Father Hesburgh and Father (Edmund) Joyce in their black suits and white col-lars,” Moore said, referring to the university’s chief financial officer. “Father Hesburgh had a black-and-white houndstooth hat, just like Coach Bryant. He was shaking hands with all the players. … He came by me, and I said, ‘Father, you look mighty handsome in that hat.’ He said, ‘Thank you, Mal. Paul gave it to me.’ And he pulled it off and it was autographed by Coach Bryant. This was three years after his death.”

Bryant learned the Irish way

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It took a little time and distance for Moore to recognize what others recognized.

"I didn’t realize what we had here until I saw what other people saw from afar," he said. "It was kind of an eye-opener. Everybody knew of Coach Bryant and knew about Alabama. I didn’t know until I went up there that Coach Bryant’s coach here was Frank Thomas, and you know how you feel about your coach. Coach Thomas played quarterback for Knute Rockne at Notre Dame. I had lunch with a guy back then in his late ’80s that played for Coach Rockne. He told me what Rockne would say in team meetings or games: the same damn things that Coach Bryant said to us, because that’s what Frank Thomas said to him. I was amazed at the connection."

And he was amazed at the similarities between the two schools.

"The whole time I was there, I still felt like I was working for Alabama," Moore said. "I loved being there."


"There’s no question you felt the power and the name of Notre Dame," Moore said. "You sensed the history of it.

"There’s a lot of traditions there, as there are here. High expectations, year in, year out. It’s the fast lane. There’s no question it was very comparable to Alabama."

There are differences, too.

"When I went there, I was shocked at how small the university was," Moore said. "In your mind, you see it as a huge university because of the great name. When I went there in ’83, there were just over 7,000 students."

Now the enrollment is 11,816 (8,372 undergraduates). Alabama’s enrollment has surged in recent years and now is 33,602.

"Recruiting for Notre Dame was different," Moore said. "Because of their academic requirements, if you heard of a great player, you didn’t go see him play. You went straight to the counselor’s office and looked at the transcripts. It didn’t matter how good he was. ... So you basically had to recruit the country."

But the biggest difference is religion.

"The high percentage of people there were Catholics," Moore said. "I’d never been around a lot of Catholics. They were fun. I’ll say that. They had a good time.

"I’m an old Southern Baptist, but I went to Mass with the team. It was absolutely different. We played Southern Cal in California and took the team on Sunday morning and had Mass at one of the big hotels near Disneyland."

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He recalls 2,000 to 3,000 people gathering in a ball-room.

"Coming out, they sang 'Amazing Grace,'" Moore said. "I was walking along with Father Joyce, and I said, 'Well, Father, I was able to help out today.' I knew that song."
Ex-Tide star Jones named to Pro Bowl

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Former University of Alabama and Foley High School football standout Julio Jones has been named to the NFC Pro Bowl team, the NFL announced.
Jones is a wide receiver for the Atlanta Falcons.
The starting wide receivers for the NFC squad are Calvin Johnson of the Detroit Lions and Brandon Marshall of the Chicago Bears. Jones and Victor Cruz of the New York Giants are the reserves.
A little after 8 Wednesday, Jones said on Twitter; "I want to thank everybody for voting! I just woke up and seen the great news."
In his second season in the NFL, Jones has 76 receptions for 1,142 yards and 10 touchdowns, helping the Falcons to a 13-2 record heading into their final game of the regular season.
Liberal Arts Colleges Evolve With Job Market

By: Justin Pope

They're the places you think of when you think of "college" — leafy campuses, small classes, small towns. Liberal arts colleges are where students ponder life's big questions, and learn to think en route to successful careers and richer lives, if not always to the best-paying first jobs.

But today's increasingly career-focused students mostly aren't buying the idea that a liberal arts education is good value, and many small liberal arts colleges are struggling. The survivors are shedding their liberal arts identity, if not the label. A study published earlier this year found that of 212 such institutions identified in 1990, only 130 still meet the criteria of a "true liberal arts college." Most that fell off the list remained in business, but had shifted toward a pre-professional curriculum.

These distinctively American institutions — educating at most 2 percent of college students but punching far above their weight in accomplished graduates — can't turn back the clock.

But schools like Adrian College, 75 miles southwest of Detroit and back from a recent near-death experience, offer something of a playbook.

First, get students in the door by offering what they do want, namely sports and extracurricular opportunities that might elude them at bigger schools. Offer vocational subjects like business, criminal justice and exercise science that students and parents think — rightly or wrongly — will lead to better jobs.

Then, once they're enrolled, look for other ways to sprinkle the liberal arts magic these colleges still believe in, even if it requires a growing stretch to call yourself a liberal arts college.

"We're liberal arts-aholics," says Adrian President Jeffrey Docking, who has added seven sports and two pre-professional degree programs since arriving in 2005 — and nearly doubled enrollment to about 1,750.

But he's also a realist.

"I say this with regret," said Docking, an ethicist by training. But "you really take your life into your own hands thinking that a pure liberal arts degree is going to be attractive enough to enough 18-year-olds that you fill your freshman classes."

In ancient Greece, liberal arts were the subjects that men free from work were at leisure to pursue. Today, the squishy definition still includes subjects that don't prepare for a particular job (but can be useful for many). English, history, philosophy, and other arts and sciences are the traditional mainstays. But these days, some prefer a more, well, liberal definition that's more about teaching style than subject matter.

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"I refer to it as learning on a human scale," said William Spellman, a University of North Carolina-Asheville historian who directs a group of 27 public liberal arts colleges. "It's about small classes, access to faculty, the old tutorial model of being connected with somebody who's not interested only in their disciplinary area but culture broadly defined."

Does it work? It's true that research tying college majors to salaries can make the generic liberal arts degrees look unappealing. But technical training can become obsolete, and students are likely to change careers several times. These schools argue you're better off, both in life and work, simply learning to think.

Research does point to broader benefits of studying liberal arts in small settings, in areas like leadership, lifelong learning and civic engagement. Liberal arts colleges are proven launching pads to the top of business, government and academia (graduating 12 U.S. presidents, six chief justices and 12 of 53 Nobel laureates over a recent decade who attended American colleges, by one researcher's count). Foreign delegations often visit to observe, and big U.S. universities are trying to recreate mini-liberal arts colleges within their campuses.

But outside a secure tier of elites with 10-figure endowments — the Swarthmores, Amhersts, Wellesleys of the world — many schools are in trouble. The liberal arts still account for about one-third of bachelor's degrees, but the experience of getting one in these small settings is increasingly atypical. Definitions vary, but liberal arts colleges today probably account for between 100,000 and 300,000 of the country's roughly 17 million undergraduates. There are more students at the University of Phoenix, alone.

These schools "are all getting to around $40,000 a year, in some cases $50,000, and students and their families are just saying 'we can't do it,'" Docking said. Small classes make these schools among them most expensive places in higher education, though they often offer discounts to fill seats (Adrian's list price is $38,602, including room and board, but the average student pays $19,000).

Other pressures are geographic and generational. Many liberal arts colleges are clustered in the Northeast and Midwest, in towns like Adrian, founded by optimistic 18th- and 19th-century settlers who started colleges practically as soon as they arrived. But where the country is growing now is the South and West, where the private college tradition isn't as deep.

Meanwhile, students these days expect the climbing walls and high-end dorms that smaller, poorer schools can't afford. And a growing proportion of college students are the first generation in their family to attend. They've proved a tougher sell on the idea they can afford to spend four years of college "exploring." In UCLA's massive national survey of college freshman, "getting a better job" recently surpassed "learning about things that interest me" as the top reason for going to college. The percentage calling job preparation a very important reason rose to 86 percent, up from 70 percent in 2006, before the economy tanked.

Politicians have reinforced the message. Florida Republican Gov. Rick Scott recently proposed public colleges charge more for degrees in subjects like anthropology that he said were less

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economically valuable to the state than science and engineering (though in fact, those subjects usually cost much more to teach).

So, with varying reluctance, colleges have adjusted. In his 2011 book "Liberal Arts at the Brink," former Beloit College president Victor Ferrall calculated that in 1986-87, just 30 of 225 liberal arts colleges awarded 30 percent or more of their degrees in vocational subjects. By 2007-2008, 118 did so. Even at a consortium called the Annapolis Group, comprised of the supposedly purest liberal arts colleges, the percentage of vocational degrees jumped from 6 percent to 17 percent.

"What's new in the past few years," said Richard Ekman, president of the Council of Independent Colleges, "is people are beginning to wonder in the places that have remained liberal arts colleges whether that's enough." Schools like Adrian that had already shifted to a more vocational approach "are asking whether the balance is right, whether they need to tip more to the professional side."

Adrian was weed-strewn, demoralized and down to its last 840 students when Docking arrived in 2005.

"We borrowed 30 million bucks and said, 'if this doesn't work out, we're done,'" he recalled.

First, Docking built up facilities and added teams, notably in sports like hockey and lacrosse that tilt toward more affluent students. No niche market was too small: Adrian started one of the country's only synchronized skating teams. At the nearby University of Michigan, almost nobody walks onto the football team or even the marching band, but you can at Adrian. And everybody recruits. Docking's band director has to bring in 20 kids a year, the symphony director 10. He has fired coaches who don't meet their quotas.

(This year, about 700 of Adrian's 1,756 students play varsity sports, more than 40 percent. At the University of Michigan, there are 881 student-athletes — or 3 percent of the 27,500 undergraduates.)

Docking worried Adrian would become a "jock factory," and the number of students wearing team gear on campus is striking. But, he said: "They come in as hockey players, and they leave as chemists and journalists and business leaders." Michael Allen, a longtime theater professor, says the athletics culture has turned out better than he feared, saying most athletes who persist are (or get) serious academically.

Pre-professional programs weren't new to Adrian, but it's recently added athletic training and sports management. The two most popular majors are business and exercise science. So is Adrian still a "liberal arts college?" Some would scoff, but Docking say yes. He notes the top minors include chemistry, English and religion/philosophy. He talks up "institutes" on campus — devoted to ethics, study abroad and other areas — that try to inject liberal arts-style learning around even the pre-professional curriculum. That curriculum still includes liberal arts distribution requirements majors, and he insists liberal arts skills can be taught in other types of classes, and even through extra-curriculars.

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Vicki Baker, a professor at nearby Albion College, who co-authored the recent study tracking the 39 percent decline in liberal arts colleges since 1990, also thinks these colleges can retain their value even as they evolve. Her Albion business classes include debates, presentations and other teaching techniques that were impossible when she taught 400 at Penn State.

Liberal arts colleges "appeal to a certain kind of student who really flourishes in that environment," and who might not otherwise succeed in college, Baker said. "It would be a loss to see that vanish."

Senior Kyle Cordova chose Adrian half for the chance to play baseball, half for its small size. He was leaning toward a liberal arts major but ended up in criminal justice to prepare for a law enforcement career. He's had the same half-dozen or so professors year after year. "They know me, they know how I work, what I'm weak in, what I'm strong in, how to help me better," he said. "That's better than going to Michigan State."

Communications major Garrett Beitelschies said his professors meet with him on every paper and "you're actually talking in front of the room, having to defend your stance." He's also partaken of an extracurricular feast unimaginable at the bigger schools he considered: president of his fraternity and the senior class, radio, theater, homecoming king and even dressing up as Bruiser the Bulldog mascot at football games. With financial aid Adrian ended up costing him less than some state schools.

Both students said they'd learned broader skills — Cordova cited the complex skills involved in learning to interview witnesses.

But neither said they'd taken a class where the syllabus entailed reading, say, a set of novels.

Liberal arts colleges talk constantly — and perhaps with more urgency lately — about better pitching their case to the public. But until they do, they'll have to respond to what that public wants.

Docking says the survival recipe will vary (hockey helps here but won't in for Florida colleges). But the basic formula is the same.

"You need to be able to offer more than simply strong academics or you're going to have difficulty attracting students," he said. "There's a lot of competition. You'd better have something to distinguish yourself."
Student food banks fight hunger on college campuses

By Alan Scherzegrer
The Associated Press

COLUMBIA, Mo. — University of Missouri junior Simone McGautha works three campus jobs and has accumulated $11,000 in student loans as she seeks to become the first in her family with a college degree. So when McGautha learned about a new campus food pantry for needy students, the 19-year-old was happy to have the help.

"I use every bit of money I have for basic needs," the Kansas City native said. "I don't have family putting money in my bank account. If somebody wants to help, why not?"

The student-run Tiger Pantry is among a growing number of programs at university campuses. Organizers say it's both a response to a weak economy and a sign of the latest trend in student activism.

The pantry, which opened in early October, is within easy walking distance of the University of Missouri's campus in Columbia. It has given free food to nearly 150 people and their families, and an additional 100 people expressed an interest. Food recipients include nearly three dozen graduate students and a similar number of university employees, as well as a handful of professors.

Student organizers modeled the program on a similar effort at the University of Arkansas known as the Full Circle Food Pantry. As a sanctioned organization, the Tiger Pantry receives some money from student fees but primarily relies on donated food. Students can drop off donations in large bins around campus, and the local food pantry provided 2,500 pounds of food to help the Tiger Pantry get started.

The University of Mississippi and Auburn University are also starting campus food pantries, joining schools such as Central Florida, Georgia, Iowa State, Oregon State and West Virginia. The University of California Los Angeles deploys "economic crisis response" teams that assist students struggling to pay bills and rent or who are homeless.

Campus organizers estimate at least 20 schools have similar programs, with even more interested in joining the effort.

At the Tiger Pantry, users are limited to monthly visits, and the amount of their bounty depends on family size. But they don't have to prove that they're struggling financially.

The Auburn food pantry is part of a broader anti-hunger campaign that includes an international hunger research institute that is a collaboration with the United Nations World Food Programme, an international hunger research institute. A student-driven "War on Hunger" campaign launched in 2004 has spread to more than 200 universities worldwide, the school says.

"It's a moral imperative of a land-grant institution to improve the quality of life," said Harriet Giles, the hunger institute's managing director. "That's our mission."

Precise statistics measuring the extent of student and staff hunger are elusive, Giles and other supporters of such efforts acknowledge. Campus administrators also are cautious that the food bank projects embraced by a current crop of do-gooders don't become dormant if the next generation of student leaders fails to share those passions.

"The university wants us to prove the need of the pantry first," said Missouri's food bank director Paul Baluszczak, a St. Peters junior.

Peggy Kirkpatrick, executive director of the Food Bank of Central and Northeast Missouri, said more people are using food pantries generally. She said her regional group serves nearly 13,000 people each month, compared with fewer than 8,000 just four years ago — a 63 percent increase.

Kaitlyn Kelly, a senior animal science major from Blue Springs, has used the Tiger Pantry from the start. So does her boyfriend. Kelly has cashed childhood savings bonds and other investments to help pay for college. She also has wheat allergies, making her food choices more difficult and more costly.

"I need help. So I'm not going to refuse it," she said. "There are plenty of students who could use this. This whole program is a godsend."
Deans List: Hiring Spree Fattens College Bureaucracy—And Tuition

BY DOUGLAS BELKIN AND SCOTT THURM

MINNEAPOLIS—When Eric Kaler became president of the University of Minnesota last year, he pledged to curb soaring tuition by cutting administrative overhead. But he hit a snag: No one could tell him exactly what it cost to manage the school.

Like many public colleges, the University of Minnesota went on a spending spree over the past decade, paid for by a steady stream of state money and rising tuition. Officials didn't keep close tabs on their payroll as it swelled beyond 19,000 employees, nearly one for every 3½ students. "The more questions I asked, the less happy I was," Dr. Kaler said.

Many of the newly hired, it turns out, were doing little teaching. A Wall Street Journal analysis of University of Minnesota salary and employment records from 2001 through last spring shows that the system added more than 1,000 administrators over that period. Their ranks grew 37%, more than twice as fast as the teaching corps and nearly twice as fast as the student body.

Across U.S. higher education, non-classroom costs have ballooned, administrative payrolls being a prime example. The number of employees hired by colleges and universities to manage or administer people, programs and regulations increased 50% faster than the number of instructors between 2001 and 2011, the U.S. Department of Education says. It's part of the reason that tuition, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, has risen even faster than health-care costs.

The University of Minnesota illustrates the trend. Its main Twin Cities campus had the largest share of employees classified as "executive/administrative and managerial" among the 72 "very-high-research" public universities in the 2011-12 academic year, according to data compiled by the U.S. Department of Education. Minnesota officials say the figures are misleading because not all schools report administrative spending the same way.

At Minnesota, tuition and fees for state residents have more than doubled in a decade, to $13,524. That far exceeds the average at four-year public colleges of $8,655, which also represents a doubling, according to the College Board. Private-college tuition averages $29,056.

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Hiring Spree Fattens the Bureaucracy
At Colleges, Helping Push Up Tuition

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but has risen more slowly.
For students, the effect is
striking. In 1975, a University of
Minnesota undergraduate could
cover tuition by working six
hours a week year-round at a
minimum-wage job, the Journal
calculated. Today, a student
would have to work 32 hours at
minimum wage to cover the cost.

Gregory Kiss, a sophomore
business major, expects to gradu-
ate owing more than $50,000.
Trying to economize, he bought
a dining plan that provides only
10 meals a week.

Mr. Kiss tapped a nerve when
he launched a website listing
campus events where free food
was to be had. He has attended
lectures about evangelical Chris-
tianity, (with free Korean BBQ),
cell regeneration (burritos) and
something called “the feast of
nations,” which he says was the
tastiest.

“I think it’s a good school and
it’s a good value, but I know I’m
going to be paying it off for a
long time,” Mr. Kiss says.

The bureaucracy finds numer-
ous ways to spend money. Offi-
cials have spent millions plan-
ing a not-yet-built residential
community 20 miles from the
University of Minnesota Twin
Cities campus designed in part
to showcase sustainable energy
and environmental stewardship.

Administrative employees
make up an increasing share of
the university’s higher-paid peo-
pel. The school employs 353 peo-
ples earning more than $200,000 a
year. That is up 57% from the
inflation-adjusted pay equivalent
in 2001. Among this $200,000+
plus group, 81 today have admin-

Administrators making over
$300,000 in inflation-adjusted
terms rose to 17 from seven.

Many forces besides adminis-
trative overhead add to universi-
ties’ cost pressures, among them
health-care and retirement ex-
enses. And among the adminis-
trative spending, some is un-
avoidable, such as that owing to
federal rules requiring greater
spending to oversee research
grants or accommodations for
students with disabilities.

Schools also compete—by ne-
necessity, they say—to offer fancier
rooms, dining halls, gyms
and other amenities, to raise
their rankings and attract stu-
dents. “It’s a competitive busi-
ness,” says Paul Lingenfelter,
executive director of the State
Higher Education Executive Offi-
cers Association.

To compete, schools have
stepped up borrowing for con-
struction. Total debt at public
four-year colleges more than tri-
pled between 2002 and 2011, to
$368 billion, according to the De-
partment of Education. At the
University of Minnesota, the
yearly cost of servicing debt
more than doubled to $106 mil-
lion in that time.

For decades, public universities
were somewhat insulated from
financial rigor by steadily in-
creasing state funding. That has
slowed or stopped in many
states in tight budgetary times.

Minnesota’s government last
year contributed $570 million to
university operations, which was
about the same as in the
2003-04 school year despite in-
flation and roughly 10% in-
creased enrollment.

Higher education now faces
pressures similar to those that
reshaped other segments, Min-
nesota’s Dr. Kaler says. “You look
at American industry in gen-
eral—the car industry got com-
fortable until the Japanese
showed up, the airline industry
was comfortable until it got de-
regulated,” he says. “Now it’s
higher ed’s turn.”

Academia’s contemplative cul-
ture can provide fertile ground
for growth in bureaucracy. In a
speech after becoming president,
Dr. Kaler told the story of 33
words inscribed on the audito-
rium in 1936. It took the creation
of an inscription committee, the
hiring of an “inscription consul-
tant”—and 12 years—before
chisel met stone, he said.

The number of employees at
the University of Minnesota with
“human resources” or “person-
nel” in their job title—272—has
increased by a third since the
2004-2005 academic year, a pe-
riod during which the enrol-
ment grew approximately 6%.

In its Office of Equity and Di-
versity, the number of people
with “director” in their title
grew to 10 in the 2011-2012
school year from just four direc-
tors five years earlier, by a uni-
viversity official’s count.

Growth in the diversity office
is an attempt to make the cam-
pus “more inclusive and more
welcoming to people of different
backgrounds,” Dr. Kaler says.

Caution: fed bureaucratic
growth after the school agreed
to pay the federal government
$32 million in 1998 to settle alle-
gations relating to sales of an
unlicensed transplant drug. The
school acknowledged misman-
agement of grant funds, and the
National Institutes of Health put
its grant applications under spe-

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cial scrutiny, creating research delays and faculty departures.

To prevent a repeat, officials imposed "fairly onerous bureaucratic processes," said R. Timothy Mulcahy, vice president for research. He said the university "evolved a very, very risk-averse, very, very conservative culture."

Several years ago, Russell Luepker, a professor of epidemiology at the school of public health, sought reimbursement for a $12 parking bill. The form went to the head of his department to an accountant who entered it in a computer to a senior accountant responsible for approving it. Richard Portnoy, chief administrative officer in the epidemiology department, estimates it cost $75 to move the paperwork. When Dr. Luepker heard of it, he stopped filing for parking reimbursements.

The Journal, using payroll data provided by the university, calculated that across all of the system's campuses, administrators consume 24% of the payroll, up from 20% in 2001. Employees who teach, such as professors, lecturers and instructors, account for 37% of the payroll, down from 39% in 2001, the Journal calculated.

The university hasn't maintained a consistent definition of an administrative employee through the years. The Journal based its analysis on 151 job titles the university classified as executive, administrative or managerial at some point between 2001 and 2012.

To make year-to-year comparison valid, the Journal included all 151 such job titles for each year. Likewise, the Journal's totals for teaching jobs include all 42 job titles the university has considered instructional at some point between 2001 and 2012.

The university said many employees at the school wear several hats, so that some who have administrative titles also teach, and some job titles don't accurately describe the work an employee actually does.

In June, the university did its own analysis of compensation, which totals well over $1 billion a year. One conclusion it reached was that salary and fringe benefits for those in "leadership"—previously 6% of the compensation total—had risen to 7% of total compensation.

A university spokesman, Chuck Tomhage, said administrative efforts such as giving guidance to students do generate benefits. He pointed to the Twin Cities campus' rate of four-year graduation: about 58% in 2008, up from 41% in 2002.

Dr. Kaler, in his inaugural address in September 2011, criticized the costs of "long meetings, excessive committee deliberations and endless email chains," that contribute to a "tangled web of bureaucracy that drags us." He pledged to reduce administrative expenses.

One hurdle: The system's chief financial officer, Richard Pfutzenreuter III, says that while he can track the cost of heating a particular floor of a building or of serving a cafeteria meal, he can't specify elements of the hierarchy such as how many people report to each manager. The human-resources system doesn't track such chain-of-command information, he said, because "it wasn't a priority in the past."

Streamlining the chain of command has proved important in controlling costs elsewhere. A 2010 analysis of the University of California Berkeley by Bain & Co. found that supervisors oversaw an average of 5.1 employees. The school raised that to 7.1 and saved $20.5 million annually, says Andrew Szeri, dean of Berkeley's graduate division.

Dr. Kaler ordered a review of Minnesota's spending. A survey found that in the system, which has about 43,800 undergraduates and 68,400 students in all, people were calling 73 different numbers for help with computer trouble. He is trying to reduce that to one.

Some things the school uses money for are arguably distant from its teaching mission. Since 2006, it has spent $10 million on consultants and others for UMORE Park, a planned 30,000-resident community the university will build on land it has 20 miles from the Twin Cities campus.

School officials say the community reflects the changing mission of a public university in the 21st century. They also say it will one day yield a large return, partly from gravel that can be extracted on the land and sold.

Meanwhile, however, the project is decades from completion but already has four staff members, including a $71,000-a-year director.

The University of Minnesota system employs 139 people in its promotions, marketing and communications departments. It has spent more than $8 million since 2006 on an ad campaign to buff its image. A university spokesman said these efforts encourage donations that, in part, help fund scholarships.

When state funding initially grew tighter, Dr. Kaler's predecessor, Robert Bruininks, says he responded with a wide range of steps that included freezing or reducing salaries, eliminating 14 car allowances, restructuring the health-care and retirement systems and closing dozens of extension-school offices. Dr. Bruininks said he "reduced the number of vice presidents by three during my last year," and "we reduced the number of deans by three in closing and combining colleges."

The austerity measures weren't evenly distributed. Traditionally, professors who had temporarily taken administrative roles but were returning to teaching have been given a year of paid leave to refresh their skills. The pay traditionally was not at their higher administrative level but the academic level.

Before leaving last year, Dr. Bruininks approved more than $2 million of such transition packages, in some cases at the employees' higher administrative salaries.

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An uproar that ensued when the Minneapolis Star Tribune reported on the payments earlier this year led the school’s Board of Regents to tighten its oversight of the packages, diminishing the president’s discretion. Dr. Bruininks said that the dollar amount was high in part because there were so many administrators transitioning back to academia and that he packages were appropriate “to attract and retain leaders in higher education.”

Dr. Kaler has a salary of $610,000 and his chief of staff of $185,000. Minnesota’s governor makes $120,000. Mr. Kaler, 56, said his pay “is competitive in the marketplace.” He has turned down an $18,000 raise.

Among his efforts to economize, Dr. Kaler said he recently eliminated the office of academic administration after its head took a job elsewhere. He said the move will cut 5.5 full-time positions, including a senior vice president who earned $300,000 plus.

Dr. Kaler said he wants to bring discipline, accountability and transparency to the school’s administration. Fifteen months into the job, he figures he is about 45% of the way there.

To Dr. Luepker, in the public-health department, such goals are up against an institutional inertia that inhibits the periodic streamlining common in business. “We establish things and programs and they never quite go away,” Dr. Luepker says. “They’re nice people and they’re colleagues and they’re good people...but in this environment, you have to ask can we continue to do this?”