JULY 30, 2015

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Brown’s move to highway draws praise and scrutiny

JOHN SHARP
jssharpsb.com

Matthew Brown, the newest member of the Alabama State Board of Education, recently moved into the Baldwin County Highway Department as a design engineer. This move has brought about back District L opposition to a tax plan that was on the ballot.

But juggling the two positions might be difficult, according to some Baldwin County Commission Chairmen.

“I am happy for Matthew, and I am interested to see how he intends to handle a very important full-time job as a design engineer with the county highway department and a seven-county district with frequent meetings and requirements on his time,” Commissioner Chris Elliott said.

Added Commission President Charles “Skip” Gruber: “I just hope (the appointment) doesn’t become a conflict between him and his job.”

The reaction shows the level of scrutiny that is likely to follow Brown as he begins his tenure in a politically appointed position with both the state’s school board and being at odds with a number of local elected officials during the March 31 Baldwin County School System’s referendum campaign.

Brown said his role as both a county employee and as a state school board representative won’t be an issue.

“I do feel confident I will be able to satisfactorily complete both obligations,” he said.

Pittman: No discussions with governor

Brown, as leader of the opponents of the March 31 school tax referendum, is a common foe of some county commissioners, school board members and school officials. He has met with other politicians who backed the referendum.

Voters, though, sided with Brown’s position overwhelmingly shot down the school system’s request for new taxes while also defeating the renewals of expired mills.

Matthew Brown

One official who supported Brown was state Sen. Trip Pittman, R-Montrose, who denied having a direct influence with Gov. Robert Bentley regarding Brown’s appointment.

“(The Brown appointment) was done by his staff, and there were interviews (with the candidates for the state board seat),” Pittman said. “The governor and I have a good relationship, but we don’t always agree at the end of the day. But (Bentley) felt that Matt Brown was the best person for the position.”

Jennifer Ardis, Bentley’s spokeswoman, agreed.

“This appointment is no different than numerous other appointments the governor makes,” she said. “(Bentley) accepted applications and narrowed the list down to the top candidates. Matthew is highly qualified for the position, and the governor appreciates his willingness to serve.”

Pittman said he felt Brown’s leadership opposing the tax referendum — supported by an overwhelming majority of Baldwin County voters — helped his cause. Also under consideration for the board appointment were Terry Burle, the executive director of the Baldwin County Education Coalition, and Daphne resident/businessman Ernest Scarborough.

“Obviously two-thirds of the voters had concerns about the way the tax was being renewed and the additional taxes (under consideration),” Pittman said. “I would contend that if people thought about the future of the schools, people would want someone in there who is conscious of the money and make sure the money they are appropriating is being well-spent and managed.”

The District also encompasses Mobile, Butler, Covington, Conecuh, Crenshaw and Escambia counties. No one from any of those counties was under consideration.

Brown replaces Al Thompson, also of Baldwin County, who was appointed by Bentley to serve on the newly created Alabama Community College System Board of Trustees earlier this year.

Brown’s tenure as one member on the eight-person board is about as he will be up for election next year. Board members serve four-year terms.

Eastern Shore MPO

Brown, at the time of the March election, served as coordinator of the Eastern Shore Metropolitan Planning Organization — a group that consisted of the local officials who supported the referendum.

But he also was heavily involved in one of the most politically heated elections in Baldwin County in some time. His role: help to organize the “Educate Baldwin Now.”

“He has a lot of trust built up among a lot of the people who opposed the taxes in Baldwin County,” said Fairhope Mayor Tim Kant, whose city is exploring a possible independent school system. “He’s a young man and very intelligent.”

During the campaign, Brown was in an awkward position after an MPO report surfaced showing 2040 student enrollment in Baldwin County required the construction of “16 to 20 new schools.”

“The school report was included in the MPO’s long-term transportation plan,” Brown said. “Brown said he stood by those numbers even if he was leading the opposition to a tax plan that had been passed, would have raised $150 million over 10 years to pay for a system-wide expansion program.

The weeks following the election brought about backlash against Brown’s role as MPO coordinator.

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During an April MPO
Governor Bentley Highlights Gulf State Park Project at 2015 National Governors Association Summer Meeting

By Staff

Governor Robert Bentley on Friday highlighted the Gulf State Park Project as an innovative strategy for tourism and economic development at the Summer Meeting of the National Governors Association in White Sulphur Springs, West Virginia.

"Alabama’s unique strategies to preserve our state’s natural resources, recreational opportunities and historic landmarks will attract new industries while strengthening Alabama’s economy," Governor Bentley said. "During the joint committee meeting at NGA, I had a special opportunity to showcase what makes Alabama beautiful. I enjoyed sharing our exciting plans for the Gulf State Park Project with other governors."

Governor Bentley currently serves as vice-chair of NGA’s Economic Development and Commerce Committee which met Friday afternoon.

Governor Bentley presented Alabama’s plans for the Gulf State Park Project and highlighted its benefits for the state’s tourism industry. Cooper Shattuck, Executive Director of Alabama’s Gulf State Park Project, joined Governor Bentley for a roundtable discussion on the project. Governor Bentley’s remarks focused on the state’s efforts to promote tourism and showcase Alabama’s natural resources while expanding economic development in Alabama.

The beaches along Alabama’s Gulf Coast region account for approximately 40% of all tourism throughout the state. The Alabama Department of Tourism estimates that over 24 million people visited Alabama in 2014 and spent more than $11 billion throughout the state. In 2013, the Governor signed Senate Bill 231, which will improve the Gulf State Park. Improvements to Gulf State Park are part of a series of proposed Gulf Coast restoration projects. There are five key components of the Gulf State Park Restoration Project, and they include the following: enhancing the visitor experience, restoring the dunes, building an environmental information center, creating a research and education center and rebuilding a lodge in Gulf State Park that was previously destroyed by a hurricane.
Commerce Department launches workforce development division

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Calling workforce readiness is a “key issue facing every advanced manufacturer in the U.S.” Alabama Commerce Secretary Greg Canfield said while announcing a restructuring of his department to better align with Gov. Robert Bentley’s Alabama Workforce Council.

The realignment, reported by Alabama Power Co’s Alabama News Center, creates a new Workforce Development Division within the Alabama Department of Commerce to be led by longtime Alabama Industrial Development Training chief Ed Castille.

Although Castille will maintain his position as director of the statewide training initiative, he also will assume the role of a deputy secretary within the commerce department.

Meanwhile, both the Workforce Investment and Workforce development divisions of the Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs will shift to the new commerce department division.

In addition, the state’s 10 workforce development councils will realign from the Alabama Community College System to the commerce department’s new Workforce Development Division.

Canfield made the announcement to members of the Economic Development Association of Alabama. The Alabama News Center quoted him as saying, “This is not about meeting institutional needs. This is about meeting the needs of business and industry.”

Meanwhile, the commerce department’s Business Development Division will continue to focus on recruitment and retention of industry, international trade, the state’s film office and other traditional functions of the department.
Local experts to visit Chamber in Session

Staff report

"State of the Economy" will be the topic of discussion for the group of local experts Thursday morning at the Chamber in Session at Hotel Capstone.

The event, sponsored by the Chamber of Commerce of West Alabama, will start with a 7:30 a.m. breakfast and the main address by Carl Pinkert, vice president for research and economic development for the University of Alabama.

Pinkert then will moderate a panel discussion whose members will include Dara Longgrear, executive director of the Tuscaloosa County Industrial Development Authority, representing industry; Brendan Moore, Tuscaloosa’s development ombudsman, representing retail and commerce; Jay Kasten, executive director of the Tuscaloosa Tourism & Sports Commission, on tourism; Grayson Glaze, executive director of the Alabama Center for Real Estate, on the real estate and housing industries; and Al Spencer, the Chamber of Commerce’s vice president for economic development and public policy.

Cost, including breakfast, is $30. Reservations need to be made in advance with Stacey Gann at the Chamber, at 391-0559 or stacy@tuscaloosachamber.com.
Funding is oxygen for education

We have all heard the monotone safety briefing before an airplane takes off: "In the event of a loss of cabin pressure, oxygen compartments will automatically open in the panel above your seat. Reach up and pull the mask to your face...."

The instructions precede to tell parents to ensure that their masks are securely in place before attending to their children. The concept is fairly simple: the intent is to maintain the health of those who can best help others so everyone is taken care of.

Metaphorically, we have lost cabin pressure in the State of Alabama. The plane is speeding toward earth, there are cries of horror from the passengers and oxygen masks are dangling from overhead.

This emergency has been created by a lack of revenue needed to fund our state's General Fund and Education Fund budgets. Now as the Legislature begins a special session we find ourselves at decision time. Who places the mask on first? Whose strengths need to be maximized to help others?

I maintain that education backed by strong education funding is the first step.

There are so many economic reasons for a strong statewide education system. The prosperity that we all seek begins with education.

CEOs and boards looking for locations focus on the quality of life in a prospective area. Education is the number one factor in quality of life. Companies do not decide to locate in an area where their employees do not have access to good schools. And, quality schools provide a quality workforce.

These decisions are also made daily by the professionals that all communities need. What young doctor wants to move to, or stay in, an area with no chance for a good education for his or her children?

Providing a better education for our youth and keeping them in school saves millions in prisons and welfare costs. A strong education system strengthens property values and other social and economic variables, thus improving all communities.

Statewide affluence begins with education.

There are many who assert that education funds need to be diverted to the General Fund to keep taxes low. They go on to state that low taxes are the central element in attracting business and industry. But if that were the case, a megalopolis would extend from Anniston to Selma and from Demopolis to Russellville. Low taxes have not been a driver for business and industrial growth throughout much of the state.

There are some who will try to convince themselves and others that education is well-funded in Alabama. They even state that we are better funded now than at any time. The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities and the National Center for Educational Statistics report that the state of Alabama has the highest decline in the nation in per-pupil spending from 2008 to 2015. In Madison City Schools alone, our funding is down more than $300 per student from the 2008 budget to the proposed 2016 budget. And, that's not even accounting for inflation.

For years the schools have received zero funding from the state for technology, libraries or professional development. If the 2016 budget is not altered, it will be the first time in seven years that the state has budgeted any money for these areas. We will receive approximately $38,000 in technology funding for a student population of 9,700. That equates to a mere $4 per child.

Similarly meager amounts are now budgeted for libraries ($1.31 per pupil), professional development, textbooks and other areas of need.

In 2011 the legislature passed the Rolling Reserve Act. The Act provides for conservative budgeting based on several years of tax receipts. This act eliminates proration on the back end of the budget by restricting numbers of prorating the front end of the budget.

This year the tax revenues in the Education Trust Fund exceeded the budget number that the Rolling Reserve allowed. This was the optimum time to take this money and use it to fully fund transportation, to provide for technology infrastructure, to lower the pupil-teacher ratio, to compensate growing districts that have to pay for teachers because of more students and to provide for remedial and gifted educational programs.

Instead some have taken this opportunity to falsely argue that we have a surplus in education funding and that this money should be diverted to pay for prisons and other items covered by the General Fund. Pardon me, but I don't see that logic.

Diverting money from the Education Trust Fund will only ensure that the prison population will grow as education weakens in our state.

Lack of revenue for education is a problem for our state. Many will say that you can't fix a problem by throwing money at it. When have we ever thrown money at education in Alabama?

As our Legislature goes into special session, please encourage your legislator to place the oxygen mask on education and save all the passengers.

Dee Fowler is superintendent of Madison City Schools and a board member and immediate past president of the School Superintendents of Alabama.
U.S. women’s soccer game could bring $10 million economic boost

BIRMINGHAM

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The upcoming soccer game between the World Cup-winning U.S. women’s soccer team and Australia could bring $10 million to Birmingham’s economy, city officials say.

The game is part of a 2015 FIFA Women’s World Cup victory tour. It’s set for 1:30 p.m. Sept. 20 at Legion Field and will be broadcast on ESPN2.

Birmingham is one of 10 cities chosen to host a victory tour match. City officials say it’s just one more sign that Birmingham is fast being a destination, especially for major sporting events.

“We have worked hard for Birmingham to become an international city, host big events and welcome visitors from around the world,” Mayor William Bell said. “This is another indicator that we are on the right track.”

Birmingham was selected as the site of the 2017 National Senior Games, billed as the world’s largest sporting event for people over 50. The games take place every two years and attract thousands of competitors and spectators.

This year, the city also landed the 2021 World Games, which will bring athletes and spectators from 100 countries to Birmingham. Those events would cost about $75 million to host and could have a $265.5 million economic impact on the region.

After Tuesday’s City Council meeting, President Johnathan Austin noted the success of the 2009 Davis Cup tennis event, which earned raved reviews and attracted a record crowd, and the recent WBC heavyweight championship that sold out Bartow Arena.

THE GAME

U.S. women vs. Australia

When: 1:30 p.m.
Sunday, Sept. 20

Where: Legion Field

TV: ESPN2

Tickets: On sale 10 a.m. July 31 at ussoccer.com; by phone at 1-800-745-3000 and at all Ticketmaster ticket centers; or day of at Legion Field.

The women’s soccer game is another step in the right direction, he said.

“It says that the city of Birmingham is a sports destination - not just local, regional or national but an international sports destination,” Austin said.

Though Legion Field hosts fewer events than it did in its heyday, Austin says the facility is ready to host the game. It’s still home to two large annual games, the Magic City Classic and the Birmingham Bowl, and is the home field for the recently revived UAB Blazers football team.

“T’m not certain we’ll have to make any changes,” he said. “It’s in pretty good shape to host the event right now.”

Tickets will be available on Friday, July 31, at 10 a.m. at ussoccer.com. Pricing information has not yet been released, but Gene Hallman, president and CEO of Bruno Event Team, said they will be affordable.

Options include public tickets, ultimate fan tickets that include a jersey and post-game field access, corporate packages and more. Hallman has said they hope to sell between 35,000 and 40,000 tickets.

Birmingham has a strong history with U.S. soccer, as it has served as a host for multiple friendly competitions and a men’s World Cup qualifier.

Two decades ago, a game between Team USA and Argentina in the 1996 Atlanta Summer Olympics saw the highest attendance for an event at Legion Field.

“That was such a special, unique moment in Birmingham’s sports history, and we’re going to build on that,” Hallman said.
Governor Bentley Named Vice Chair of the National Governors Association Education and Workforce Committee

By Staff

Governor Bentley on Saturday was named vice chair of the National Governors Association (NGA) Education and Workforce Committee by NGA Chair Utah Governor Gary Herbert and NGA Vice Chair Virginia Governor Terry McAuliffe during the 2015 NGA Summer conference in West Virginia.

The Education and Workforce Committee handles issues dealing with education related to early childhood, K-12 and postsecondary as well as workforce development. Members of the committee ensure that governors’ views are represented in the shaping of federal policy.

“Education and workforce development are very important issues to me, and I look forward to serving on the NGA Education and Workforce Committee,” Governor Bentley said. “Alabama has made significant strides in preparing students for success in college and their careers. As governors, we are uniquely positioned to influence federal legislation and regulations that affect education and workforce policies. I look forward to sharing Alabama’s success in the area of workforce development with other governors.”

In 2014, Governor Bentley created the Alabama Workforce Council to advise and support members of the State School Board, the Chancellor of the Alabama Community College System, presidents of Alabama’s four-year institutions and the Superintendent of the Department of Education on ways to more closely tailor the state’s workforce education programs with the workforce needs of new and existing Alabama business and industry.

During the 2015 Regular Session, Governor Bentley supported and signed legislation aimed at streamlining workforce development efforts across state government, creating a one-stop-shop for job creation and meeting industries’ needs.

Founded in 1908, NGA is the collective voice of the nation’s governors and one of Washington, D.C.’s most respected public policy organizations. Its members are the governors of the 55 states, territories and commonwealths. NGA provides governors and their senior staff members with services that range from representing states on Capitol Hill and before the Administration on key federal issues to developing and implementing innovative solutions to public policy challenges through the NGA Center for Best Practices.
Saban talks Texas, NFL Draft evaluations

Tide coach says he turned down opportunity to meet with Longhorns

By D.C. Reeves
Special to The Tuscaloosa News

PENSACOLA, FLA. | Nick Saban coaches at Alabama. He traveled to Northwest Florida to speak to a booster club on Tuesday night.

Talk of Saban and Texas can cross state lines freely. Saban offered slight detail about his agent Jimmy Sexton’s conversations with Texas, saying Sexton called him “about 15 times” to gauge his interest in the job.

The excerpt does not quote Saban or Sexton, and it does not specifically mention any direct conversations between Saban and anyone involved with Texas or its football program. It does detail several of Sexton’s conversations with people around the UT program until Saban’s contract extension with Alabama was signed in December of 2013, falling somewhat in line with Saban’s explanation about Sexton’s constant gauging.

That wasn’t the only opportunity for Saban to clear the air. During SEC Media Days, Saban reiterated his stance that the NFL did his job. I did my job.”

See next page
SABAN

Continued From Page 1C

should push the date college underclassmen receive their draft evaluations back until after the college season ends to not cause a distraction as players prepare for upcoming bowl games.

"So we're trying to get ready far a game, and all of a sudden, a guy finds out he's a first round draft pick or a guy that thought he was a first round draft pick finds out he's not a first round draft pick, and we're trying to get ready to play a playoff game," Saban said at SEC Media Days in Hoover on July 15. "I think that it would be better not to submit that information to a player until he was finished competing in college."

Some media outlets criticized Saban for using the distraction as an explanation for his team's 42-35 loss to Ohio State in the College Football Playoff semifinal.

"All of a sudden, it's an excuse for losing to Ohio State. Where it came from, I don't know," Saban said Tuesday. "But it had nothing to do with it."

"(Moving the evaluation reports back) is still how I feel, and I think it would be better for the game and I think more coaches will see it that way when they have more players involved in the draft. "It's a philosophical thing for me, it's not going to change. I'm probably going to keep saying what I think, and I'm probably going to keep getting criticized or something is going to be made of it."

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City mulls University Blvd. facelift

Improvement plan from downtown to campus OK’d by City Council committee

By Jason Morton
Staff Writer

City officials are moving forward with a series of improvements to University Boulevard that were suggested in a study of the downtown corridor almost one year ago. The study itself grew out of a year-old task force formed to examine ways to revamp the University Boulevard corridor between downtown and the University of Alabama. The overall plans from this study were presented in August 2014. The study was jointly funded by the city and the university.

“It’s been sitting on a shelf because of a lack of funding,” said Councilman Matt Calderone.

INSIDE

On Tuesday, the City Council’s Public Projects Committee voted to move forward by examining ways to implement portions of the study that are considered to be the most important because of public safety concerns.

The first area to be considered likely will center on University Boulevard between Reed Street and Queen City Avenue, where low lighting and narrow, broken sidewalks make it hazardous for pedestrians.

“It doesn’t necessarily meet our standards for excellence,” Calderone said of this area.

At Calderone’s request, the council committee voted to allow city staff members to explore ways to improve this area.

Those improvements could cost between $1 million and $4 million, depending on the scope of the work.

The UA/Downtown Tuscaloosa Connectivity Plan relies heavily on the addition of bicycle paths on University Boulevard and other parts of...
downtown. The bike paths would shrink the size of the current traffic lanes, slowing vehicular traffic and creating a more pedestrian-friendly area.

Other options include re-striping as well as some level of construction, such as the installation of bike tracks — two-way bicycle paths on the sides of streets protected from cars and pedestrians by a small median and a vegetative buffer.

And the ideal plan for University Boulevard between Queen City and Gene Stallings Avenue — located just east of Reed Street — would also be the most expensive, according to the proposed plan. These upgrades would include a two-lane street, buried utility lines, expanded sidewalks, additional trees and bicycle paths on either side.

One factor in the city’s decision to move forward was the recent decision to remove state oversight to University Boulevard. An agreement recently was approved by city officials and the Alabama Department of Transportation that gives jurisdictional control over University Boulevard in this part to Tuscaloosa.

“University Boulevard no longer being designated a state highway is huge,” Calderone said. “It gives us the ability to go in and make these improvements without having to deal with the bureaucracy of state government.”

To fund the work, Calderone pointed to two recent sales of city-owned land that generated about $1.4 million in unencumbered funds for the city’s use.

Additional funds might be needed depending on the ultimate scope of the project.

Calderone said he is optimistic that the funds can be found for the project.

“I hope to get this project going as soon as possible,” he said. “It’ll transform the area.”

In addition to this area of University Boulevard, the overall study examined much of the downtown area and how it can better connect to the UA campus.

The proposal outlined options for improving traffic on campus and downtown through the implementation of altered striping on Hackberry Lane, McCorvey Drive, Marr’s Spring Road and University Boulevard as well as the expansion or alteration of the median on Greensboro Avenue.

With Lurleen Wallace Boulevard North and South, many motorists no longer rely on Greensboro Avenue to get through downtown Tuscaloosa. Rather, it’s used to get to certain destinations. By reducing this from four lanes to two, expanding the median by adding a central bicycle path and making parking on either side parallel instead of diagonal, motorists would be required to go slower and pedestrian traffic would increase, consultants have said.

And while the proposal sounded exciting to city leaders, it caused concern among residents in the area over the potential effect its full implementation would have on the downtown historic districts.

Reach Jason Morton at jason.morton@tuscaloosanews.com or 205-722-0200.
UA grad to display art at Bama Theatre

Staff report

The Bama Theatre's Junior League Gallery on Friday will begin the display of an exhibit featuring watercolor and acrylic work by an artist who graduated from the University of Alabama.

Janet Mego's "Valleys Peak, Faces Reach" exhibit will be on display through Aug. 28 at the theater, 600 Greensboro Ave. The gallery is open weekdays from 9 a.m. until noon and 1-4 p.m. The gallery is also open during events at the Bama Theatre.

Mego has been drawing, painting and sculpting since she was 6 years old.

A news release from the Arts Council of Tuscaloosa, the host of the "Valleys Peak, Faces Reach" exhibit, says that Mego's work focuses on the intricacies of the human face and its expression of emotion. She also uses acrylic paints for abstract interpretation of trees, water and sky.

Mego has served as an artist in residence for the Sumter County Fine Arts Council and has worked as an adjunct art instructor at Livingston University, now known as the University of West Alabama. She retired as a teacher in the Jasper City Schools System but she still teaches an advanced placement English literature and composition class part time.

A reception honoring Mego will be held from 5-8 p.m. Aug. 6 at the Junior League Gallery.
UAB School of Education reaches major milestones in strategic, broad approach to transforming lives

By Tiffany Westry

Since establishing the initial framework of its strategic plan in 2011, the UAB School of Education has refined goals and objectives and is concentrating efforts around several areas through 2017.

“The School of Education is working to impact human potential more broadly,” said Dean Deborah L. Voltz, Ed.D. “We recognize that there is a symbiotic relationship between health and education. This is reflected in excellence in faculty research and programs that give students the training and knowledge to enhance P-12 education and health and wellness for individuals in Alabama and around the world.”

The school’s focus through 2017 includes strengthening enrollment, enhancing student support services, expanding online program offerings, increasing external funding, and increasing the number of educators prepared to work in high-poverty schools and in high-needs areas such as math, science, special education and English as a second language.

“The UAB School of Education plays a very important role in improving the quality of education in Alabama, a goal to which the school is extremely dedicated,” said UAB President Ray L. Watts. “With Dean Voltz’s leadership, faculty, staff, students and supporters are working together in innovative ways to make a substantial impact on education in our community and beyond.”

Innovation in teaching

The school saw a highly successful first year with its UABTeach program, far surpassing enrollment expectations and receiving significant philanthropic support. Designed to quickly produce a new teaching force of highly qualified instructors in science, technology, engineering and math, the program allows undergraduate STEM majors to receive a subject-matter degree and certification to teach at the secondary level within a four-year graduation plan. The program enrolled 70 freshman and sophomore students last fall. It is the only program of its kind in Alabama and will graduate its first class in 2017.

Opportunities for School of Education students also extend overseas, as UAB is the only university in the state to partner with the Peace Corps. Students looking to combine graduate school with the Peace Corps can do so as Peace Corps Master’s International students in the School of Education, with 14 PCMI master’s degree options. PCMI students complete most of their courses at UAB and spend two years overseas as volunteers working in a career related to their master’s degree.

A new honors program in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction and an existing program in the Department of Human Studies give students the opportunity to collaborate with faculty to pursue their intellectual interests through research or a service project designed to address a particular societal need as it relates to their field of study.
Other exciting new degree programs are emerging in the school. The UA System Board of Trustees recently approved a doctoral program in educational studies in diverse populations, and a master’s option in school psychometry. The school's online degree offerings have also grown from two to five fully online programs.

Supporting its exceptional programs is the School of Education’s Office of Student Services, which is developing innovative new initiatives to help students reach their educational goals. The office has developed a new proactive advising model to assist undergraduate students in identifying academic challenges early in their academic careers and utilizing appropriate resources to address those challenges. Additional initiatives to further enhance student services are on the horizon.

The strength of the school’s programs is reflected in the success of its alumni. School of Education alumni have been named Alabama Teacher of the Year — the top teacher in the state — for the last three years, and one has gone on to be a finalist for the national award — one of four top teachers in the country.

Innovation in research

In 2014, the school was awarded a seven-year, $49 million grant by the U.S. Department of Education to increase the number of low-income students prepared to enter and succeed in postsecondary education. The Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) grant provides funding to states to enhance services for students, parents and teachers at high-poverty middle and high schools.

UAB serves as the hub of GEAR UP Alabama, which will impact about 10,450 students from 18 school districts and 53 schools in Alabama’s Black Belt. The program will work with a cohort of students in either sixth or seventh grade and follow them through their first year of college.

With the help of a philanthropic gift from AT&T Alabama, the UAB Innovative Learning Collaborative launched a pilot program with Birmingham City Schools’ Parker High. UAB education students worked with 50 students from Parker High School’s Academy of Urban Educators to better engage them in the learning process and improve their writing skills. One area tested by the program is the use of tablet computers preloaded with reading and writing tools.

A recent $1.25 million grant from the U.S. Department of Education will assist the school’s early childhood special education program in preparing students, through an interdisciplinary program of study, for careers as early interventionists to improve services and results for young children with disabilities and their families throughout Alabama. The program will provide full scholarships to 14 scholars each year for five years in order to address a state shortage of highly qualified personnel in this area.

The school is focused not only on enhancing learning outcomes for the P-12 population in Alabama and around the world, but also on improving health and wellness for people of all ages. Recently funded research in the school’s Department of Human Studies ranges from exploring family counseling-based approaches to childhood obesity and the effects of aerobic exercise.
training and exercise intensity in premenopausal women to exploring women's emotional barriers to exercise.

Innovation in service

Keeping with the university's mission, the School of Education continues to be active in service.

Renovations are complete for the school's recently established Maryann Manning Family Literary Center, and plans for its grand opening are underway. The center was established in 2014 to honor and continue the work of longtime faculty member Maryann Manning, Ed.D. The center brings together expertise from many areas of literacy to provide services for children and families throughout the state, regionally and globally.

Planning for next year's Girls in Science in Engineering Day is underway. GSED is a unique, free event created by two UAB students in 2011 to inspire and empower Birmingham-area middle school girls to achieve and excel in science and engineering fields. It is a day for local middle school girls to come to UAB and participate in fun science and engineering activities led by women who are professors, scientists and students from UAB and the surrounding community.

Since 2011, the UAB Community Counseling Clinic, housed in the School of Education building, has filled a service gap for people in Jefferson County by providing low-cost mental health counseling. The center sees an average of 112 patients a year and partners with more than 60 community organizations and agencies for referrals. The clinic is run by School of Education faculty. Services are provided by advanced graduate students and supervised by doctoral-level faculty. The clinic is working to expand its outreach within the community.

The school looks to create new partnerships and strengthen existing ones to develop innovative approaches for addressing areas of critical need locally and beyond.
Becker's Hospital Review
Tuesday, July 28, 2015

25 largest public hospitals in America | 2015

Written by Erin Marshall

Here are the 25 largest public hospitals in the United States, listed by number of beds.

Note: This list is based on data from hospitals' most recent cost reports, accessed through the American Hospital Directory. Data was accessed July 16. The hospital bed counts reported include all medical/surgical and special care beds in children's, critical access and acute care facilities under governmental control, as reported to CMS by the hospitals in their most recent cost reports.

In some cases, figures may include bed counts from affiliated facilities that share a provider number with the main hospital. Those facilities are identified in footnotes.

1. Jackson Memorial Hospital (Miami) — 1,678
2. Memorial Hermann Southwest Hospital (Houston) — 1,200
3. UAB Hospital (Birmingham, Ala.) — 1,134
4. Memorial Regional Hospital (Hollywood, Fla.) — 1,037
5. Carolinas Medical Center (Charlotte, N.C.) — 998
6. Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center (Columbus, Ohio) — 962
8. Grady Memorial Hospital (Atlanta) — 915
9. Bellevue Hospital Center (New York City) — 912
10. Huntsville (Ala.) Hospital — 870
11. Parkland Hospital (Dallas) — 846
12. Lee Memorial Hospital (Fort Myers, Fla.) — 835
13. University of North Carolina Hospitals (Chapel Hill, N.C.) — 824
14. Greenville (S.C.) Memorial Hospital — 814
15. New Hanover Regional Medical Center (Wilmington, N.C.) — 755
16. VCU Medical Center (Richmond, Va.) — 743
17. Ben Taub General Hospital (Houston) — 727
18. Medical University of South Carolina – University Hospital (Charleston, S.C.) — 726
19. Upstate University Hospital (Syracuse, N.Y.) — 715
20. The University of Kansas Hospital (Kansas City, Kan.) — 699
21. University of Iowa Hospitals & Clinics (Iowa City, Iowa) — 693
22. University Hospital of Brooklyn (N.Y.) — 686
23. University of Mississippi Medical Center (Jackson, Miss.) — 668
24. Los Angeles County and University of Southern California Medical Center — 664
25. Broward General Medical Center (Fort Lauderdale, Fla.) — 656

[1] Includes information for the Jackson Rehabilitation Hospital, Jackson South Community Hospital, Jackson North Medical Center and Holtz Children's Hospital.
[2] Includes information for Memorial Hermann Northwest Hospital, Memorial Hermann Southeast Hospital, and Memorial Hermann The Woodlands Hospital.

See next page
[3] Includes information for both the Joe DiMaggio Children's Hospital and Memorial Regional Hospital South.
[4] Includes Carolinas Medical Center-Randolph.
[5] Includes information for Ohio State's Richard M. Ross Heart Hospital, Ohio State University Harding Hospital and Ohio State University Hospital East.
[6] Includes information for Huntsville Hospital for Women and Children.
[7] Includes information for the HealthPark Medical Center, The Children's Hospital of Southwest Florida and The Rehabilitation Hospital.
[8] North Carolina Memorial, Children's and Women's Hospitals operate on this campus.
[9] Includes information for the Betty H. Cameron Women's and Children's Hospital, Cape Fear Hospital, the New Hanover Regional Medical Center Behavioral Health Hospital and the New Hanover Regional Medical Center Rehabilitation Hospital.
[10] Includes information for two other Harris County Hospital District entities: the Lyndon B. Johnson General Hospital and the Quentin Mease Community Hospital.
[11] Includes information for The Institute of Psychiatry, Medical University of South Carolina - Ashley River Tower and Medical University of South Carolina - Children's Hospital.
[12] Includes information for Upstate Gulisano Children's Hospital and Upstate University Hospital - Community Campus. Also known as Upstate University Hospital - Downtown Campus.
[13] Includes the University Hospital of Brooklyn at Long Island College.
[14] Also known as LAC+USC Healthcare Network.
Baptized at 97, Ken Thompson says, 'I want to completely belong'

By Kay Campbell

Ken Thompson, who turns 98 on Sept. 12, 2015, was baptized on July 12, 2015, at First Baptist Church of Madison, Ala., where he and his wife, Tempie, have been attending for a few years. He doesn't believe that baptism is necessary to qualify for Heaven – his stated belief in Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior suffices for that, he says.

So why bother with baptism? After all, even though Thompson remains active and uses a cane only for extra balance, getting up and then down the steep steps of the church's baptistery is a fairly strenuous workout for someone his age. The demographer for the central office of Alabama's Southern Baptists believes that Thompson may be the oldest baptism candidate they have heard of.

"Well, better late than never," Thompson said, smiling. Then he quietly adds his deeper, truer reason, "The church is like family to us. I just want to completely belong."

A combination of factors delayed his baptism, he said. As a kid, his family lived too far into the woods of Michigan's Upper Peninsula to make it to church. Thompson's mother, a Catholic, taught her children the rudiments both of reading and writing and of the Christian life. So, while always a Christian believer, Thompson never got into the habit of attending church until the last few years.

After all, he had a lot to do.

CCC then U.S. Army

He finished high school at 16 and quickly joined the CCC, Roosevelt's Depression Era workgroups, fibbing that he was old enough. For most of the next eight years, he said, he lived in tents, either in the CCC or in the U.S. Army, which he joined a year before Pearl Harbor. Thompson was accepted into what would become the Army Air Corps. Bombing missions in the Pacific and life in the Army camps didn't include much church-going, although Thompson is sure that it was only through God's watchful care that he escaped death several times -- including twice when he was shot down and once when he and two other crew members survived in a raft at sea for a week before being rescued.

"Who guided me back to safety?" Thompson asks rhetorically in "Intro to Stories by Kenneth O. Thompson," a collection he wrote at the demand of his children. Anecdotes from some of his narrow escapes in life are included in a section labeled, "Short Incidents with the Lord Controlling."

"You can see his faith in the book," Thompson's wife, Tempie Thompson, said.
War ended, and Thompson went to college on the GI bill, burying into the fast-developing field of aerodynamics and aeronautical engineering. That career trajectory brought him to Huntsville, Ala., as he followed his dissertation director, Rudolf Hermann, from the University of Minnesota. Once in Huntsville, he had research to do, and what became the University of Alabama in Huntsville to help organize. Thompson eventually was associate dean of engineering at UAH -- plus, he remained in the Air Force Reserves for 20 years, a commitment that lapped up more weekend time.

On weekends and vacations beginning about 35 years ago, he and Tempie began living out of their RV, traveling the U.S. and Canada. The first year after he retired, they were on the road all but about six weeks. They would sometimes visit a church, but never regularly.

"We drove that RV everywhere -- to every state in the Union except Hawaii, to every province of Canada and three times to Alaska," Thompson said.

**Moorings**

Then the economic crash of 2008 put their son, Clay, out of work. They begged him to move in with them while he looked for a job. Clay, it turned out, had begun attending church regularly, and they decided to go with him as a family activity.

"I'd do anything for him in that time," Thompson said. "It's hard to be out of work."

That Father's Day, Clay gave Thompson a leather-bound Bible -- the first they had had in the house.

"We read that out loud to each other, it was so precious a gift," Tempie Thompson said. "We had a chart, and we never missed a day. We read it all the way through."

By the end of that year, their son had a good job and moved to D.C., and they kept on reading something inspirational to each other daily and going to church weekly. Church-going, like their twice-weekly duplicate bridge games, had become cornerstones of their life.

"We were hooked," Tempie said.

As Tempie looked to formally transfer her membership to First Baptist in Madison, which is closer than the church they had been attending with their son, Ken realized he no longer wanted to just attend.

"I wanted to join as a unit, and baptism is a requirement for church membership," Thompson said. "I want to be all in."
Seeking to Cut Hospital Admissions - With a Water Bottle

By Staff

Dehydration contributes to a lot of medical problems leading to hospital admissions, and a UAH professor thinks his 'smart' water bottle creation can help prevent many of them. Dr. Emil Jovanov, Alabama Launchpad's 2014 Inventor of the Year, says his smart bottle employs sensors to keep track of the amount of water consumed, among other things. It also has the ability to transmit data, so that it can be used to improve care on a case-by-case basis, and collectively. Dr. Jovanov's 'smart' water bottle project is a finalist in the current Alabama Launchpad start-up competition.

This comes after the success of his 'smart' pill bottle, born of a class project at UAH. That product features visible and audible reminders for users, and wireless networking to supply medical professionals and other caretakers with information about patients' medication. It's being tested at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center.

Dr. Jovanov, inventor and UAH professor of electrical engineering, spoke with WLRH host Shane Scott. You can download and stream an extended version of the interview here.
Stadium could take USA to 'next level'

University looks to boost game attendance, alumni involvement

MIKE HERNDON
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Until this month, South Alabama head football coach Joey Jones believed the biggest moment in his program's history was earning its first bowl berth last season.

On July 6, however, USA President Tony Waldrop announced the school would explore the possibility of constructing an on-campus stadium, and the Jaguars' Camellia Bowl appearance last December was pushed down to No. 2 on Jones' list.

"If we can get an on-campus stadium, it's going to catapult our program to the next level," Jones said last week.

See next page
"I think at that point, once that happens, it's probably going to go places that I don't even think the people here realize it could go."

While the university has enjoyed what Athletics Director Joel Erdmann said is a good relationship with its current home, Ladd-Peebles Stadium, and the City of Mobile through the program's first six years of existence, an on-campus facility might provide South Alabama with an opportunity to create new game-day traditions, as well as continuing the university's efforts to create more of a residential campus.

As Erdmann notes, it would immediately create "six or seven opportunities a year where you can bring alumni and people who are not alumni to campus. That enhances the familiarity and the pride, I guess you could say, of people toward the university."

Bringing people to campus and bringing the games closer to the students were the goals at Tulane when the Green Wave opened Yulman Stadium on campus last year.

Stadium, Page 11
Idea of on-campus facility is popular in community

Stadium
Continued from Page 1

After averaging less than 20,000 fans during a 7-6 season while playing at the Mercedes-Benz Superdome in 2013, Tulane sold out its 2014 season-opener against Georgia Tech at Yulman, which seats 30,000, and averaged 25,012 fans for its six home games there last fall.

"It has been quite amazing with the excitement that gets built around football season and leading up to home games, and all the activities and events that are tied to home games," said Tulane Deputy Athletic Director Barbara Burke. "The Superdome is a wonderful facility with a tremendous historical presence here in the city of New Orleans, but it wasn't a place we could call our own.

"It's a huge facility and we had no opportunity there to create demand for tickets as well. Now we can put things out early and provide people the opportunity to select their seats and have deadlines and it created energy and excitement of trying to get people into your stadium, which has been wonderful."

At Central Florida, which averaged 31,569 fans in its final year in the Citrus Bowl in 2006, the Knights have averaged no fewer than 34,000 fans since moving on-campus into 45,000-seat Bright House Networks Stadium in 2007, with a high of 44,018 per game that inaugural season. They averaged 37,978 fans last year.

Making the commitment to build an on-campus stadium doesn't guarantee increased attendance or interest in a program, however. Akron, which built 30,000-seat InfoCision Stadium on campus in 2009 to the tune of $65 million, drew just 9,169 fans per game in 2014, the lowest FBS attendance in the nation. According to the Akron Beacon Journal, the university is subsidizing the football program by about $8 million, including annual debt payments of $4.3 million on the stadium.

Akron was desperate to get out of the run-down Rubber Bowl, a New Deal-era facility that it bought for a dollar from the city of Akron in 1971. Its experience since, however, is a testament to the fact that it takes more than a shiny new building to draw fans — it takes wins. The Zips went 6-42 in the first four years after moving into their new home.

"Certainly, not winning on the field contributes to it," said Nathan Mortimer, Akron's interim athletics director, adding that other factors contributed to keep attendance figures low even though the Zips improved to 5-7 (with a win over Pittsburgh) under Terry Bowden in 2014.

"Last year specifically, our TV contract had us in a lot of mid-week games, so we did a lot of Tuesday-Thursday games. Games started late, ended late, compounded with some bad weather. And the reality on top of all that is that everybody's challenged for time now. Everybody has a lot of different interests they're doing, and we're competing for that."

Asked what advice he'd have for other schools considering building on campus, he added: "I would encourage people to be realistic and not optimistic in what they think they're going to do in terms of attendance."

Akron is working to combat its issues with family-friendly events on game day, numerous appearances in the community, and a unique ticketing partnership with Northern Ohio Golf Charities for its homecoming game. Most of the Zips'
home games are on Saturdays this year, which will also help.

But the biggest factor, Mortimer said, would be a winning season.

"Coach Bowden's going to win football games this year; he's going to win a lot of them," Mortimer said. "Once we start competing and winning on the field, which is going to happen this year, it's going to help.

South Alabama doesn't have the same weather issues as Akron and the Jaguars may be a program on the rise after last year's first-ever bowl berth, but cautionary tales such as that of Akron are part of the reason South Alabama wants to take its time in studying the idea. Erdmann said there is no timetable for the study to be completed.

"The last thing we want to do is to build a stadium that is draining our operating budget," Erdmann said. "There are examples of that floating around out there and that's a place we definitely do not want to go."

Erdmann said calculating "reasonable but conservative" projected attendance and ticket sales figures is part of the equation in studying the feasibility of building on-campus, along with sponsorship revenue and even potential naming rights.

"I think it's very fair to say that external revenue is going to be a piece of this," Erdmann said. "If you look at stadiums across the country, there tend to be naming opportunities of varying levels and of various spaces and areas within the facility, sponsorships, licensing programs of some kind, club-level programs of some kind."

As the school begins to study every-thing from financial feasibility to the right size and potential locations for an on-campus facility, Erdmann said one thing is clear — the interest in the idea on campus and in the Mobile community is there.

"I've become somewhat of a popular guy," Erdmann said. "I think people appreciate that we're taking a serious look and we're doing this aboveboard and on the table. I think they have a sense of excitement, but also a sense of reality that this book is not yet written. We've got to get down the road a little bit and see where this will ultimately go.

"When we get there, there's going to be a financial aspect to this thing that at that point in time we're going to have to decide: Can we do this? Or does this need to wait for a little while down the road?"
UWA trustees to vote on tuition increase

The hike will hopefully raise $400,000

By Ed Enoch
Staff Writer

The Executive Committee of the University of West Alabama board of trustees is scheduled to meet on Monday to vote on a 2015-016 budget that includes a 4-percent tuition increase.

The special called meeting will be at 10:30 a.m. Monday at UWA's Montgomery office at 125 Ripley St.

The increase is part of a proposed $39.5-million budget for fiscal year 2016. The tuition increase would be used to cover debt service for bonds issued in 2012 and operation and maintenance costs associated with buildings built or renovated on campus.

The rate increase is expected to generate roughly $400,000, which would be evenly split between the debt service and the operational costs.

The board agreed to at least 2-percent hikes annually for a four-year period as part of the issuance of the $25 million in bonds for capital improvements. The 2015-16 school year would be the last for the obligatory increases.

The trustees are scheduled to meet for their regular quarterly meeting on Sept. 14 in Livingston.
UWA increases upcoming tuition

Board of trustees approve a 4 percent jump for the 2015-16 fiscal year

By Ed Enoch
Staff Writer

MONTGOMERY | Tuition at the University of West Alabama is set to increase 4 percent in the fall as part of a 2015-16 budget approved Monday by the executive committee of the UWA board of trustees. The committee approved the $39.5-million budget for fiscal year 2016 during a special-called meeting at the university's regional office in Montgomery. The budget approved Monday was unchanged from a draft approved by the finance committee earlier this month, UWA Board President Terry Bunn said.

The average undergraduate tuition for Alabama residents would increase annually by $276 to $7,144 and for non-residents by $550 to $14,288. The annual rates for graduate students would increase $348 per hour for residents and $696 for students from out of state.

The increase will be used to cover debt service for bonds issued in 2012 and operation and maintenance costs associated with buildings built or renovated on campus using the bond money.

The rate increase is expected to generate roughly $400,000, which would be evenly split between the debt service and the operational costs.

The board agreed to at least 2-percent hikes annually for a four-year period as part of the issuance of the $25 million in bonds for capital improvements. The 2015-16 school year would be the last for the obligatory increases.

The increase of tuition for on-campus students will coincide with a decrease in the rates for online students, a move approved by the board in June in the hope of reversing a

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CONTINUED FROM PAGE IB

The hourly undergraduate online tuition rate will decrease from $429 to $325, and the graduate rate will decrease from $477 to $429.

The online program has a proposed budget of $10.9 million for FY 2016. The budget is based on enrollment for 2014, but could perform better than expected if new degree offerings and the lower rate spur enrollment growth, according to Raiford Noland, vice president of financial affairs.

UWA President Ken Tucker said he was cautiously optimistic about the fall enrollment figures, adding the preliminary indicators were positive.

The trustees are scheduled to meet next for their regular quarterly meeting on Sept. 14 in Livingston.
Steve Spurrier struggling against a big opponent: Time

Paul "Bear" Bryant did it right. That sentence would apply to a number of circumstances. In this case, what the former Alabama coach and legend did right was manage his own departure from coaching football. That's become something to reflect on in the past week or so as Steve Spurrier, one of the coaches who will stand beside Bryant, Robert Neyland and a few others in the pantheon of the greatest SEC coaches, has seemed to struggle against the only true undefeated opponent: Time.

Spurrier spoke reflectively and well about his career just a week ago at SEC Media Days. He said he felt healthy and happy and wanted to keep on coaching at South Carolina. That's fine, most people agreed. But some of the reactions nagged at Spurrier, especially when a dissenting opinion about the wisdom of staying, words from columnist Mark Bradley of the Atlanta Journal-Constitution, appeared in The State, the newspaper in Spurrier's home, Columbia, S.C. That set off a rant — there seems no other word for a diatribe that refers to "enemies" and quotes the philosophy, if not the actual words, of Attila the Hun. As far as anyone knows, Attila couldn't write.

All really good coaches will eventually come to the same place. If they aren't really good, they'll get fired. But for even the great ones, the end isn't easy. Joe Paterno's final act was clouded by scandal, but age was gaining on him quickly. Woody Hayes melted down in a fit of rage. Bobby Bowden and Mack Brown stayed until their own fan bases were divided, a self-fulfilling guarantee of decline.

Bryant didn't do that. He looked at the situation — his age, his health, the rigors of the game — and made the decision to step away. No one forced him to do so. No one could have. He knew, though, that it was best for the Alabama program.

Would his decision have been different, his departure prolonged, had he not surpassed Amos Alonzo Stagg and become, at the time, the winningest coach? Maybe, but the question is moot. He had conquered that world, and there were, as Alexander the Great once lamented, no more worlds left to conquer. So he retired, to let someone else fight the grueling daily battles, which had taken their toll.

Spurrier faces some of the same issues Bryant did, and Bowden and Brown. When you get older, and there is one season that is short of expectations, the whispers begin on the recruiting trail.
HURT
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1C

If you are looking for "enemies," that's where you find them, not in the newspaper. Times have changed. Spurrier has always had a wariness about writers he didn't trust. If he cared, he'd probably call me an "enemy" too, since I've been in Tuscaloosa since Attila was on the Hun junior varsity pillaging team.

But as much as I wish it were different, newspapers don't wield much power anymore. He who controls ESPN controls the message, and Spurrier should know that. It might not have been that way in Bryant's time, but he didn't rant about newspapers, either.

I'm not saying that now is the time for Steve Spurrier to go. Age isn't an absolute — ask Bill Snyder. Spurrier knows more than I do about his health, physical and mental. He knows more than I do about his support at South Carolina. He doesn't need to recite his achievements to impress people. We're impressed.

Great coaches are fiercely competitive. That's a given. But in reality, Steve Spurrier, like all of us, has only one opponent: Time. That opponent will win, sooner or later. Bryant knew that — and knew when it was time to go.

Reach Cecil Hurt at cecil@tidesports.com or 205-722-0225.

The Tuscaloosa News
Friday, July 24, 2015
Jacob a nominee for Woman of the Year

Staff report

BIRMINGHAM | The National Woman Athlete of the Year and NCAA Division I Scholar-Athlete of the Year as a senior, Alabama gymnast Kim Jacob was named the SEC nominee for the 2015 NCAA Woman of the Year it was announced Thursday.

Now in its 25th year, the Woman of the Year award honors graduating female college athletes who have exhausted their eligibility and distinguished themselves throughout their collegiate careers in academics, athletics, service and leadership. The NCAA encourages member schools to honor its top graduating female student-athletes each year by submitting their names for consideration for the Woman of the Year award.

Conference nominations will be forwarded to the NCAA Woman of the Year selection committee. The selection committee chooses the top 10 honorees in each of the three NCAA divisions. From among those 30 candidates, the selection committee then determines the top three finalists in each division. Finally, the members of the NCAA Committee on

See Jacob | 5C
Women's Athletics will select the 2015 NCAA Woman of the Year from the top nine finalists. The 2015 NCAA Woman of the Year will be announced at an awards dinner in Indianapolis on Sunday, Oct. 18.

One of the most decorated students in Alabama's storied history, Jacob was an 11-time All-American and 2014 NCAA all-around champion who led the Crimson Tide to four top-four NCAA finishes including back-to-back national championships in 2011 and 2012 as well as a SEC team titles in 2011 and 2014.

Jacob carried a 4.0 grade point average while pursuing a degree in exercise science, which led her to being the first student-athlete in league history to earn SEC Gymnastics Scholar-Athlete of the Year honors three-times in a row. An NCAA Postgraduate Scholarship winner, Jacob also earned a place on the SEC Community Service Team as a junior and senior.

"I am so proud to be a part of the University of Alabama's tradition of excellence and to be recognized in this amazing way by the Southeastern Conference," Jacob said. "I am truly awestruck by the championship legacy that I have had the privilege to be a part of both at Alabama and as part of SEC. I have to thank my family, my teachers, my coaches and especially my teammates for everything that I've accomplished. Their support, love and constant encouragement provided the platform for all the success that I enjoyed."

After earning the 2014 NCAA all-around championship to close out her competitive career, Jacob went on to earn the Honda Award for gymnastics, given annually to the nation's top gymnast. She then won the Honda Cup, which goes to the collegiate woman athlete of the year.

A two-time member of the Capital One Academic All-America At-Large Team, Jacob was the third Crimson Tide student-athlete in a row to be voted the Academic All-America of the Year, making Alabama the only school in the history of the honor to win it three consecutive years and one of just two schools to earn the honor three times.
Alabama track earns academic honors

NEW ORLEANS | The University of Alabama track and field team was once again highly prevalent in the U.S. Track & Field and Cross Country Coaches Association's annual academic accolades. The Crimson Tide women were honored by the USTFCCCA as a 2015 All-Academic Team while 17 members of the men's and women's team earned the association's All-Academic accolade.

Quanesha Burks led the way for the Crimson Tide, winning the 2015 NCAA outdoor long jump championship while carrying a cumulative GPA of 3.6. Also on the list were All-Americans Nia Barnes, Filippa Fotopoulou, Alex Gholston, Katelyn Greenleaf, Danielle McConnell and Sarah Thomas as well as Lacey Dent, Meropi Panagiotou, Anna Rawles, Haley Teel and Merilyn Uudmae.

On the men's side, 2014 NCAA discus champion Hayden Reed led the way, once again earning both All-America and All-Academic honors in 2015. He was joined on the All-Academic list by All-American Jacopo Lahbi as well as Matt Airola, Joe Williams and Jacob Zalesky.

Ex-Tide player Traina winning pitcher for U.S.

TORONTO | Former University of Alabama softball player Jaclyn Traina struck out four batters in two innings as the winning pitcher in Thursday's 11-0 mercy-rule victory over the Dominican Republic in the Pan Am Games.

Traina struck out the side in the first inning and added another strikeout in the second, allowing no baserunners in two perfect innings for the win. She threw 15 strikes and needed only 19 pitches to record six outs.

The game was halted in the fourth, with Sara Nevins also throwing two perfect innings of relief.

UA outfielder Haylie McCleney went 1-for-2 in the game.

The U.S. finished pool play with a 5-0 record, outscoring its opponents 43-4 in Pan Am Games play.

Medal play begins today, with the U.S. facing either Canada or Puerto Rico in semifinal action.
Tide to play Oregon in Birmingham

By Cecil Hurt
Sports Editor

The University of Alabama men's basketball schedule for the inaugural season of head coach Avery Johnson continues to take shape.

UA announced on Friday that the Crimson Tide would face the Oregon Ducks in Birmingham (BJCC Legacy Arena) on Monday, Dec. 21, at a time to be determined.

"We are looking forward to playing a quality team such as Oregon, but we are even more thrilled for the opportunity to play in front of our fans in Birmingham at Legacy Arena," Johnson said in a UA release. "This is something that will be exciting for the University of Alabama fan base, our players and our staff. It's been five years since an Alabama men's basketball team has played in Birmingham, so this is something we hope to continue to do on a yearly basis."

Earlier, Dayton, an NCAA Tournament team last season, released its nonconference schedule, including a Nov. 17 game at Dayton. The Flyers and Alabama could meet for a second time the following week as both teams are participating in the ESPN Orlando Classic.

The Oregon game will mark the Crimson Tide's first appearance in Birmingham since facing Oklahoma State in 2011. It will be the first game of a home-and-home series between the two teams, with Alabama playing in Eugene, Ore., during the 2016-17 campaign.

The Tide and Ducks have split the only two games the teams have played in series history, with each contest taking place at a neutral location. Last season, Oregon finished with a 26-10 record and was a No. 8 seed in the NCAA tournament. The Ducks eventually fell to national runner-up Wisconsin in the Round of 32.

Tickets for the game will be included as part of the 2015-16 season ticket package.
New book on Saban a good, solid effort

I received a review copy of the new Nick Saban biography "Saban" in the mail last week. I had spoke with the author, Monte Burke, as he was writing the book.

He seemed to have a good grasp of what he wanted to say, and was clearly dedicated to talk to everyone he could, a necessity since the biography is of the unauthorized variety. That means Saban didn't cooperate, and the quotes that appear from the Alabama head coach had been published elsewhere in the past.

Full disclosure: I am quoted in the book once, but not directly regarding Saban. The quote is about Alabama football in the 1960s.

In any biography of this sort, running to 324 pages, the author has to make a compromise as he writes about a life. He has to give enough insight to make the book more than just a rehash of other people's work, but he also has to make the book accessible to a general audience.

Burke has succeeded well enough at that. For me, the first two-thirds of the book, about Saban's pre-Alabama days, was of more interest because it wasn't such familiar ground.

The last 100 pages or so cover the Alabama days and will, naturally, be most interesting to a Tuscaloosa audience that loves nothing more than reading about the Crimson Tide.
A chapter is devoted to the "saga" of Nick Saban's flirtation with Texas. Burke (or his publicist) seem to feel that is the most compelling part. At least it is the part that has been excerpted to many media outlets, including the New York Times. As you'd expect, the story does not include any comments from Saban or his agent, Jimmy Sexton, and thus is heavy on input from various Texans. Burke's premise, based on those interviews, is that Alabama officials were "afraid" that Saban might leave, resulting in a hefty raise for Saban.

That's possible, but it's also a fact, at that point, Saban had won three national titles in four years and was going to get a market-setting extension either way. And it reiterates an aspect of the story that I've commented on before but will mention again: Texas boosters are going to tell their story in such a way as to make Texas look as good as possible. But for all their talk of $100 million offers (a detail that Paul Finebaum, among others, had already written about) and Austin lake houses, the boosters who were doing the "offering" did not have enough juice to actually get rid of Texas coach Mack Brown.

At one point, they say, they "asked" Brown to retire. Brown declined. So, if you can't fire the coach, can you really hire the next one? If the next one — i.e., Saban — holds all the cards, is that really a situation he wants to involve himself in? The Texas administrators — presidents or athletic directors — don't come across as particularly in control.

History seems to have borne that out in the case of current AD Steve Patterson, who seems, well, not exactly like someone who would be a Saban favorite. At any rate, Burke goes on from there and wraps things up in "all's well that ends well" fashion.

That said, I'd recommend the book as a good, solid effort. Read for yourself and draw your own conclusions — although the subject, Nick Saban, is one about whom most people have formed their opinion long ago.
Alabama should play UAB in football, but now is not time

Alabama should play UAB in football. I’ve believed it, written it, shouted it for years.

Now I’m not so sure it’s a good idea, at least not in the short term.

Think of the UAB fan base, which has so much justifiable anger and bitterness toward some of the most powerful trustees of the University of Alabama System, the ones who enabled UAB President Ray Watts to kill his football program last December.

No doubt a lot of Blazer fans wouldn’t be able to enjoy the opportunity to make history, the way the UAB men’s basketball team did when it beat Alabama in their one-and-only meeting in the 1993 NIT. They might look at the game as more of a crusade even though they’re winning the larger battle by getting their program back.

Now think of the UAB football team. As much confidence as Bill Clark has that his first team back in 2017 will be able to compete for the Conference USA championship and a bowl game, reality says it will take the Blazers years to get back to full strength.

Fact is, Alabama has lost just two regular-season non-conference games under Nick Saban - to Florida State in Jacksonville and to Louisiana-Monroe in Tuscaloosa, both during his first season with the Crimson Tide in 2007. It would take maybe the biggest upset in college football history for UAB to be next anytime soon.

Playing Alabama would help UAB financially, but there are guarantee games to be found elsewhere. As Clark told me, a lot of Football Bowl Subdivision schools “are licking their chops” to play the Blazers in their first season back on the field in 2017, expecting them to be an easy mark.

Playing Alabama and losing badly to the Crimson Tide wouldn’t do anything to help Clark’s rebuilding efforts. From a psychological standpoint, it would be a blow to some UAB fans looking for revenge in the wrong place.

I still believe that one day Alabama should dismount from its high horse and play UAB in football for all the reasons I mentioned last September when Alabama played two straight games against other Conference USA opponents and paid Florida Atlantic $1 million and Southern Miss $1.4 million for the privilege.

In that case, one school in the University of Alabama System was not only refusing to help another but also was hurting its younger brother by throwing money at its conference rivals.

Saban has always said he’s not against an Alabama-UAB matchup, though he hasn’t exactly done anything to demonstrate he’s for it, and that disconnect has extended to Alabama’s refusal to schedule any in-state schools as non-conference football opponents since Samford was known as Howard in 1944.

That institutional arrogance pre-dates Saban by decades so it’s no surprise that he tapped-danced around the subject before a speech this week in Montgomery.

There will come a time when Alabama should play UAB. Now is simply not that time.
Crimson Tide Fan Day to be Aug. 9

2-hour open practice starts at 2:30 p.m.; football coaches, players will sign autographs afterward

By Tommy Deas
Executive Sports Editor

The University of Alabama will hold its annual football Fan Day on Sunday, Aug. 9, the school announced Wednesday.
The Crimson Tide will hold a two-hour open practice at Bryant-Denny Stadium starting at 2:30 p.m. Players and coaches, including head coach Nick Saban, will be available for autographs at approximately 4:45 p.m. The autograph session will last for 45 minutes. Fans will be limited to one item per person for autographs, and no posed photographs will be permitted.

At the conclusion of practice, Fan Day participants will enter the field through gate 45 and exit via the northeast and northwest field gates.

Those who do not want to view the

See next page
practice can start lining up early at 1:30 p.m. through the same gate. Attendees who want to view the practice can start entering the stadium at 1:30 p.m. through gates 12 and 16. Seating will be available in the lower bowl in sections A through N. Concession stands on the west side of the stadium on the field and mezzanine levels will be open, and vendors will walk through the stadium during the practice. UA athletic merchandise will also be sold and 3,000 autographed posters will be given away.

For security purposes, all items are subject to inspection as fans enter the stadium.

Children will be able to sign up for Big Al's Kids Club, and all fans can register for the Crimson Tide Rewards program outside the east side of the stadium at gate 45 beginning at 1:30 p.m. Parking will be available in the Westten Hoor area, with two parking decks and surface lots open. Parking for persons with disabilities will be available in the Communication card lot and Wallace Wade lots. No special accommodations will be made for recreational vehicles, which should park at the Northington lot near University Mall.

In case of inclement weather, the Fan Day activities will be moved to Coleman Coliseum.

Updates and other information is available at www.rolltide.com.
Another year, another QB competition

By Aaron Suttles
Sports Writer

In the first part of an eight-part series counting down to the beginning of fall camp for the University of Alabama football program, The Tuscaloosa News takes a closer look at Crimson Tide quarterbacks.

For the second consecutive season, Alabama enters camp with a competition for the starting position.

The starter

Quite simply, there is no starter. There are five candidates, but Jake Coker has the most experience. In fact, the senior from Mobile is the only of the five quarterbacks to have attempted a pass in an actual game. Coker played in seven of 14 games in 2014, passing for 403 yards and four touchdowns while completing 38 of 59 attempts. Coker got plenty of repetitions during spring practice, but so did the others, including redshirt freshman David Cornwell, who enters fall camp with as good a chance as any other to win the starting job. Cornwell redshirted after enrolling during the spring in 2014.

The backups

Besides Coker and Cornwell, there are three other candidates with a chance to make their marks. Junior Alec Morris, sophomore Cooper Bateman and true freshman Blake Barnett all went through spring practice. Morris, 6-foot-3, 233 pounds, has played in a game before but did not attempt a pass. He was the back-up punter a season ago. Bateman, 6-3, 220 pounds, was the team’s holder on field goals last year. Barnett, 6-5, 200 pounds, is the highest rated quarterback to sign with Alabama during the Nick Saban era.

Overview

Pardon the pundits if they don’t seem to make much of Alabama not having named a starting quarterback named just yet. That’s the luxury of having Lane Kiffin as the Crimson Tide’s offensive coordinator. Kiffin gets the benefit of the doubt because of the work he did with Blake Sims in his first and only year as a starter. The results yielded program records on offense. To that end, the coaching staff isn’t particularly worried in July that there is not a starter for a game to be played in September. There will be concern, however, if a month from now, one, or even two, quarterback(s) hasn’t established himself. For now, though, UA feels comfortable with where the position is headed.

COMING FRIDAY

RUNNING BACKS:
A look at what kind of depth the Crimson Tide will have for 2015

Sophomore Cooper Bateman and true freshman Blake Barnett all went through spring practice. Morris, 6-foot-3, 233 pounds, has played in a game before but did not attempt a pass. He was the back-up punter a season ago. Bateman, 6-3, 220 pounds, was the team’s holder on field goals last year. Barnett, 6-5, 200 pounds, is the highest rated quarterback to sign with Alabama during the Nick Saban era.
Preseason magazines have Alabama among the favorites to earn spot in College Football Playoff

By Aaron Suttles
Sports Writer

Each season when the bevy of preseason college football magazines hit the racks in the middle of a summer, they foretell the coming of fall and the upcoming season. Fall camp is approximately two weeks away from opening, and the University of Alabama program, fresh off an appearance in the first College Football Playoff, remains a national and conference favorite.

Much has changed since then — the exit of one of the country’s most efficient quarterbacks, the nation’s top wide receiver and the best all-around running back chief among the differences — but the expectations, both internally and externally, haven’t.

The Crimson Tide is still a popular pick to win the SEC West, according to the magazines, and most think UA has a chance to claim one of the four playoff spots.

In a composite ranking of four preseason magazines (Phil Steele’s College Football Preview, Athlon, Lindy’s and Sporting News), Alabama ranks No. 3 overall behind defending national champion Ohio State (a consensus No. 1) and TCU.

Phil Steele thinks UA rides the strength of its defense to win the SEC West.

“The offense will be solid despite just three returning starters, and the defense might be the best in the country,” Steele wrote. “Plus, they have my No. 2 special teams in the SEC. Look for the defense to get back to being dominant.”

Steele ranks Alabama’s defensive line and linebackers as tops in the conference and the defensive backs unit as the league’s third-best group.

On offense, he ranks the running backs third, offensive line fourth and wide receivers seventh. Even without naming a starting quarterback, he ranks the signal callers eighth.

“The Crimson Tide has won two national titles with a first-year starting quarterback (2009 and 2011),” Steele wrote. “Last year, they earned the No. 1 seed in the playoffs behind a first-year starter and led Ohio State 21-6 in the second quarter.

“They have just six returning starters this year but had just 12 and 11 in their last two title years (2011 and 2012). Alabama is 31-4 versus the SEC, including championship games, the last four years and rates at the favorite again.

The only drawback to Alabama this year, Steele said, is the schedule. Even so, he thinks UA is the team to beat in the SEC.

Lindy’s and Athlon also predicts Alabama to win the West. The Sporting News, though, has the Crimson Tide behind in-state foe Auburn.

“Can you lose a 1,700-yard receiver, a 1,000-yard rusher and the SEC’s most effective passer and hope to be as productive offensively?” the magazine asked. “There’s no question the Tide will be terrific in the trenches, but Bama is no automatic choice to win the SEC and earn a CFP spot this time.”

The Sporting News also named Alabama the league’s most “overrated” team.

See Preseason 7C

**COMPOSITE TOP 25**

The composite rankings of four preseason college football magazines (Phil Steele, Lindy’s, Athlon and Sporting News) has Alabama slotted No. 3 nationally. A first-place vote earned a team 25 points, a second-place vote 24 points, a third-place vote 23 points, etc.

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**PRESEASON TOP 5**

**Sporting News**
1. Ohio State
2. TCU
3. Auburn
4. Oregon
5. Alabama

**Athlon**
1. Ohio State
2. Alabama
3. Auburn
4. Oregon
5. TCU

**Lindy's**
1. Ohio State
2. TCU
3. Alabama
4. Oregon
5. Baylor

**Phil Steele**
1. Ohio State
2. TCU
3. USC
4. Alabama
5. Baylor

See next page
PRESEASON

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1C

"SEC dominance isn’t a foregone conclusion anymore. Neither is Alabama’s. The Tide must find a new quarterback, retool the skill positions and repair their defensive reputation."

Tennessee is the most underrated program in the SEC according to the magazine.

Reach Aaron Sutiles at aaron@tidesports.com or at 205-722-0229.