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New trustee has already been a friend to Blazer football

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If any fan base in the free world has a right to be skeptical about the slightest whisper from its board of trustees, it's the UAB fan base. For the Blazers and their supporters, even silence from that governing body can be worrisome.

So you can imagine their concern at the latest news from the UA System BOT: Trustee Johnny Johns is stepping down before the end of his first term, and Stan Starnes is stepping in to take his place.

SEE SCARBINSKY, B3
SCARBINSKY
FROM BI

Exchanging the CEO of one insurance-related Birmingham firm for another may not seem like a big deal to most people, but it has at least some UAB fans wondering what it could mean for their reborn football program.

After all, Starnes did successfully represent then-President Robert Witt and the University of Alabama when they were part of a series of lawsuits by Mike Price after Witt did the right thing and fired Price as the school’s football coach in 2003.

Hard-earned and well-justified paranoia aside, it’s unfair to Starnes to suggest that doing his job well in that instance has any relevance to his feelings about UAB athletics in general or UAB football in particular.

On the contrary, Starnes has been one of many Birmingham business leaders who stepped up in the inspiring group effort to not just bring back UAB football, but to give it a better chance to compete and succeed than ever before.

Starnes was a member of the UAB Athletics Campaign Committee, chaired by Hatton Smith, which spearheaded the fundraising efforts. Starnes’ company, ProAssurance, donated a healthy, six-figure sum toward the UAB Football Operations Center, the first capital project in program history.

That building and the adjacent Legacy Pavilion are rising above Interstate-65 as we speak as a monument to what’s possible in Birmingham when people work together for the greater good.

For all those reasons, it seems likely that Starnes would continue to be a friend to UAB in his new role on the UA System Board of Trustees.

State Rep. Jack Williams has demonstrated his willingness to call out the crimson-colored BOT and its attitude toward UAB football when necessary so it was instructive to hear his take on the change. Williams said he hasn’t yet spoken to Starnes about his new position but he’s not concerned about anyone attempting a return to the dark days before #TheReturn.

“I hope we’re replacing one friend with another,” Williams said.

Interesting that Williams would use the word “friend” to describe Johns and his attitude and actions toward UAB football. There was a time not that long ago when UAB fans weren’t exactly happy with him.

Shortly after UAB President Ray Watts announced the infamous decision to kill football, rifle and bowling in December of 2014, Johns offered public support for that decision.

“I think Dr. Watts went through a very good process,” Johns told the Birmingham Business Journal at the time. “He’s been extremely rational, it was gut-wrenching for him, but at the end of the day, he came to the view that this was a hard decision he needed to make.”

Say what? That unpopular sentiment put Johns, the CEO of Protective Life in Birmingham, on the #FreeUAB enemies’ list.

Ever since, according to Williams, Johns “proved to be a champion for us” in the successful fight to bring back the UAB football program and set it on the right course. Johns maintained an open-door policy toward Williams at a time when Williams was one of the most vocal critics of the process and the decision to kill UAB football.

Williams said Johns told him almost three years ago that he planned to serve just one term on the BOT. While Williams said he didn’t know the reason for Johns stepping down now before his term expires, he’s heard good things about Starnes and hopes to meet with him soon.

“Everything I’ve heard has been positive,” Williams said. “I think he understands the importance of athletics to our community.”

A lot of people in this state had that understanding reinforced thanks to the campus and community blowback against the events of Dec. 2, 2014.

“We have to realize something,” Williams said. “The rock is rolling downhill. You’re not going to have someone jump in and just say, ‘Stop. We quit. We’re not going to do this anymore.’ ”

UAB football is back, and Starnes has played a role in it. He can be an even greater source of support for the program and the larger university in his new role on the BOT.

UAB fans should and will see to it that he’s reminded of that responsibility.
Alabama officials: 2016 high school graduation rate is 85 percent

By: Trisha Powell Crain

Alabama board of education members had mixed reactions after learning the graduation rate for the class of 2016 at Thursday's work session in Montgomery. That rate is 85 percent, four percentage points lower than the reported 89 percent rate for 2015, which federal education officials said was artificially inflated.

That four percent decline reflects 2,492 fewer students graduating than in 2015.

Today's report was unexpected, and state department officials appeared to be caught off guard when, during a discussion clarifying what it takes to earn a diploma, board member Dr. Cynthia McCarty, R-Jacksonville, point-blank asked for the official class of 2016 graduation rate.

State department officials squirmed a bit, and board member Mary Scott Hunter, R-Huntsville, asked again, "So, what's the rate?"

State department officials have been slow to release this year's rate, delaying it months later than in previous years. The detailed data showing graduation rates by system, has not yet been released, and a state department of education spokesperson said they are working on it.

Alabama superintendent Michael Sentance said, "A decline of four percent is pretty significant, and we're still working through issues, making sure that credit recovery and data entry among other things are being done properly, so I wouldn't say this is a closed issue."

Sentance said the federal Office of Inspector General's official report on the investigation is expected to be released within the next 45 days. He couldn't comment on what is in the report, he said.

McCarty said she was "pleasantly surprised," at the graduation rate, adding she hadn't been sure what the drop might be, and hadn't known what to expect.

"We can believe in this number," McCarty said, adding, "In the past sometimes, with the big unveiling [of the increase in graduation rate], it was almost too much."

McCarty said she believes school districts have taken this investigation seriously and are doing the best they can to ensure students graduate and the numbers are accurate.

Hunter took more of Sentance's tone, saying, "It's a significant drop," adding she is at least relieved they actually know the rate now, as she, like McCarty, hadn't known what to expect.
Chief Academic Officer Dr. Barbara Cooper clarified the three pathways for students to earn a diploma: the Alternate Achievement Standards pathway, the Essentials pathway, and the General Education pathway.

The Alternate Achievement Standards pathway is for students with significant disabilities who have an Individualized Education Program (IEP). Students on this pathway should not be counted in official graduation rates.

The Essentials pathway is designed for students who are preparing for work or for a two-year college after high school, Dr. Linda Felton-Smith, director of learning support said, adding the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) will not accept coursework on this pathway for athletic eligibility. It is what was formerly referred to as the Alabama Occupational Diploma.

Students on the essentials pathway take courses not fully aligned with Alabama academic standards. Prior to 2013, students taking those courses did not count in the official federal graduation rate. Former superintendent Dr. Tommy Bice issued instructions in January 2013 that students taking courses on the essentials pathway would count as graduates. Felton-Smith said 45 students didn't count as graduates in the official graduation rate because they took essentials pathway courses.

State officials said each percent of the graduation rate equals 623 students, so removing those 45 students accounts for less than one-tenth of one percent of the rate's drop.

Beginning with the 2017-2018 school year, only students with disabilities who have Individualized Education Programs are allowed to take essentials coursework, Felton-Smith said.

Students without IEPs must take courses on the General Education pathway.

The General Education pathway is designed to prepare students to be successful in college or in a career, Felton-Smith said.

Board vice president Dr. Yvette Richardson, D-Birmingham, said she was pleased that counting graduates who took courses on the "essentials" pathway didn't appear to have as large an impact as she originally thought they might.

Federal regulations specify that only coursework fully aligned with a state's academic standards count toward graduation under their formula.

Reflecting on the federal investigation, Hunter said, "It was extremely disappointing" to be in the national spotlight suspected of inflated graduation rates. Hunter worried that the
department hadn't provided proper oversight and given school districts enough support, sharing data and helping them interpret that data.

Hunter said that as the board, under Bice's leadership, was making changes to regulations and coursework students were required to take to earn a diploma, "I recognize there were questions that were unanswered. I should have drilled down to that a lot sooner. I wish that I had been a bit more aggressive. And I won't make that mistake again."

McCarty said she is looking forward to seeing this chapter closed, but she is anxious, and "I'm not going to feel like there is closure until I see that [OIG] report."
Ivey focus: Righting the ship

New governor doesn't rule out running for a full-term

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New Alabama Gov. Kay Ivey said during her first official press conference Thursday that she is considering running for a full term in 2018, but she's more concerned about getting the state back on track after a tumultuous year that saw three top leaders removed from office.

"There's certainly a possibility about (running for a full term) but right now my priority has to be on stabilizing the ship of state, getting it steady, and improving the image of Alabama," Ivey said. "I have a few more months to make that decision and we'll be back in touch later on that. Right now my focus has to be on the immediate priorities."

Ivey became governor on Monday, a little more than halfway through her second term as lieutenant governor, when former Gov. Robert Bentley pleaded guilty to two misdemeanors and resigned. In the previous nine months, House Speaker Mike Hubbard was convicted of ethics charges and removed from office and Supreme Court Chief Justice Roy Moore was suspended for violating a federal judge's order.

Ivey, who ascended from lieutenant governor when Bentley stepped down, will complete the current term, which ends in January 2019. She is only the second woman to serve as Alabama governor, after Lurleen Wallace, who served from 1967 to 1968 before dying of cancer in office.

"Lurleen Wallace was a personal mentor to me. She was my inspiration for a lot of things, so I'm honored to follow her," Ivey said. "Her son and his family sent
Ivey
FROM A1

some beautiful flowers that were her favorite shades of roses, pastel roses. It's very special to be a part of Gov. Lurleen Wallace's legacy. And I'm proud to be the first Republican woman ever to hold office.

Ivey was asked if it was inevitable that Alabama will eventually have a lottery or other expanded forms of gambling.

"Gambling is a big word. It's one thing to talk about the lottery, it's another thing to talk about casino gambling and all of that," she said. "Lotteries are very popular in Alabama. A lot of people are for the lottery. And if it were just a pure, simple lottery, that would probably have some merit. But there's no such thing as a pure, simple lottery."

Ivey said if the state Constitution was amended to repeal the prohibition on lotteries, it would open the door to other forms of gambling.

"Gambling is not necessarily a stabilizing form of financial resources."

Her first act as governor was to ask for the resignations of all Bentley's cabinet members. Jon Mason, the husband of Bentley's former adviser and alleged mistress Rebekah Caldwell Mason, was fired immediately. Stan Stabler, the Alabama Secretary of Law Enforcement who stood by Bentley right now, but the whole program right now is under possible change and modification (in Washington), so we'll take it and evaluate it as it comes."

On whether the consolidation of law enforcement agencies approved in 2013 should be repealed and the Alabama Law Enforcement Agency abolished (legislation is pending that would do that), Ivey said she'll evaluate it.

"Anytime there is a transition or a change of administration, surely there are going to be changes. But we're going to be very deliberate and consider and evaluate each one of the cabinet offices," Ivey said.

Ivey said there would be a cabinet meeting today where she would share her priorities and expectations and listen to theirs.

"I can't tell you right now when and what positions are going to be changed but you just know that there will be some changes."

She also addressed the rising cost of Medicaid and the plan, initiated under Bentley, to convert much of Medicaid to managed care through regional care organizations, or RCOs.

"I think the RCO plan has some merit. And I know Sen. Greg Reed (R-Jasper, sponsor of the Medicaid reform legislation) is very high on the information they got when they went to Washington recently," Ivey said. "So I'll be very supportive of finding some workable solutions to enable us to be effective and provide the right kind of care."

"No need to deny anybody anything, but at the same time there's got to be a better way to do it. We need to keep people healthy," Ivey said. "And you know, everybody can do something to improve their health. Everybody can walk around the block. Everybody can eat vegetables instead of sweets. So it's a personal thing that the people of Alabama need to address as much as they can, as well."

On whether the consolidation of law enforcement agencies approved in 2013 should be repealed and the Alabama Law Enforcement Agency abolished (legislation is pending that would do that), Ivey said she will take a hard look at ALEA.

"This concept of consolidation makes sense. And I'm not sure we had the right management team in there. And so, now I have the opportunity to address that and hopefully will make good choices for ALEA, because I don't think we need to abolish it."
BENTLEY SCANDAL

Unsolved mysteries

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There are two ways the Robert Bentley saga goes from here: We stop, pretend Kay Ivey holds her office because we, the voters, put her there. Isn't that for the best?

But that means the culpable, the complicit and the guilty go unpunished. Loose plot lines dangle. Mysteries go unsolved.

So we could resolve this thing. Follow all those threads to their ends. Solve the Bentley saga's unsolved mysteries.

Something Strange happened: When Bentley appointed Alabama Attorney General Luther Strange to replace Jeff Sessions in the U.S. Senate, the deal stunk. We now know Strange's office was running an active grand jury investigation into the governor. We know that Strange, knowing this investigation was running, solicited the appointment from Bentley. Now lawmakers say they confronted the governor about it and that Bentley told them he had to promote Strange to get him out of the state. It's clear Strange sold out Alabama for a Senate seat, but Alabama needs to know what were the terms of the deal.

What's the deal with Jon Mason? When Bentley's affair with Rebekah Mason became public, Jon Mason published a statement calling it a family problem that had been mended long ago. Mason stood by as his wife went on trips alone with Bentley — knowing they had engaged in some kind of funny business. What's more, Mason was set up by Bentley with a patronage job for which he had thin qualifications. We need to know, was Mason being paid for his silence, or worse, for license to run around with his wife?
For whom the Tide rolls: So many cords in the Bentley affair run back to Tuscaloosa, Alabama needs to know what was the deal at Bama. We know the university paid the Masons’ company, ostensibly for billboards. Those payments were made through, of all things, Paypal, and were part of a no-bid contract. Meanwhile, the university participated in potentially lucrative consulting work with the Gulf State Park hotel reconstruction — a conspicuous project, the ins and outs of which have not been sufficiently explored or explained. Whatever the deal was there, it was enough for the university to withdraw once the deal became a public spectacle, and the university’s lawyer, Cooper Shattuck, resigned in the aftermath. Shattuck also set up the governor’s dark money nonprofit, ACEGOV, and when the time came for Bentley to resign, Shattuck helped broker a deal. Another unanswered question here is whether, by pushing Bentley to make a deal, he was really acting to protect himself.

Who contributed to ACEGOV? The governor’s nonprofit served as a political slush fund used to pay Mason, but what’s still unknown is who paid money into it. ACEGOV has fought to keep its donor list secret, but we won’t know who was currying the governor’s favor until those records are public.

Was it Franklin Haney? We know Chattanooga billionaire and real estate developer Franklin Haney gave at least $300,000 through political action committees to the governor’s campaign and met with Bentley to seek support for privatizing an unfinished TVA nuclear power plant in northeast Alabama. The deal went to Haney. What we don’t know, but suspect, is that Haney was a contributor to ACEGOV. Could Alabama soon have a nuclear power plant of questionable safety because the governor needed money to pay his girlfriend?

Bentley emails and texts: In his farewell address, Bentley said he received emails and text messages from supporters every day. That’s funny, because for the past two years, the governor’s office has insisted that Bentley didn’t use those things — a lie and a blatant violation of the state’s open records law.
Flight and visitor logs: Impeachment investigators discovered that at least some flight logs had been edited, but the Bentley administration would not provide the unedited logs. If the logs had been altered to cover up the affair, that’s serious and possibly a violation of state law. Further, the administration refused to provide visitor logs to the governor’s mansion and the Blount mansion, a second Montgomery estate used by the governor’s office. Those records are public records and Alabama deserves to know what’s being concealed there.

AELA cover-up: It’s clear that the Alabama Law Enforcement Agency helped cover up the Bentley affair. The full extent of AELA’s role in the cover-up must be exposed before the state can trust its law enforcement again.

And then there’s the safe deposit box: Bentley reportedly opened a safe deposit box with Rebekah Mason at a Montgomery bank. Perhaps more than any other object, the Luv Guv’s mystery box typifies all that remains hidden or unknown, still waiting to be opened. But this story won’t be over until we find out what’s inside.

Whitmire writes a regular opinion column on state politics for AL.com.
Strange not concerned with link to Bentley

Accusations from critics "politics at its worst," says senator

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Describing it as "politics at its worst," U.S. Sen. Luther Strange intertwined state scandals as he explained unnamed critics attacking him for his connection to former Gov. Robert Bentley.

Strange spoke briefly to reporters in Huntsville on Thursday morning before addressing Boy Scouts at the U.S. Space & Rocket Center.

Strange also took the opportunity to tout his record as Alabama attorney general, pointing specifically to the prosecution of former Speaker of the House Mike Hubbard.

SEE STRANGE, A4
Hubbard was removed from office last year after a jury in Lee County convicted him of 11 felony ethics violations.

"The things that are being reported are coming from a disgruntled group of people who are mad at our office for doing our job," Strange said. "We took on the tough challenges in Montgomery. We took on a sitting Speaker of the House. The people I've heard mention anything are people who stood at pep rallies with him, who have been saying things about our team for years, not just recently."

While Strange recused himself from the prosecution of Hubbard, his office investigated the case and presented it in court with Matt Hart as lead prosecutor.

Strange did not specifically name anyone from that "disgruntled group of people" to which he referred. State Rep. Ed Henry, R-Hartselle, spoke publicly for the first time this week about a meeting he had with Bentley shortly before Bentley appointed Strange to the Senate.

Henry said in that private meeting, Bentley told him he was sending Strange to the Senate because the AGs office was corrupt and he needed to "get rid" of Strange.

Henry described his conversation with Bentley as "surreal" and acknowledged that it would be disputed by Bentley's attorneys.

Henry said he left that meeting with Bentley and returned to his office in the State House, where state Reps. Mike Ball, Ken Johnson and Connie Rowe were visiting with Henry's wife.

"I said you guys are not going to believe the conversation I just had," Henry said.

As for "people who stood at pep rallies" with Hubbard, Strange may have been referring to a press conference held by Hubbard days after he was indicted. Henry was among more than two dozen Republican legislators standing alongside Hubbard at that press conference.

"I think it's politics at its worst," Strange said. "Everything I did and worked with (came) on the advice of the best public corruption team in the United States of America in Matt Hart and (former deputy AG) Alice Martin. Their record speaks for itself."

In a statement to AL.com on Wednesday, a Strange spokesperson referred to a "political vendetta" by people who "misconstrued" the AGs office's investigation into Bentley.

Strange said he had no concerns about being linked to the scandalous exit Bentley made from office.

Bentley appointed Strange to the Senate to replace Jeff Sessions, who became U.S. attorney general in the Trump administration.

That appointment came three months after Strange requested that the House impeachment committee suspend its work while Strange's office worked on related cases. The House impeachment committee agreed to put its work on hold at Strange's request, which came less than a week before Trump's victory to win the presidency.

"I was already running for the office," Strange said of his Senate campaign. "I wasn't seeking the appointment (from Bentley beyond applying for the position along with at least 20 others across the state) and I didn't know I would get the appointment until a few hours before (Bentley) called me.

"Beyond that, my record of going after public corruption, working with Matt Hart and Alice Martin, the truth speaks for itself. It's a six-year record and I'm happy to talk about that during the campaign."

Strange also took no position on the issue of when the special election for Sessions' seat should be held. Bentley scheduled it to coincide with the general election in November 2018, but Gov. Kay Ivey is considering making the election sooner.

"My position has been the one I've had from the first day," Strange said. "I'm a candidate for the office whether the election is tomorrow or next week or next year. It's indifferent to me. I've got to go earn the votes of the people around the state. Whatever it is, it is. That's not my job to decide that issue. That's her position. I'm just doing what I can control."
State in dire need of real leadership

With Robert Bentley now removed from the governor’s office, it is time to get back to business.

Unfortunately, the ongoing saga involving the now former governor was a severe distraction for the people of Alabama and most certainly for those charged with running the day-to-day in Montgomery. The power vacuum created this year by the resignation or forced removal from office of the Alabama chief justice, the speaker of the state House of Representatives and the governor, combined with the U.S. Senate seat vacated by Jeff Sessions and now occupied by former state Attorney General Luther Strange, has the state’s political players posturing for a move up. Watch closely Alabama, because if there ever were an opportunity for grandstanding it is now. But there’s also a great opportunity, and a dire need, for real leadership to emerge.

The first order of business is to schedule an election for the U.S. Senate seat that Strange took control of through a dubiously planned appointment by Bentley, who opted to allow the former state attorney general to sit there until the next general election in 2018. State Auditor Jim Zeigler has filed a lawsuit calling for a special election. Secretary of State John Merrill has said he believes a special election is called for under Alabama law. Kay Ivey, the new governor, should end all of this instead of letting the courts decide; she should let the people of the state decide quickly if they want Strange in that seat or someone else.

After that, we have several key bills in the hopper for the remainder of this legislative session. The prison situation continues to worsen. Bentley had a plan to build four new prisons at a cost of $800 million. There remain a great many questions about how this plan would come to fruition. But something has to give and fast. Alabama prisons were designed to hold 13,000 inmates. They currently hold about 23,000. Meanwhile, correctional staff have been cut tremendously over the past few years. As a result, there are violent incidents almost daily. Staff members have been attacked numerous times just in recent months. Just Wednesday, a correctional officer was stabbed by an inmate at the William E. Donaldson Correctional Facility in Bessemer. If we don’t do something fast, the federal government will step in and the costs will begin to skyrocket.

There’s also a looming budget crisis. Our state’s public school system is failing. There’s a $1.2 billion bond issue working its way through the Legislature for improving the state’s infrastructure that would include a tax increase on gasoline. And that’s just for starters.

It all amounts to this: There’s plenty of work to be done and there’s no time to spare. There’s little doubt that there will be a great deal of jockeying for position by politicians and those who surround them will. Voters should keep an eye, though, on who truly leads with action and not just words.
Ivey no stranger to state politics

By Kim Chandler and Anthony Izaguirre
The Associated Press

MONTGOMERY — Within a span of minutes, Alabama's lieutenant governor catapulted from a position of largely ceremonial duties to the state's top political job. But new Republican Gov. Kay Ivey has decades of experience working in, and around, state politics.

She held two terms as state treasurer and ran for governor in 2010, entering a crowded GOP primary field that included ex-Gov. Robert Bentley, who resigned Monday rather face impeachment hearings. Ivey dropped out of the race that Bentley eventually won, and she was victorious in her bid for lieutenant governor that year.

“I ask for your help and patience as we together steady the ship of state and improve Alabama's image,” she said.

Ivey grew up in Wilcox County, the same rural area where U.S. Attorney General Jeff Sessions was raised, and the two attended high school together.

She graduated from Auburn University in 1967 and has worked as a classroom teacher, banker, administrator in higher education and assistant director of the state's industrial recruitment agency.

She worked for then-Gov. Fob James in early 1980s, serving as first as executive assistant for social services and then as assistant director of the Alabama Development Office.

“She would persevere to always get the job done at a high level. She always wanted to know the details,” James said. “She's got a lot of political know-how by now.”

As state treasurer, Ivey oversaw the Alabama Prepaid Affordable College Tuition Plan, which was heavily invested in stocks. Turmoil on Wall Street caused its assets to plunge as tuition costs rose to the point of the plan becoming insolvent.

Critics blamed her for the demise, but Ivey's defenders said she had no control over Wall Street and tuition costs.

As the Senate's president and presiding officer as lieutenant governor, Ivey acted as a moderator who didn't offer opinions on legislation but instead directed the procedural flow in her signature honey-dripping drawl, cutting off senators whose speeches have gone on too long or namedropping distinguished guests in the gallery.

Ivey spent her first day in office talking to staff and dismissed Jon Mason, the husband of the woman alleged to have had a romantic affair with Bentley. An investigation that began with reports about an alleged romance between Bentley and the woman resulted in Bentley's resignation on Monday.

Eileen Jones, a spokeswoman for Ivey, said the new governor has asked all Cabinet and staffers to turn in letters of resignation so that she can evaluate everyone to decide who will stay and who will go.

“She knows there are going to be many people asking her for stuff right now. She is smart enough to hear both sides before making a decision,” said Retirement Systems of Alabama head David Bronner, who worked with Ivey in the James administration.

Ivey is Alabama's second female governor, and the first to climb up the political ladder on her own.

Alabama's first female governor was Lurleen Wallace, wife of four-term Gov. George C. Wallace.

She ran as a surrogate for her still-powerful husband in 1966 when he couldn't seek re-election because of term limits. She won, but died in office in 1968. Her husband regained the governor's seat in 1970.
Bentley era leaves winners and losers in its wake

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So much changed in Alabama politics in the last week. The king is dead, long live the queen, and all that.

Some — such as former Gov. Doctor Dr. Robert Bentley — lost everything. Others have forever put their imprint on Alabama history. These are the winners and losers of the era known as “The Robert Bentley scandal.”

**Winner:** Linda Adams. One of the new Real Ladies of Alabama, her sworn testimony — which revealed her nickname for Rebekah Mason as “Flim-Flam” — was critical to the case against Bentley. She spoke in a manner Alabamians could understand. When asked if Mason’s husband, Jon, knew of the affair, she said: “Ray Charles could see what was going on. There was no way that that man didn’t know what was going on.”

**Loser:** Alabama Law Enforcement Secretary Stan Stabler. The report by the lawyer investigating Bentley on behalf of the House Judiciary Committee left little doubt that Stabler had intimate knowledge of the affair, and that he had seen illicit text messages between Bentley and Mason. Yet he stood by Bentley at a press conference and denied it all to keep his job. Alabama knows its top cop is a liar.

**Winner:** Angie Horn Stalnaker. The woman who managed Bentley’s first campaign — who made him the accidental governor when nobody thought he had a chance — was tossed out like yesterday’s tuna casserole. When Stalnaker learned of the affair she was the only one to confront both Bentley and Mason.

**Loser:** Former Bentley Spokeswoman Jennifer Ardis. She argued that Bentley didn’t use email, and sought to discredit former ALEA Secretary Spencer Collier when Collier initially revealed the affair. She went to Vegas with the governor and Mason, attended a Celine Dion concert and rationalized the whole thing. Yet she skated away to serve as spokeswoman for another state agency. For now.

**Winner:** Heather Hannah. She was fresh out of college when she started working for the Bentley campaign, young and naïve and fully believing all of what the governor stood for. As chief of staff for Dianne Bentley, she saw him change. She sniffed out the affair and helped Mrs. Bentley make the recordings that turned far-fetched rumors of a Bentley affair into a scandal that would bring him to his knees. Her strength and sworn testimony carried more weight than Bentley could have imagined.

**Loser:** The University of Alabama Political-Industrial Complex. UA’s Clay Ryan slept in the Governor’s Mansion poolhouse — which if nothing else makes him the Kato Kaelin of Alabama’s slow Bentley Bronco chase. Cooper Shattuck, formerly of UA, set up shadowy non-profit ACEGOV that funneled unidentifiable money to Mason. The “Tuscaloosa mafia” that helped bring Bentley to power have taken a hit.

**Winner:** Wanda Kelly. Her desk became a meme after Bentley was captured on a recording saying he wanted to move it so Kelly wouldn’t hear what went on inside his office. The lady’s a saint.

**Losers:** Rebekah and Jon Mason. They are literal losers, because they financially and politically tied their star to Bentley, and both are now out of work. If pesky investigators still have the energy and inclination, the Masons will be their first order of business.

**Winner:** Spencer Collier. The man has made some mistakes, and was loyal to Bentley for too long. But he stood up to Bentley and Mason, stood up for the law and revealed the worst about his boss. Alabama owes him an apology.

**Loser:** U.S. Sen. Luther Strange. As Alabama attorney general he implored the House of Representatives to leave the investigation of Bentley to his office. Then he asked Bentley to appoint him senator. The stink will stick to him.

**Winner:** Ray Lewis. Bentley’s former security chief took heat for the overtime pay he generated while guarding Bentley. Turns out it takes a lot of hours to be a superhero. His superpowers are documenting wrongdoing and knowing right from wrong.

**Loser:** Robert Bentley. He lost everything. His family and many friends, his honor, his clean criminal record, his job and his legacy. He is a sad Southern tragedy.

**Winner:** Gov. Kay Ivey. She has much to prove. But she came into office looking far more gubernatorial than Bentley. Among her first acts were to fire Jon Mason and to sign a bill ending judicial override in death penalty cases. Perhaps the real winner is Alabama.

Archibald writes a regular opinion column for AL.com.
Governor Ivey: ‘More than capable’

Supporters see Ivey as anything but a placeholder, while critics recall tuition program troubles

By: Zach Tyler

Lt. Gov. Kay Ivey became the 54th governor of Alabama on Monday evening, after Robert Bentley pleaded guilty to campaign finance crimes and resigned.

Bentley announced his resignation in a speech given not long after he’d been arrested Monday afternoon at Montgomery County Jail on misdemeanor charges, his arrest part of a deal that ended impeachment hearings. In the speech, the former governor said he’d spoken with Ivey, 72, about a “positive and peaceful” transfer of power.

The second woman ever to hold the post behind Lurleen Wallace, Ivey took office shortly after 6 p.m. Monday. Acting Alabama Supreme Court Chief Justice Lynn Stuart — who also took over after a male predecessor, Roy Moore, was forced out — administered the oath of office.

“I pledge to do my very best,” Ivey, an Auburn University graduate who coordinated Wallace’s campaign efforts there and has since logged a long career in government, said after the oath.

“The Ivey administration will be open, it will be transparent, and it will be honest.”

Efforts were unsuccessful Monday afternoon to reach Ivey through her staff. Her first priorities as governor, she said during a short televised speech, are to “steady the ship” and to improve Alabama’s image.

Ivey took no questions from reporters Monday but swore no interruptions in state operations or services, saying she’d soon meet with members of Bentley’s administration to ensure a smooth transition.

She characterized that transition as a “positive opportunity” for Alabama. It’s also the final step on an unconventional path to the governor’s office for the one-time schoolteacher and bank treasurer.

After a failed bid as a Democrat for state auditor in 1982, Ivey in 2002 became the first Republican since Reconstruction to be elected state treasurer.

After two terms, Ivey qualified to run for governor in 2010. She later agreed to switch races, eventually unseating then-lieutenant governor and Democrat Jim Folsom Jr.

As allegations swirled around Bentley last year, Ivey was characterized as a politician ready with a plan should she be asked to step up.

Ivey said Monday she’d been prepared to become governor since her first day as second in line, but “never desired” that.

Her roots lie in Camden, the tiny Wilcox County city of 2,000 where she grew up, and where friends who now find they have the new governor’s personal cell phone number believe she’s up to the task of tackling state troubles.

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“It’s still kind of hard to absorb,” said Bill Albritton, vice chairman of the Wilcox County Commission. Ivey in 2013 wrote him a recommendation for the job. “Of course we are really proud,” he said.

“She’s going to have a full plate,” said former U.S. Rep. Jo Bonner, also a native of Camden. He led Ivey through her first oath of office in 2003.

Both men praised Ivey as being experienced and honest, patriotic and religious. Both acknowledged that she’ll face big problems — overcrowded prisons, budget negotiations and Medicaid expansion among them.

“She will prove more than capable,” Bonner said.

Ivey enters office with detractors already, though, carrying over from her time as state treasurer. She was meant to oversee the Pre-paid Affordable College Tuition program, or PACT, and garnered much of the blame when it lost nearly half its value after the Great Recession.

“I’m a little concerned,” said Suzanne Clemons, a high school math teacher in Alabaster. Clemons paid into the PACT program for her son and her daughter, and says that now she’s “not getting what we paid for.”

“I hope she doesn’t do to the state what was done to that program,” Clemons said.
Dual enrollment is a program that allows students to earn college credits while still in high school. In other words, it is an opportunity for high school students to gain a leg up on their peers. The way it works is simple. Alabama community colleges partner with local high schools, and students use their elective periods to take college courses. The completed college coursework is applied to both the student's high school graduation requirements and the student's college transcript.

The results are tremendous. By the time a dual enrollment student graduates high school, it is possible that he or she will have earned enough credit hours to also receive a two-year degree. The credit hours through dual enrollment can be applied not only toward a two-year degree, but also can be transferable to a four-year university. Industry-recognized certifications are also available, which qualify students to enter the workforce immediately. Any of these outcomes should be considered a success depending on that particular student's needs and goals.

But there is a catch. The dual enrollment program is not free. Each student who enrolls in the program is responsible for paying program tuition to the community college. However, most students are afforded this otherwise unattainable opportunity through state-sponsored scholarships for the career-technical dual enrollment program. I was pleased in previous years when the Legislature appropriated $10.3 million to support Alabama's dual enrollment students, but it turns out that there was a greater demand than expected.

With only $10.3 million in available funds, over $12 million worth of dual enrollment scholarship applications were received from students across Alabama. While it is unfortunate that some motivated students were not able to take full advantage of the program, this is, in fact, good news. To me, this is clear evidence that the dual enrollment program is gaining in popularity and is working successfully.

Let me give you a real example. Just recently, I learned of a public high school student who is scheduled to graduate in a couple of months. Before he receives his high school diploma, he will have earned enough college credit hours through the dual enrollment program to receive an associate's degree. Not only that, but he has a $42,000 per year job offer from a local manufacturing company and a scholarship offer from a four-year institution.

This is a real success story. The dual enrollment student is the clear winner, but so will be the manufacturer or the four-year school that brings him on board. Dual enrollment has given this student both educational and career-oriented options. It prepares young Alabamians to financially support themselves and their families without the burden of student loans, and it benefits industry in Alabama, which is desperately seeking to provide high-paying careers for the right candidates. Keep in mind, also, that the state's modest investment in each dual enrollment student is quickly returned, as they are likely to contribute economically in a short period of time.

The Alabama Community College System is requesting a $5 million increase for dual enrollment to further serve and invest in Alabama's high school students. Before the Legislature's spring break, the program had received only level funding from the Senate education committee, but with a long legislative road still ahead of the education budget, I remain hopeful that the program will receive its additional $5 million funding request.

When I served in the Legislature, I considered funding proposals according to the state's projected return on investment. Now, looking at the dual enrollment program, there is no doubt in my mind that increased funding would generate a significant return on investment. For a program that so greatly benefits students, employers and the state, $5 million is a small price to pay.
The University of Alabama

UA to add 116 new faculty members this year

Instructors will be in place by next fall

By Ed Enoch
Staff Writer

The University of Alabama hopes to add about 116 tenure-track faculty by the start of classes next fall. The figure includes replacement hires as well as new faculty being added as part of UA's five-year strategic plan, UA President Stuart Bell said. Bell gave the update Thursday as part of remarks during the annual spring campus assembly meeting for faculty and staff.

"We are now well into adding more than 300 new faculty positions on our campus," Bell said. About one-third of the 116 new hires have already signed contracts, with the remaining two-thirds in the process of reaching agreements, Bell said.

"We are targeting both newly minted faculty and faculty with established records of excellence in areas that will bolster our achievement," he said.

Bell announced plans to hire roughly 300 to 400 tenure or tenure-track faculty as part of the five-year strategic plan unveiled last year. The university had about 850 tenure or tenure-track faculty last fall.

"Over the next four years, we will complete our investment that will touch all aspects of our plan," he said.

Previously, Bell said adding new tenure-track faculty would be part of the strategy to help increase graduate student enrollment.

The hires will support the primary goals of the strategic plan to provide a premier education for students, increasing research and scholarship, enhance diversity and inclusivity on campus, and provide resources and opportunities to help recruit and retain outstanding faculty and staff.

"Supporting all these pillars are the investments we are making in our faculty and there are many other strategies," Bell said.

The increase in faculty comes with a rise in UA's student enrollment. UA had a record high enrollment of 37,665 students in the fall of 2016.

Reach Ed Enoch at ed.enoch@tuscaloosanews.com or 205-722-0209.
Students publish book about UA's mascot

By Drew Taylor
Staff Writer

A year ago, Kevin Corcoran became captivated by a newspaper article about a group of young students who wrote their own books about the University of Alabama's mascot.

Corcoran, a professor in the UA School of Social Work, read a profile in The Tuscaloosa News about how second- and third-grade students from the Capitol School who each wrote their own stories about Big Al, UA's elephant mascot. Last January, the group of 26 students visited the Paul W. Bryant Museum to read their stories, surrounded by memorabilia of Crimson Tide football. Every book each student wrote was titled "Big Al, Big Al, What Do You See?" chronicles all the different things the mascot would see during a Crimson Tide football game.

SEE BOOK, B4

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Al, What Do You See?,” which chronicled all of the different things the mascot would see during a Crimson Tide football game. Each book was written in the style of Eric Carle’s “Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?” with one page asking what the main character sees and another page describing what they saw.

“I just thought it was as cute as a bug’s ear,” Corcoran said.

From there, Corcoran contacted Capitol School teacher Missy Richey about publishing a children’s book that would combine the students’ best pictures.

On Tuesday, Richey and the students celebrated the launch of “Big Al, Big Al, What Do You See?” at the Paul W. Bryant Museum. During the afternoon, students signed books for their parents and received a tour of the museum.

Proceeds from book sales will be split evenly between the Capitol School and the School of Social Work. The book is now available at the Capitol School, the museum, The Supe store as well as online at Amazon and Mascot Books, the publisher.

“What I like about it is how there are so many books about Big Al, but they aren’t stories like this,” said Jan Scurlock, a researcher at the museum.

Like “Brown Bear,” the students’ book incorporates art made from tissue paper collages.

“It was really fun, but had some challenging parts,” said Nola Besant, a student who worked on the book. “It was hard to get some of the strips of paper to fit just right.”

To get the students familiar with what the pictures should look like, Richey took the students to A-Day, UA’s spring football game, last year to get a sense for what Alabama football was like.

The game was student Ian Sheri’s first time in Bryant-Denny Stadium, or at a football game at all.

“It was the first game I had seen that wasn’t on a TV screen,” Ian said.

Richey said the idea for the book came from her time in England, where she learned about how some elementary schoolchildren learn subjects by writing short books about them.

“When you’re studying a subject, you do a book on it,” Richey said. “We always want to try and do new and exciting things.”

Richey said she is proud of how her students’ accomplishments could be captured in a book that could be enjoyed by others.

“They are going to be 80 years old and still have this book to look back on,” she said.

Student Nygel Seay said he had fun making the book.

“It was a great opportunity for me and my friends to draw and make a book together,” Nygel said. “I am glad there is a story about Big Al.”

Reach Drew Taylor at drew.taylor@tuscaloosanews.com or 205-722-0204.
UAB sets football homecoming game

By: Staff

UAB has announced its Homecoming game will be played on Oct. 7 vs. Louisiana Tech at Legion Field.

"Homecoming is a special event and for it to be our Conference USA home opener will make this game a memorable one for our players, coaches and fans," head coach Bill Clark said. "Louisiana Tech is a quality opponent and it will be a very competitive and entertaining Homecoming game."

Louisiana Tech is UAB's third home game of the 2017 season and its Conference USA home opener. The Bulldogs are the reigning C-USA West Division champs and finished 9-5 last season which included a 48-45 victory over Navy in the Armed Forces Bowl.

UAB and Louisiana Tech will meet annually as C-USA West Division foes. The two teams have played five times in program history with four of those games coming in the 1990's. The first time the two met as Conference USA members was on Nov. 8, 2014 - a 40-24 victory for Louisiana Tech.

The last UAB Homecoming game was a memorable one as the Blazers defeated North Texas 56-21 on Oct. 11, 2014 at Legion Field.

Season tickets are on sale for 2017 starting as low as $99 or call (205) 975-UAB1 to purchase your season tickets and witness history as UAB makes its triumphant return to the field in 2017.
Sohn: Will weather research twist in the wind?

By: Pam Sohn

If you like weather, science and watching "Twister" reruns every tornado season, then you must have loved Times Free Press reporter Ben Benton's story Monday about scientists studying why Sand Mountain is a tornado magnet.

That's right, a tornado magnet. Researchers told Benton that of 49 tornadoes touching down in the Sand Mountain area in the last 10 years, 32 of them formed on top of the mountain. And of those 32, 16 formed within three miles of the mountain's northwestern edge.

On Wednesday the week before, researchers' mobile radar had captured the formation of several thunderstorms, including one that intensified and produced a small tornado as the storm system moved northeast over the junction of the Tennessee-Georgia-Alabama state lines on the west side of Nickajack Lake.

That tornado was estimated to be an EF0 or EF1 with a path about 100 yards wide and more than two miles long, and it appeared to have been a storm influenced extensively by the presence of Sand Mountain and perhaps Lookout Mountain, too, according to researchers who now will be spending several weeks on the mountain to watch and catalog data from this spring season's weather.

"With Sand Mountain, we have strong evidence that something physical is going on up there," said Tony Lyza, a researcher and doctoral student from the Atmospheric Science Department of the University of Alabama at Huntsville.

Lyza is among as many as 40 researchers who are part of an ongoing study of what role topography plays in the formation of storms and tornadoes.

Thanks to more than $10 million in federal funding released in 2015 and 2016 to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, VORTEX-Southeast was able to launch the largest-ever study of tornadoes in our region. UAH's Severe Weather Institute, Radar and Lightning Laboratories is the host for the study in Huntsville.

Given the geography of our tri-state region — the Cumberland Plateau and Appalachians in Tennessee, the Blue Ridge Mountains in Georgia and Sand Mountain's extension of the Cumberland Plateau into North Alabama — this research has special interest for us. Scientists hypothesize that as winds approach a ridge like Sand Mountain, those winds accelerate as they squeeze up the slope then slow down suddenly when they drop off the other side of the mountain. You may recall that we've seen similar effects as tornadoes formed on Lookout Mountain and dropped on Lookout Valley, and formed on Signal Mountain then dropped onto Red Bank.

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Kevin Knupp, lead scientist on the research team, said Sand Mountain offers an ideal study spot. He first noticed the effect of topography in 1989 when an EF4 tornado formed near Redstone Arsenal in Huntsville.

But the kind of funding that makes this study possible is endangered under President Donald Trump's science-deprived budget plan.

That plan, released in mid-March, would slash more than half of the funding for NOAA's ocean and atmospheric research, eliminating scores of research projects, including the agency's long-running, $73-million Sea Grant program, which supports 33 U.S. colleges and universities that conduct research, education and training about ocean and coastal topics. At the same time, the administration's budget for NASA is shifting that agency's focus "deep-space exploration rather than Earth-centric research." In short, anything having to do with climate study is being axed.

Mick Mulvaney, the White House budget director, has been blunt when asked by national reporters about the cuts to climate research in Trump's plan: "We're not spending money on that any more," he said. "We consider that to be a waste of your money to go out and do that."

To call this short-sighted is obvious. Even 7th-graders understand that ocean temperatures, currents and tides contribute to how the wind blows and how storms form. But, alas, Trump says he doesn't like to read, and apparently his science and budget advisers don't either.

Scientists do, and increasingly they are sounding alarms that climate change already is spawning more extreme weather. Even here. And these shifts — however slight now — should be researched.

On April 27, 2011, a monster EF5 tornado killed 35 Sand Mountain residents as it plowed through DeKalb County. It was one of 62 tornadoes that struck Alabama that day (363 tornadoes across the South during a four-day outbreak). When it was over, 81 people in the Chattanooga region lost their lives to the deadly storms. Across the South the death toll was 348 and another 2,775 were injured, according to weather.com. Damages totaled $10.8 billion.

This kind of research, which can only be done in real time and in real storms, doesn't come cheap, yet understanding what role topography plays can guide scientists to better forecasts — more advanced warning, reduced false alarms and "site-specific" warnings.

Knupp says warning lead time for tornadoes is currently about 15 minutes. Forecasters would like to be able to stretch that to an hour.

In our mountains, those extra minutes could make all the difference.

Trump and his advisers don't have to believe in climate change (though we wish they would). But they should believe in saving lives.
The Long-Term Impact of Financial Deregulation

* A repeal of the Dodd-Frank Act could have devastating consequences.

**By: Wayne Duggan**

President Donald Trump is setting his sights on eliminating the Dodd-Frank Act, a set of financial regulations aimed at preventing another credit crisis like the one that occurred in 2008. While bank investors have cheered a possible end to the burdensome regulations, deregulation of the financial sector may be setting the table for another economic crisis years down the road.

Trump has called Dodd-Frank "horrendous" and said that he intends to perform "a major streamlining and perhaps elimination" of the law. Bank stocks traded higher following Election Day after Trump repeatedly pledged to eliminate corporate regulations throughout the campaign season.

But what's good for banks may not necessarily be what's good for the country in the long haul.

**Understanding Dodd-Frank.** One of the major provisions in the 2,300-page Dodd-Frank Act sets strict guidelines for the amount of capital banks must hold at all times as a protective cushion in the event of unexpected loan losses. In addition, banks must limit a certain percentage of their investments to assets that can be easily liquidated, if needed.

Dodd-Frank requires any U.S. bank with at least $50 billion in assets to pass an annual Federal Reserve stress test to make sure the banks are fully prepared for a potential economic downturn. Dodd-Frank also requires each of these large banks to get the blessing of the Federal Reserve prior to increasing dividend payments and/or share buyback plans.

Finally, Dodd-Frank created a new regulatory agency called the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau to aide in financial regulatory enforcement and help identify abusive practices.

Dodd-Frank hits a handful of banks particularly hard. Companies such as JPMorgan Chase & Co. (ticker: JPM), Citigroup (C) and Bank of America Corp. (BAC) are deemed "global systemically important banks." These banks have even higher capital requirements and must submit annual living wills detailing how assets could be liquidated in an orderly fashion during a potential bankruptcy.

**A history lesson.** Banking booms and busts have been cyclical occurrences in the U.S. over the past century. The Glass-Steagall Act of 1933 was implemented after nearly 5,000 U.S. banks failed during the early years of the Great Depression. The Glass-Steagall Act created the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, increased regulatory scrutiny of banks and prohibited commercial banks from participating in certain types of risky investment banking.

The Glass-Steagall investment banking restriction was lifted in 1999. Just like during the period prior to the Great Depression, U.S. banks spent much of the early 2000s exploding in size. Banks
milked every cent of earnings they could out of the U.S. housing market during the peak of the bubble.

John Burnett, an associate professor of finance at the University of Alabama in Huntsville, says a repeal of Dodd-Frank could simply proliferate the cycle of banking booms and busts.

"This may seem oversimplified, but to me, the long-term danger of a complete repeal is that we end up in a similar crisis again," Burnett says. Financial regulations are always a delicate balancing act between protecting consumers and allowing markets to operate smoothly.

"No legislated regulation is perfect. So if the new leadership can make some improvements, that's great," Burnett says.

Bankrate senior economic analyst Mark Hamrick says Dodd-Frank has limited U.S. bank lending in recent years, but that doesn't necessarily mean the law should be completely scrapped.

"Just as a flu shot doesn't provide full immunity from all strains and colds, Dodd-Frank doesn't create some kind of sci-fi style forcefield guarding against financial crises," Hamrick says. "Nevertheless, it doesn't make sense to forgo the proverbial inoculation because it fails to achieve perfection."

A path to compromise. As critical as Trump has been of Dodd-Frank, he has also expressed a somewhat surprising interest in bringing back the Glass-Steagall Act's rules banning commercial banks from risky investment banking activities. While pure investment banks such as Goldman Sachs Group (GS) and Morgan Stanley (MS) may not be impacted significantly by a return of Glass-Steagall, Bank of America, Citigroup, JPMorgan and others could be forced to split their commercial lending operations and investment banking business into multiple entities.

Trump's chief economic advisor and former Goldman Sachs president Gary Cohn recently said that a return of Glass-Steagall would pave the way for more aggressive bank lending to small and medium-sized U.S. companies.

In Washington's increasingly partisan climate, the return of Glass-Steagall could offer a rare opportunity for bipartisan compromise. U.S. Sen. Elizabeth Warren, D-Mass., who spearheaded the creation of the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, has been pushing for a reinstatement of Glass-Steagall for several years.

"The intent of the rule is a good one, and the repeal [of Glass-Steagall] has not harmed clients in a substantial way, as many of the activities that led to the 2008 crisis could still have happened regardless," says JJ Kinahan, managing director of client advocacy and market structure at TD Ameritrade. "Hopefully before decisions are made, the issue of liquidity in our markets is a primary concern. Liquidity ultimately breeds confidence and opportunity."

Trump has pledged to ease the burden of regulation on American banks, a move that has created major tailwinds for bank stock investors. However, until investors are certain about what
anything) will replace the Dodd-Frank Act, the risk that deregulation is laying the groundwork for the next U.S. financial crisis remains a threat to long-term investors.
Universities woo prospective students at NRG Center

By: Lindsay Ellis

The college admissions game is getting techy – and some new advances were on display Thursday at the National Association for College Admission Counseling’s fair at NRG Center.

High school students didn’t need to hunch over information tables, scrawling their names and email addresses to stay in touch with the hundreds of university admissions representatives situated around the room.

Instead, they held out a white piece of paper with a personalized barcode. College administrators stood behind each table and scanned student codes with a small handheld device to automatically file their information. Later, they could reach out via email to get in touch.

Representatives from at least 200 universities came to Houston from 46 states, the District of Columbia and around the globe for Thursday’s fair. They distributed pamphlets and answered questions, hoping to bolster the university’s potential applicant list to improve future enrollment numbers.

A few universities from out of state tried to bring prospective applicants to campus virtually on Thursday.

Students tapped through an iPad’s virtual college tour of the University of Alabama at Huntsville, which brought “visitors” down campus paths and into buildings like the student center.

Utah State University played a seven-minute admissions video featuring students at football games, sliding down hills and, of course, in the classroom on a propped-up screen.

Technology aside, the schools that seemed to garner the most interest were local. Throngs of students gathered around the University of Houston, which distributed black-and-red glossy booklets, the University of Texas at Austin, Texas A&M University, Houston Community College and Texas Southern University.
UAH Supplies Critical Systems for NASA 's EUSO Super Pressure Balloon

By: UAH

Critical systems for NASA’s Extreme Universe Space Observatory (EUSO) Super Pressure Balloon have been supplied and calibrated by The University of Alabama in Huntsville.

The balloon is a prototype engineering test bed for the future satellite launch of the EUSO instrumentation. Once launched, the balloon is expected to circle the Earth for up to 100 days, a record for an ultra-long duration flight.

A new telescope aboard the balloon is designed to detect ultra high-energy cosmic rays interacting with the Earth’s atmosphere. UAH researchers were at the launch site at Wakana, New Zealand, from February until early April. One UAH graduate student, Malek Mastafa, remains there awaiting an opportunity to guide an airplane under the balloon.

“This is a follow-on flight to the one in Timmins, Canada, in 2014,” says Dr. James Adams, a principal research scientist at UAH’s Center for Space Plasma and Aeronomic Research (CSPAR).

Cosmic rays interact with nuclei in the atmosphere, creating an intense shower of particles that cause the atmosphere to fluoresce. The EUSO instrument’s main component is a high-speed video camera that records a video clip at 400,000 images per second of the fluorescent spot of light streaking down through the atmosphere at the speed of light.

“UAH provided the solar power system, the onboard calibration system and a tracker system that allows an airplane to be guided under the balloon in order to calibrate the instrument in flight,” says Adams. “UAH student Malek Mastafa will serve as navigator to direct the pilot to fly under the balloon. UAH also provides a calibration system that flies on the airplane.”

The UAH team is Dr. Adams; his student, Malek Mastafa, in the Department of Physics; Evgeny Kuznetsov a CSPAR engineer; and Doug Huie, an engineer with the Rotorcraft Systems Engineering and Simulation Center.

The telescope was designed with participation from 16 countries. The U.S. team is led by University of Chicago and includes Colorado School of Mines, Marshall Space Flight Center, University of Alabama at Huntsville and Lehman College at the City University of New York.
What we know now about Aerojet Rocketdyne’s 800 new jobs in Huntsville

By: Lucy Berry

Eight hundred jobs are coming to Huntsville to help build Aerojet Rocketdyne’s next-generation rocket engine.

Leaders announced Monday that Aerojet will launch a state-of-the-art production plant at North Huntsville Industrial Park on Pulaski Pike. The facility will cover a range of services, including additive manufacturing, composites production and research and development.

Huntsville Mayor Tommy Battle said Aerojet will have plenty of skilled local employees to fill jobs at the plant, which will need production, engineering and design, and high-tech manufacturing workers.

"We’ve been able to work on our workforce, bring people here, and also get some of those who are here to apply for these jobs and get better jobs," he told AL.com. "The long-range look of it is we can still afford a little bit more growth."

Battle said the production jobs will range in salary from $40,000 to $45,000, high-tech manufacturing $60,000 to $70,000, and engineering and design $80,000 to $100,000 per year. The full-time positions will also offer company benefits.

The aerospace and defense leader provides medical/dental/vision insurance, short- and long-term disability and life insurance, paid vacation and sick time, a 401(k) savings plan, career development and more. The company currently has dozens of Huntsville openings on its website.

Aerojet Rocketdyne is consolidating facilities and eliminating or moving jobs in California and Virginia to open the AR1 engine production facility in Huntsville. The operation should be ready for production by mid-2019.

Chamber of Commerce of Huntsville/Madison County President and CEO Chip Cherry said he believes most of the new positions will be filled by local workers, though some employees may transfer from facilities outside Alabama.

Cherry said the universities have performed an important role for companies like Aerojet that are looking to expand their workforce in Huntsville. The University of Alabama in Huntsville's aeronautical and astronautical engineering research program, for example, ranks sixth in the nation, according to the National Science Foundation.

"Huntsville and Madison County have all of the elements that allow aerospace companies such as Aerojet Rocketdyne to thrive," said UAH President Robert Altenkirch. "The talented students that we produce along with our research capabilities are valued by our corporate partners."
City of Huntsville Director of Urban Development Shane Davis said incentive details are still being finalized. The city will present that information to the Huntsville City Council once a final package is complete.

AIDT, the state's workforce development agency, is providing in-kind and direct reimbursement assistance valued at just under $8 million for Aerojet's expansion. Stefania Yuhas, a spokeswoman for the Alabama Department of Commerce, said AIDT has committed its full-service program to recruit, screen and train the new Aerojet hires.

"The program includes the AIDT Preemployment Selection System, instructor development and on-the-job training assistance," she said. "In addition, AIDT committed the Robotics Technology Park and other in-kind training assistance."

Job seekers should monitor AIDT.edu for updates on employment.

Attempts to reach Aerojet Rocketdyne on Tuesday to learn more about the jobs were unsuccessful.
Aerojet Rocketdyne bringing 800 rocket jobs to Alabama

By: Lee Roop

Aerojet Rocketdyne is bringing 800 new jobs to Huntsville and building a state-of-the-art factory where those workers will produce its next-generation rocket engine, the company announced today.

The move comes as Aerojet Rocketdyne consolidates operations at its Sacramento and Vernon, Calif., and Gainesville, Va., sites.

"At the company's Sacramento site, defense-related program management, engineering and related support positions will be moved to the company's Huntsville, Ala., facilities, home of Aerojet Rocketdyne's Defense headquarters and Rocket Show Defense Advanced Programs, by the end of 2018," the company said.

"We believe these actions are essential for the performance of our business and the growth of the company," company president Eileen Drake said. "The results from this initiative will benefit our valued employees, customers and shareholders alike."

Local leaders said the company will build a state-of-the-art production plant at North Huntsville Industrial Park on Pulaski Pike featuring additive manufacturing, composites production and research and development. It expects to be ready for production of the new liquid-fueled AR1 engine in mid-2019.

That's the year Congress has ordered rocket companies to stop using Russia's RD-180 engine. Aerojet Rocketdyne says it is on schedule to deliver a certified AR1 in 2019.

Aerojet had announced in January that it would produce the new rocket engine in Huntsville and bring 100 jobs to the city to start ramping up the new operation. Today's announcement confirms at least another 700 jobs.

In its January announcement, Aerojet cited "the top-tier talent at the University of Alabama in Huntsville's Propulsion Research Center, the exceptional level of rocket engine expertise at NASA's Marshall Space Flight Center and at our teammate, Dynetics, and in the local community" as reasons for its move.

UAH has a federally financed aeronautical and astronautical engineering research program ranked 6th in the nation, according to the National Science Foundation.

"Aerojet Rocketdyne's announcement today is excellent news for our state," U.S. Sen. Richard Shelby (R-Tuscaloosa) said in a statement. "North Alabama remains the nation's epicenter for aerospace and defense research, development, and production. I am pleased to see Aerojet Rocketdyne investing and growing in Alabama, and I look forward to working with them and other businesses to continue boosting economic development opportunities."

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Mayor Tommy Battle said the announcement "is another great example of our effort to diversify Huntsville's economy with high-quality advance manufacturing, and yet, Aerojet Rocketdyne is here because of Huntsville's outstanding role in research and defense technology. This project works all facets of our economy by marrying R&D with advanced manufacturing."

"Everyone knows Madison County, Ala., is home to Rocket City USA where rockets and propulsion truly began," County Commission Chairman Dale Strong said. "The announcement by Aeroject Rocketdyne ... reaffirms we are and will continue to be Rocket City USA."
UAH students sound off about Governor Bentley's impeachment hearings

By: Sarah Macaluso

HUNTSVILLE, Ala. – In Montgomery, impeachment hearings are in full swing Monday with Governor Robert Bentley at the center. At UAH, students are sounding off about the Governor's possible impeachment or potential resignation.

"I think he needs to go," said sophomore Kimberly Ferguson. "I think he needs to be prosecuted."

"It's unethical and you know, he has to be held accountable," said junior Mark Sisk.

A government class at UAH started with an open discussion about the impeachment proceedings of Governor Bentley in Montgomery this week.

Whether it's via social media, television or word of mouth, these students say they've heard the recent news about Bentley. Ethics violations regarding Bentley's relationship with his former top political aide and allegations regarding finances are at the center of the potential impeachment.

"I think Alabamians tend to kind of have, dare I say, kind of a hypocrisy with politics and religion and fidelity," said Sisk. "I don't think it's very pragmatic or practical. But in this case, it is the subversion of funds that should be the hallmark issue for impeachment."

In recent days, leaders with Alabama's Republican Party have also called on the Governor to resign immediately.

"The Republicans are right to speak up out against him and set an example," said Ferguson.

"The Republicans are right to speak up out against him and set an example," said Ferguson.
Scientists study why Sand Mountain is tornado magnet

By: Ben Benton

Even though humans on Alabama's Sand Mountain go back at least 9,000 years, it probably never occurred to anyone to question why Mother Nature seems to deal out more tornadoes there than almost anywhere else in the area.

In the coming weeks, when storms are looming on the western horizon, mountain residents might see teams of scientists scurrying around the mountain. They're there to figure out what causes tornadoes to spawn there more than "almost any other place in North Alabama," said scientists from the University of Alabama at Huntsville's Atmospheric Science Department.

In fact, scientists were on Sand Mountain last Wednesday when two lines of storms delivered a one-two punch to the South with thunderstorms, heavy rain, hail and more than 40 tornadoes, officials in Huntsville said Friday.

Kevin Knupp, lead scientist on the research team, said mobile radar on Wednesday captured the formation of several thunderstorms, including one that intensified and produced a small tornado as the storm system moved northeast over the junction of the Tennessee-Georgia-Alabama state lines on the west side of Nickajack Lake.

That tornado was estimated to be an EF0 or EF1 with a path about 100 yards wide and more than two miles long, Knupp said.

"It intensified right over one of our radars on Sand Mountain," Knupp said. "That appeared to be a storm that was influenced extensively by the presence of Sand Mountain and perhaps Lookout Mountain, too."

Speaking in 2013 about the ongoing study, Knupp said he first noticed the effect of topography in 1989 when an EF4 tornado formed near Redstone Arsenal in Huntsville, and the same effect appeared later in other nearby storms. Northerly winds approaching a ridge like Sand Mountain accelerate as they squeeze up the slope then slow down suddenly when they drop off the other side of the mountain.

Thanks to more than $10 million in federal funding released in 2015 and 2016 to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, VORTEX-Southeast was able to launch the largest-ever study of tornadoes in the Southeast. UAH's Severe Weather Institute, Radar and Lightning Laboratories is the host for the study in Huntsville.

On Friday, Knupp said five radars were deployed on Sand Mountain — one that belongs to Knupp's group and four others belonging to other groups from 11 other research institutions working on the project. The main radar site is centered at Northeast Alabama Community College in Powell, Ala., with radar extending about 20 miles in each direction to the southwest and northeast.

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Aside from radar, other instruments on the ground and onboard weather balloons measure vertical variations — that means changes from the ground up — in wind, temperature, humidity, cloud base, depth of clouds and depth of precipitation and other factors, Knupp said. The instruments and methodology complement each other to provide as clear a picture as possible of what's happening inside the storms and at the surface of the ground.

Researchers said that of 49 tornadoes that touched down in the Sand Mountain area in the last 10 years, 32 of them formed on top of the mountain.

"With Sand Mountain, we have strong evidence that something physical is going on up there," UAH doctoral student Tony Lyza said in a statement. Knupp said students are an important part of the effort and help with the field work.

Lyza said 16 of the 32 tornadoes that formed on top of the mountain did so within three miles of the northwestern edge.

"That's not a huge sample," Lyza admits, "but it's enough to make you question the possible physical processes that might impact those storm systems as they move atop that plateau."

Sand Mountain is the largest plateau on the Southern Cumberland Plateau and lies almost entirely in Alabama. Its northern tip extends just over the state line into Georgia. To the south, the mountain widens to about 15 miles or so and is home to more than two dozen small towns, mostly with populations well under 1,000 people.

On April 27, 2011, a monster EF5 tornado killed 35 Sand Mountain residents as it plowed through DeKalb County. It was one of 62 tornadoes that struck Alabama that day. When it was over, 81 people in the Chattanooga region lost their lives to the deadly storms. Across the South the death toll was 316.

Another tornado outbreak on April 28, 2014 — the fourth-largest in Alabama's history — produced a storm that damaged or destroyed more than 50 homes on Sand Mountain but didn't take any lives.

Data from both those outbreaks are already part of the ongoing study, and researchers are also studying recently collected data from the November storms that struck the Sand Mountain towns of Rosalie in Jackson County and Ider in DeKalb, claiming three lives in Alabama and two more in Tennessee.

A traveler passing through most areas on Sand Mountain still can see the jagged, broken trees and forlorn foundations successive years of storms have left behind.

This spring, as many as 40 researchers or more will be working ahead of and during storms that hit Sand Mountain. Knupp said NOAA's Orion twin-engine turboprop aircraft will give researchers the ability to quickly move onboard instruments into position.
The multi-team project, launched March 8 and funded through May 8, will be the first time so many mobile, stationary and airborne instruments will be combined with high-resolution simulations using the National Center for Atmospheric Research's Weather Research and Forecasting Model, officials said.

The goal of the research, ultimately, is to be able to give more advanced warning of deadly storms, reduce false alarms and to make the warnings "site specific," Knupp said.

"The lead time, currently, is something like 15 minutes," he said. Ideally, meteorologists would like to be able to stretch the warning time out to an hour.

Until then, the study needs more data.

"For us, we'll be out there collecting data any time the weather is right," Knupp said.
Storm Spotter Training for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

By: JJ Vincent

Severe weather affects everyone, and on Monday, there’s a special storm spotter training class to help those with hearing impairment learn how to be more weather aware.

Interpreters and CART services will be provided.

The class will feature tips on how to analyze the weather and keep yourself alert to weather warnings.

The class is free to attend and also includes a tour of the national weather service offices.

In addition to severe weather information, attendees will also receive a free weather radio complete with a strobe light feature for a visual alert.

Jennifer Saari, National Weather Service Meteorologist, says, “When you leave our class, you’ll leave with something new, some education. You’ll leave with that weather radio and strobe lights so you can go home and be even more prepared than when you left. Especially when we get night time storms, that’s imperative to be safe especially at night.”

The seminar will be presented Monday starting at 5:30 at the National Weather Service Offices on the UAH campus.

It is free to attend; however you do need to register ahead of time.
In Alabama, tracking tornadoes with the pros seems very familiar

By: Lee Roop

When you live in Alabama, you feel you can hang with professional tornado hunters pretty well. Cloud-top heights, cones, wind sheer, lightning rates, hook echoes. Check, check and check. Alabamians know about those things and more today.

But when word comes that a storm is building, turning and may be coming over that bluff over there, no one else in the big radar truck seems even mildly concerned. Apparently, this Alabamian isn't ready to turn pro just yet. Hopefully, they'll explain why they aren't worried. Quickly would be good.

The truck is here behind a Baptist church near Pisgah, Ala., because Congress gave the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) $10 million to study Southeast tornadoes. Sand Mountain, where storms seem as common as good barbecue, is a specific target. So, teams of researchers are positioned across the mountaintop Wednesday in radar trucks the size of cement mixers.

It's been quiet so far on what is called VORTEX Southeast. That's the acronym for the full mission name of "Verification of the Origins of Rotations in Tornadoes Experiment, Southeast." Scientists will go a long way to make a study sound like a word.

Research meteorologist Don Burgess is one of the experts in the truck near Pisgah. He and fellow researcher Ted Mansell are both from Oklahoma and know a thing or two about tornadoes.

"It'll be interesting to see what the storms are like," Burgess says. He means how they're similar and how they're different from Oklahoma storms because of Alabama's hilly terrain.

These big rigs can comfortably seat three. Where the second, front-facing back seat would normally be is a display and computer system straight out of the movies. On the bed in back rotates a dual-polarization radar as big as an above-ground pool.

This is how research is done today, or at least how some of it gets done. Inside the cab, Burgess shows how the circular scans of each deployed unit combine and overlap to cover a lot of ground.

Burgess and Mansell are one kind of tornado experts. The people who live here are another. Everyone you meet seems to have a close encounter story. The woman unlocking the storm shelters in Pisgah was in a house picked lifted from its foundation. A farmer who stops by to see the rig points across the road to a vacant spot of land between two oak trees. Two people died in a house there in 2011, he says. He was in a basement and can mimic the sound a tornado makes passing overhead.
Farther south, a team from the University of Alabama in Huntsville is set up in a small park on a bluff overlooking the Tennessee River. It is one of the most beautiful views in Alabama, where you can look down and seek hawks circling below your feet.

"This is the first active threat we've had," graduate student Dustin Conrad says of the day's forecast. He knows it's a double-edged sword. "You want tornadoes for the science," he says. "You don't want tornadoes for the people."

Doctoral student Carter Hulsey agrees. His family lives in nearby Henagar. "We've been lucky so far," he says of the family. One storm missed his grandparents by a quarter-mile.

For the students like Hulsey and Conrad and the seasoned pros like Burgess and Mansell, the Southeast is fascinating tornado country. Especially Sand Mountain. They want to know if anything unusual is happening here. Anecdotal evidence suggests it might be. The visiting farmer recounts local belief that tornadoes follow the same paths up here in cycles about 10 years apart.

But there won't be a breakthrough today or a hasty retreat from the ridgetop, either. Wednesday's really bad weather is skipping Sand Mountain. It's near Talladega, Ala., farther east in Georgia, and north across the Tennessee state line.

But how would the experts run if their network said the storm was coming? See that rental car parked in front of the radar truck? One of the reasons it's there is bugging out. The pair would head for a shelter or go to Plan B. Plan B is to just drive south. Since most tornadoes move from southwest to northeast or from west to east, getting away can be just that simple.

But only if you see the storm or get warning in time. To raise the chances you will get that warning, these teams will be back on Sand Mountain for the rest of April, still looking for answers about some of the worst tornadoes in America.
former UAB assistant hired to lead Bulldogs

Donnie Marsh is returning to familiar territory.

The former UAB men's basketball associate head coach was introduced as the new head coach at Alabama A&M during a press conference Wednesday in Huntsville.

"Emotions are kind of all over the place, but all in a good place," Marsh said. "This is a wonderful institution and a great opportunity. I feel blessed to have been selected to be the person. I know it was a thorough search. To finish up as 'the guy', the face of Bulldog basketball, is an absolute incredible blessing for me."

Marsh spent the last two seasons at Texas Southern working under Mike Davis, his boss at UAB from 2006-12. During their time together in Birmingham, the Blazers made one NCAA tournament appearance and three NIT trips.


“I felt like this was an opportunity for me to continue my work at an HBCU,” Marsh said, “to continue trying to help young men develop as people and as players. It was an opportunity to take something that I learned from a really good place and bring it to a place I think really, really wants it. This fan base, the support network, Bulldog nation all want a championship. They all want a chance to cheer in March. I think that’s the ultimate for college basketball fans and I think this is a place where you can do that.”

Alabama A&M went 2-27 last season under Willie Hayes, who stepped down in early March after going 54-121 in six seasons. Marsh was selected by the Atlanta Hawks in the third round of the 1979 NBA Draft after starring at Division III Franklin & Marshall (Pa.).
Tide to compete in Veterans Classic

UA becomes fourth SEC team to be invited to play

By Cecil Hurt
Sports Editor

The University of Alabama men’s basketball team will open its 2017-18 regular season in the 2017 Veterans Classic on CBS Sports Network, the U.S. Naval Academy announced on Monday.

The Crimson Tide will face Coach Tubby Smith’s Memphis Tigers at 5:30 p.m. CT, followed by Pittsburgh vs. Navy at 8 p.m. CT. Both games will be televised on CBS Sports Network.

“The Alabama basketball program is honored to be a part of the 2017 Veterans Classic,” Crimson Tide head coach Avery Johnson said in a UA release. “As a program, we have great respect for all members of our armed forces and how they dedicate their lives to protecting our country. We look forward to being involved in every aspect of this great event. Not only will we have the opportunity to see the Naval Academy in person, but it also gives us the chance to personally thank the men and women of Annapolis for their daily efforts to keep our country safe. Most importantly, this will serve as a tremendous educational experience for our student-athletes and one they will remember for the rest of their lives.”

The Crimson Tide will become the fourth consecutive SEC team to compete in the Veterans Classic, following Vanderbilt (2016), Florida (2015) and Tennessee (2014); whereas, the Tigers will be the second team from the AAC (Temple in ’15) to be invited.

The three participating schools will also have the opportunity to get a glimpse of life as a midshipman at the Naval Academy. The visiting teams will be immersed in the culture and tradition of the Naval Academy, including touring the ‘Yard,’ watching noon meal formation, eating lunch with the brigade at King Hall, as well as a number of other special experiences, including military demonstrations and receptions.

Alabama’s pre-conference schedule is not yet complete. The Crimson Tide is expected to participate in the Barclay’s Classic in Brooklyn over the Thanksgiving holiday, and will face Texas in Birmingham in a return of last year’s game in Austin. UA is also expected to participate in the SEC-Big XII Challenge in the upcoming season although the two leagues are still working out pairings.

—Reach Cecil Hurt at cecil@tidesports.com or 205-722-0225.
Warrant issued for Tide DB

By Aaron Suttles
Sports Writer

University of Alabama red-shirt sophomore defensive back Deionte Thompson had a warrant issued for his arrest for felony aggravated assault by the Galveston County Sheriff's Office on Thursday.

Thompson was one of four men to have warrants issued against them stemming from an alleged March 18 incident. According to KBMT Channel 12 in Beaumont, Thompson and three other men knocked victim Noah Frillou unconscious during a fight at the beach.

Frillou suffered broken bones in his face and sustained a major concussion, according to KBMT.

The alleged incident took place during Alabama's spring break.

Thompson has been a part of the football program, which is currently participating in spring practice. Nick Saban was not available for comment Thursday evening.

Thompson's father, Vester Thompson, wrote the following about the incident on Twitter on Thursday evening: "I understand that journalists have a job to do. Just wait until you hear the truth. Trust me, the key word in the case is ALABAMA."

— Reach Aaron Suttles at aaron@tidesports.com or at 205-722-0229.
FOOTBALL

Saban bemoans proposed NCAA rule

Could alter how Alabama builds staff, conducts summer camps

By Aaron Suttles, Sports Writer

If one of the rules the NCAA is likely to approve this week had been in effect 10 years ago, Jeremy Pruitt might never have broken into college coaching.

One of the best defensive coordinators in the country and a rising star in the profession, Pruitt most likely would've never been afforded the opportunity to jump from Hoover High School, where he was the defensive coordinator, to Alabama, where he became the director of player development.

The bylaw, 11.4.3, has the potential to change how Alabama builds its support staff.

The rule reads, "In football, during a two-year period before a prospective student-athlete's anticipated enrollment and a two-year period after the prospective student-athlete's actual enrollment, an institution shall not employ (or enter into a contract for future employment with) an individual associated with the prospective student-athlete in any athletics department noncoaching staff position or in a strength and conditioning staff position."

If the rule had applied in 2007, Alabama could have only hired Pruitt for an off-the-field staff position if it hadn't recruited Hoover for two years prior to his hiring and couldn't recruit a Hoover player for two years after his hiring.

The rule is intended to curb institutions from hiring an individual simply to have better footing in recruiting a prospective student-athlete. High school coaches feel the spirit of the rule is good but that the execution is lacking.

Take for instance Josh Niblett, head coach at Hoover. No college in the state of Alabama can afford not to recruit Hoover. So in essence, the rule severely limits Niblett's ability to go into college coaching if he so chose.

"You're going to see less high school coaches get opportunities," Niblett said. "It is what it is. They're trying to do everything they can to clean up recruiting as much as possible."

"I understand why they're doing it, but if you have aspirations to coach in the college game, it severely limits opportunities."

If another of the rules on the Division I Council's agenda for this week goes into

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SAHAN

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Effect, it will drastically change the way the University of Alabama conducts its summer football camps.

Bylaw 13.12.2.2.5 reads, “In football, an institution or staff member shall not employ (either on a volunteer or paid basis) an individual associated with a recruited prospective student-athlete at the institution’s camp or clinic (including a coaches clinic or a camp or clinic involving non-prospects), unless at least two years (24 months) have elapsed since the prospective student-athlete’s initial full-time enrollment at the institution.”

The rules mean Alabama basically can’t hire high school coaches for fear that a prospective student-athlete might be at those coaches’ high schools in the next two years.

UA head coach Nick Saban remains adamant that the new rule isn’t good for college football and is punitive to high school coaches.

“I don’t understand the spirit of the rule,” Saban said. “I don’t really know why we’re doing it. I really don’t. I think sometimes we pass rules and don’t really understand the consequences, and there’s a lot of unintended consequences, and you think you’re solving one problem, but really in reality you’re going to create 10 more. I think it’s bad for football, I think it’s bad for high school coaches.

“We had a high school coach here the other day, I’m not going to mention any names, and his son’s a prospect and he used to be a college coach. So now he can never go work at a college, can never work a camp, we can’t come speak at clinics. We just had over a thousand coaches here at a clinic and had a great camp, which is the way that I feel we serve the high school coaches and have a chance to give back to them for all that they do in developing players, helping us be able to evaluate players, giving us information about their players. I guess we can’t do anything. I really, I don’t get it. I don’t understand it.

“I guess we’ll have to try to staff our camps another way. We also have a little kids’ camp here, certainly not a recruiting camp. There’s not even any high school players in it, and we’re not even certain that we can have high school coaches work that camp. That might be under the same scrutiny that if they have any relationship with a prospect then they can’t work our camp. That’s the way I understand it, that’s the way our compliance understands it. I guess we’ll figure it out when the rule passes or whatever.

“I guess I’m just too old-fashioned. If people didn’t help me when I was coming up as a coach and visit with me, and help me grow and learn as a coach, I would never be in the position that I’m in, or have the success that we’ve been able to have, even when it was just being a position coach. So I guess it’s my respect for the profession and the paranoia that everybody has that somebody’s doing something because a high school coach comes and works your camp is pretty ridiculous, but it is what it is.”

—Reach Aaron Suttles at aaron@tidesports.com or at 205-722-0229.
Bo Davis receives show-cause penalty for NCAA violations

By: Matt Zenitz

Alabama won't face any further punishment stemming from former Crimson Tide defensive line coach Bo Davis' NCAA violations, the NCAA announced Friday morning.

Davis received a two-year show-cause penalty that will be in effect through April 13, 2019.

It's a significant punishment that stems from the violations that led to Davis being fired by Alabama last April.

According to the NCAA, Davis knowingly committed a recruiting violation when he took part in an impermissible meeting with four prospective recruits that was pre-arranged by a booster.

Davis then provided false or misleading information about the meeting and the booster's involvement when questioned by Alabama and the NCAA, according to the NCAA.

While Davis has declined to discuss the case publicly, sources told AL.com that Davis has maintained with the NCAA that the meeting wasn't pre-arranged and that it consisted simply of Davis introducing himself to the players upon urging from the their high school coach.

The investigation had been ongoing since May 2015.

Davis had been out of football and working as a truck driver in Birmingham until recently being hired as the defensive line coach at UTSA, though it's unclear how Friday's ruling affects Davis' standing with UTSA.

As part of Friday's ruling, Davis isn't allowed to take part in any off-campus recruiting activities while the show-cause order is in effect and has to attend NCAA Regional Rules Seminars the next two years.

Alabama had already self-imposed three penalties, a $5,000 fine, disassociation from the booster and restricting Davis and his replacement, Karl Dunbar, from off-campus recruiting or telephone contact with recruits from April 22, 2016 through May 31, 2016.