MAY 19, 2017

ARTICLES OF INTEREST
MAY 12, 2017 – MAY 19, 2017

FOR SPECIFIC NEWS STORIES, SEE THE FOLLOWING PAGE NUMBERS:

NEWS ABOUT

TRUSTEE/SYSTEM INFO 2
STATE ISSUES 3
UA CAMPUS ISSUES 30
UAB CAMPUS ISSUES 40
UAH CAMPUS ISSUES 47
SPORTS 53
NATIONAL NEWS 67

500 University Boulevard East
Tuscaloosa, Alabama 35401
(205) 348-5938
kreinhart@uasystem.ua.edu
http://uasystem.ua.edu
Annual Family of the Year award

Brad Cork, left, hands Jim and Karen Brooks a brick, with three flower vases, from the former YMCA at the annual Alexis de Tocqueville Society's Family of the Year event honoring the Brooks family held at the University of Alabama President's Mansion in Tuscaloosa on Thursday. The Brookses are the third family from the Phifer clan to be named the Alexis de Tocqueville Society's Family of the Year. [STAFF PHOTO/ERIN NELSON]
Legislature aims to reform scholarship program

By Ed Enoch
Staff Writer

As the 2017 legislative session winds down, Alabama lawmakers are working on a series of reforms to reduce the growing cost of a scholarship program for dependents of disabled veterans, which threatens to erode appropriations in the education budget for higher education.

“The point is to make this sustainable,” Rep. Bill Poole said. “At present, the cost trajectory is unsustainable.”

The Alabama G.I. Dependent’s Scholarship Program pays for tuition, books and fees for eligible dependents of disabled veterans at an Alabama state-supported institution of higher education or technical school. Costs of the program have soared in recent years, with lawmakers now warning that it could negatively affect the entire higher education budget if eligibility requirements aren’t tightened.

Lawmakers are expected to meet Tuesday for a conference committee to reconcile Senate and House versions of a bill that would make changes to the program, according to Poole and Sen. Gerald Dial’s office. Poole and Dial are members of the committee.

The goal is to reform the program, protecting its viability for beneficiaries and taxpayers, Poole argued.

“Nobody wants to have to reign in benefits to veterans. Nobody takes pride in having to do this,” said Boone Kinard, special assistant for governmental affairs for the Alabama Community College System.

But without reforms, Poole and Kinard say the growth of the program could potentially impact the entire education budget in the state. The education budget for the upcoming fiscal year See REFORM, A5

See next page
The Tuscaloos News
Tuesday, May 16, 2017

REFORM

Continued from A1

is currently in conference committee.

Poole warned that, without a solution, higher education in the state could see cuts in education budget appropriations to offset the growth of the scholarship program.

"It appears certain that if this program is not brought under control, all of higher education would receive a cut," Poole said.

The bill seeks to reduce the growing cost of the program by reforming the eligibility requirements. It would increase the minimum disability rating requirement for veterans, add additional residency and academic requirements for dependents, and require dependents to access state and federal education aid first.

"What we are really hoping to do now is flatten out the cost curve," said Poole, who heads the education budget committee in the House. "It is not so much going to take away from the program, but rather flatten out the cost curve."

The allocation for the scholarship program in the education budget has more than tripled in the last decade with the program projected to grow by 150 percent next year.

The Fiscal year 2017 Education Trust Fund budget appropriated $66.7 million for the Veterans Affairs Department for the Alabama G.I. Dependent's Scholarship Program. In 2016, it was $58 million. In 2007, the appropriation was $21.7 million.

"I think we could deal with small growth, but when you start seeing $25-million-a-year growth, we can't sustain that. The economy is not sustaining that," Kinard said.

Lawmakers are currently considering a supplemental appropriation of $5 million for the fiscal year ending in September to shore up the program. The budget recommendation for the upcoming fiscal year is approximately $98 million.

The growth "ate up" the available new funds projected in the education budget for next year, resulting in level funding, for the most part, for two- and four-year institutions in the state, Kinard said.

Kinard and Poole say the growing cost of the program is linked to enrollment growth in the program.

"I think the primary driver is the eligibility criteria is very generous compared to other states," Poole said. "For instance, most states require a 90 percent or higher disability rating."

The program for disabled veterans or their dependents was created by the Legislature in 1947. But in the last decade, the program has opened to more veterans and lengthened. In 2014, lawmakers removed a requirement that the veteran's service occurred during wartime or extrahazardous conditions. In 2009, lawmakers also extended the length of the benefits for dependents.

Currently, there are 16,505 dependents enrolled in the program, said Belinda Baxinet, public information officer with the Alabama Department of Veterans Affairs.

Under the existing program, a veteran must be rated at least 20 percent disabled due to service-connected disabilities, been a former prisoner of war, declared missing in action, died as the result of a service-connected disability, or died while on active military service in the line of duty.

The veteran must have been an Alabama resident for one year before beginning active service, or, if they are 100 percent disabled, they can qualify if they were a resident for five years before their dependents sought benefits. There is no residency requirement for dependents currently.

Spouses are entitled to up to 27 months of schooling. Children are entitled to five academic years or 45 months part-time.

The House and Senate versions would increase the disability rating to 40 percent beginning for the academic year beginning this fall, though there are provisions to grandfather in veterans and dependents who have already started the application process.

The version passed by the House would require veterans to have been a permanent resident of state for two years before filing for benefits or their dependents to be current residents of the state.

Residency information wasn't available for all veterans, but Baxinet said that out of a sampling of 500, about 14 percent live outside the state.

"What we want to make clear is we want to support our Alabama veterans, but we want to support just that: our Alabama veterans," Poole said. "Not veterans that live in California or New York or other parts. This is an Alabama benefit for Alabama veterans to attend school in Alabama ... If you choose to live in California that is fine, but you need to take advantage of California's plan."

Both versions would cap the benefits based on the average tuition rate based on the Department of Defense's tuition assistance cap, which set a maximum an annual amount of $4,500. The House version also would set a maximum of $1,000 for books and fees.

How much the change will save is difficult to estimate exactly, Poole cautioned, noting variables such as whether a student attends a two- or four-year institution and whether other aid is used.

Lawmakers are also considering requiring participants to use all other federal and state benefits, including filing a Free Application for Federal Student Aid, before drawing benefits through the scholarship program.

"What that means is a beneficiary of the tuition assistance program would be required to exhaust all other third-party scholarships and grants before the taxpayer's dollar was spent to close that gap," Poole said.

The proposals for academic requirements include using the standards of Satisfactory Academic Progress as required by Title IV under the Higher Education Act or requiring dependents to maintain at least a 2.0 grade point average to access benefits.

Lawmakers are also considering adding new status reporting requirements for the Department of Veterans Affairs and Alabama Commission on Higher Education or, as proposed in the Senate version, creating a new Alabama Disabled Veterans' Dependents Education Advisory Committee to track the progress and monitor the program.

The 2017 Legislative session is scheduled to end on Thursday.
The election to replace Jeff Sessions in the U.S. Senate is headed to a crowded and likely expensive primary season, with the field swelling to 19 candidates — 11 Republicans and eight Democrats — on the last day of qualifying.

The messy primary, particularly on the GOP side, is what some Senate powerbrokers had hoped to avoid as appointed Sen. Luther Strange, backed by a super PAC with ties to Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, faces challengers from different wings of the GOP. The race will gauge the preferences of conservative voters in a deeply red state.

U.S. Rep. Mo Brooks, R-Huntsville — a member of the House Freedom Caucus — and former Alabama Supreme Court Chief Justice Roy Moore, who twice lost his position for stances on the Ten Commandments and gay marriage, are among those challenging Strange. Others in the GOP field include Christian Coalition president Randy Brinson; Birmingham businessman Dom Gentile; and state Sen. Trip Pittman of Baldwin County.

SEE SENATE, A3
SENATE
FROM AL

"It will certainly be expensive. There will be a lot of outside money pouring into the state," said former Alabama Republican Party Chairman Marty Connors.

Conners said the key for challengers will be to try to make it into a primary.

Eight Democrats are seeking the seat, including former U.S. Attorney Doug Jones, a Bill Clinton appointee best known for the successful prosecution of those responsible for killing four young girls in the 1963 Sixteenth Street Baptist Church bombing. Qualifying ended at 5 p.m. Wednesday. The primary will be Aug. 15. A runoff — if needed — will be held Sept. 26 with the general election on Dec. 12.

Several candidates who were expected to run, including State Senate President Del Marsh, R-Anniston, state Rep. Ed Henry, R-Hartselle, and former state Sen. Perry Hooper Jr. of Montgomery, decided not to join the race. Here's a list of who is running:

REPUBLICANS

U.S. Sen. Luther Strange: Strange was appointed to the post by ex-Gov. Robert Bentley after Jeff Sessions was named U.S. Attorney General. Strange is the former Alabama Attorney General.

U.S. Rep. Mo Brooks: Brooks, who represents the Huntsville area in Congress, was first elected to the House in 2011.

Roy Moore: The former chief justice was suspended from the bench for advising probate judges to ignore the U.S. Supreme Court order on same-sex marriage.

Randy Brinson: Brinson is the head of the Christian Coalition and the founder of the conservative advocacy group "Redeem the Vote."

Dominic Gentile: The Hoover resident owns his own commercial cleaning business management firm.

Bryan Peeples: Peeples, of Birmingham, is a territory manager for Heartland Payment Systems and President and CEO of Peeples Consulting.

State Sen. Trip Pitman: Pitman, from Monticello, said he is the only Repub-

lican candidate from the southern portion of the state.

James Paul Beretta: Beretta is a pain management physician from Indian Springs in Shelby County.

Karen Halden Jackson: Jackson is an attorney from Prattville.

Mary Maxwell and Joseph F. Breaux also qualified to run, but no biographical information was immediately available for them.

DEMOCRATS

Doug Jones: Jones is a former U.S. attorney appointed by President Bill Clinton who is now in private practice. Jones is best known for prosecuting the Klansmen responsible for the 1963 16th Street Baptist Church bombings in 1963.


Michael Hansen: Hansen, the only openly gay candidate, is the executive director of Alabama environmental advocacy group Gasp.

Robert Kennedy Jr.: Kennedy shares a name with the son of the former U.S. Attorney General but is unknown to even local Democratic leaders. He lives in Mobile, according to the paperwork he filed with the State Democratic party.

Jason Fisher: Fisher, of Orange Beach, is the vice president and senior consultant at Buffalo Noel Levitz, a direct marketing company.

Other candidates who qualified, but for which biographical information was immediately available, include Vann Caldwell of Talladega County, Brian McGee of Lee County and Nana Tchienkom of Jefferson County.

Kim Chandler of the Associated Press and AL.com reporter Leada Gore contributed to this story.
House approves redistricting bill

Lawmakers voted for new boundaries after all-day debate; bill now goes to governor

By Kim Chandler
The Associated Press

MONTGOMERY — The Alabama House of Representatives has approved a redistricting bill after an all-day debate.

Lawmakers on Thursday voted 71-32 to approve the boundaries for the 35 Senate districts. The bill now goes to Gov. Kay Ivey for her signature.

Black lawmakers opposed to the plan had the lengthy bill read aloud on the House floor. The process took about eight hours.

Federal judges in January ordered lawmakers to redraw some lines before the 2018 elections, saying Republicans had improperly made race the predominant factor in drawing lines. The ruling came after the Legislative Black Caucus and the Alabama Democratic Conference filed a lawsuit arguing African-American voters were "stacked and packed" into designated minority districts to make neighboring districts whiter and more Republican.

Simmering tensions over redistricting hit a boiling point shortly after the vote.

Rep. Juandalyn Givan, a Democrat from Birmingham, raised her voice at the House microphone saying, "The issue in this building is racism exists in the Alabama Legislature." Givan objected when the House speaker gaveled her down for breaking decorum rules. She said white lawmakers are treated differently.

The redistricting battle consumed the penultimate day of the legislation session as Democrats wanted the bills read aloud in the House and Senate — a process expected to take up to 14 hours — before votes can be held.

"As soon as that reading is concluded, we automatically vote the bill. I expect the bill will pass along party lines," Senate President Pro Tem Del Marsh said.

Black Democrats argued Thursday that there is still "racial gerrymandering" in the plan and they had been left out of the decisions on the new bill, even though it was their lawsuit that led to the U.S. Supreme Court order for judges to review the map and the eventual court order.
to redraw the lines.

"It seems like we are going to end up in court again," Legislative Black Caucus Chairman John Knight said. "It's clear. You can look at the map. There is racial gerrymandering," Knight, D-Montgomery, said.

Partisan and racial control of Jefferson County, home to the state's largest city, majority black Birmingham, has been a major point of contention. The county is often the focus of partisan squabbles over legislation affecting local governments. The new map maintains a slim Republican majority in the Jefferson County delegation.

Knight said the districts of lawmakers who live outside Jefferson County were being stretched into the county to maintain a white Republican majority. Democrats wanted an even partisan split in the delegation.

Republicans said they are confident that the new maps correct the problems found by the court.

Marsh said the major dispute was "all about Jefferson County and the makeup of the delegation."

"I get it. But based upon what I've seen I do believe that these will hold up in court," Marsh, R-Anniston, said.
This year’s Senate race will impact field for governor in 2018

The Tuscaloosa News
Wednesday, May 17, 2017

This year’s Senate race will impact field for governor in 2018

The race for our open U.S. Senate seat will be the marquee political event for the remainder of this year. It will be a great show. However, we have a sensational and pivotal 2018 governor’s race evolving simultaneously. This much-anticipated gubernatorial derby will be affected by the preliminary Senate horse race.

The political landscape has changed dramatically with the decisive move by new Gov. Kay Ivey to call for the election of Jeff Sessions’ successor to the Senate this year. Unlike in olden days when running a preliminary statewide race was a stepping-stone to getting elected four years later, in recent years losing statewide is not good, especially if that loss has occurred within less than six months. Therefore, three or more thoroughbreds are removed from the governor’s race. One will be in the Senate and the other two will be exiled to Buck’s Pocket and will not be players in the governor’s race. You can remove Roy Moore, Luther Strange and any unknown wealthy person who can and will spend $5-$10 million of their own money. The unknown rich man will either be senator or gone from the scene.

Roy Moore’s removal from the governor’s race is the most significant change to the gubernatorial track. His evangelical base, which probably accounts for 20-30 percent of a GOP primary vote, will be splintered among the field.

As I peruse the horses grazing in the pasture, let’s take a look at them because the race begins in less than a month with fundraising for the June 2018 primaries beginning on June 6. Before I mention some horses who look to be frontrunners, let me say that most of these folks ain’t ponies.

Ivey is 72. She would have probably gone out to pasture had she not become governor. With 18 months as governor, she begins to look very gubernatorial. If she decides to run, she will be running as the incumbent and will be a viable horse if not the frontrunner.

Huntsville Mayor Tommy Battle, 61, is going to be a player in this race. He has done an exemplary job as mayor of Alabama’s most important and successful city. Folks, if we didn’t have Huntsville, we would be last in everything. Battle is popular in his neck of the woods and will come out of the Tennessee Valley with a good many votes.

The “Yella Fella,” Jimmy Rane, 70, may make a run for governor. He is a successful businessman worth $600 million, according to Forbes Magazine. His business success has not gone to his head. He is and would come across as a “good ol’ guy.”

Jack Hawkins, the 72-year-old chancellor of the Troy University system, would be the best-qualified person to be governor. If you put his resume into a merit system roster, the computer would print out his name. He would also be an attractive candidate. Besides building and presiding over a university system for 30 years, he is tall, handsome and articulate, and exudes honesty and integrity. He also would be the only Marine in the race.

David Carrington, 69, is a Jefferson County commissioner and successful businessman. He could garner significant support from the Birmingham business community. He also should have some name identification from being seen on Birmingham television for six years.

John McMillan, 75, is one of the best-liked and successful statewide officeholders in Alabama. He has had a stellar eight-year reign as commissioner of Agriculture and Industries. John is a native of Baldwin

See FLOWERS, A7
which is one of Alabama’s fastest growing and largest Republican counties. If there is a large field, a strong vote in his home county could catapult him into a runoff.

What about the other statewide officeholders? Twinkle Cavanaugh and John Merrill are younger than the aforementioned horses. At 50, they could sit out this race and come back four or even eight years later. Most observers expect Twinkle to run for lieutenant governor. She would be a favorite in that race. Merrill probably stays another term as secretary of state, which is prudent.

If he and Cavanaugh bide their time, they would be the frontrunners for governor next time around.

Young Boozer, 68, is term limited from running again for state treasurer. He is mum on his plans. Folks would be wise to not underestimate him. However, his best race would be for attorney general. He would enter as the favorite in that race.

Steve Flowers served 16 years in the Alabama Legislature.
Readers can contact him at www.steveflowers.us.
Touts 'conservative leadership,' attacks
D.C. 'swamp critters'

Paul Gattis pgattis@al.com

Repeating "that's proven conservative leadership" as he touted his record as a four-term congressman, U.S. Rep. Mo Brooks on Monday formally kicked off his expected campaign for the U.S. Senate.

Brooks, a Huntsville Republican who represents the Tennessee Valley in the House, spoke first in Huntsville as part of a four-stop campaign blitz across the state.

He also pointed to criticism of his Senate candidacy as validation that he's a feared opponent of Luther Strange — the former Alabama attorney general was appointed to the seat in February by former Gov. Robert Bentley.

The Senate Leadership Fund, in a statement Monday minutes after Brooks announced his campaign in a press release, described Brooks as a "Washington insider" who has failed to sponsor a bill that was signed into law.

The leadership fund is backing Strange, just as the National Republican Senate Committee has said it will spend whatever funds are necessary for Strange to win.

"The very fact that the Washington swamp critters are already attacking me as a candidate, I think, shows the viability of my candidacy for the United States Senate from the state of Alabama. The Washington swamp critters would not be attacking Mo Brooks if they were not concerned about my viability," Brooks said he expects to be outspent by Strange during the campaign.

Surrounded by his wife Martha, children and grandchildren, Brooks pointed to his conservative stances on issues in the House and said he is the "only candidate for the Senate who has a record of proven conservative leadership."

"America's future is at risk because our country's foundational principles are under daily attack. Our republic is only as good as our elections process. America's elections are threatened by those who support voter fraud and election theft by opposing voter identification laws while encouraging non-citizens to vote in American elections."

He also pointed to the 2nd Amendment being threatened by political forces as well as moral principles and the economy.

"WALK THE WALK"

"The solutions to America's challenges are there. The roadblocks to these solutions is, all too often, the United States Senate. In order to preserve America's status as the greatest nation in world history, we must elect senators with the understanding and backbone needed to face and defeat America's challenges."

"As you know, every election cycle is full of candidates who talk the talk and make themselves as something they are not. What distinguishes me is that I walk the walk. The proof is my record of conservative leadership."

Brooks then listed awards and recognitions he has received while in Congress — including a grade of a "perfect 100 in the fight to secure America's borders and protect American families' wages and jobs from the damage done by illegal aliens."

At a stop in Montgomery, Brooks was asked to clarify a comment he made at a town hall meeting in 2011 when he said he would "do anything short of shooting them" to stop illegal immigration.

"I said would do anything I can lawfully do short of shooting them in order to emphasize my position on border security," Brooks said.

"This was in a town hall meeting where people were questioning my sincerity and my dedication to secure America's borders. I used that as hyperbole to emphasize my position, that I'm willing to do anything lawfully can do, short of shooting them, which means I want to enforce the law."

Brooks said a surplus in the labor market caused by illegal immigration has hurt Americans and legal immigrants economically.

"It was in that context and I stand by every word of it," Brooks said.

"GOOD LIVES' COMMENT"

During a stop in Mobile, Brooks focused on policy matters pertaining to health care and tax reform.

He said he would not support a tax reform package if it added to the federal deficit. Trump has proposed tax breaks that some economists and tax specialists fear could lead to escalating federal debt.

"If I'm not convinced that in the long haul, this tax reform will decrease America's deficits and thereby make our debt more manageable, I cannot be supportive of it," said Brooks.

Brooks also clarified a comment he made to CNN's Jake Tapper earlier this month in which he said people who live "good lives" should pay less for health care.

"If I could've substituted the word 'healthy' for 'good,' it would've more accurately reflected my intent," said Brooks.

"People who lead healthy lives and don't use illegal drugs ... they will go to the doctor's office less and, as such, their health care costs will be lowered."

AL.com reporters Howard Koplowitz, Mike Cason and John Sharp contributed to this story.
Ivey set to sign bill for autism coverage

Families lobbied lawmakers to gain passage

By Kim Chandler
The Associated Press

MONTGOMERY — An Alabama bill requiring some insurers to cover autism treatment for children heads to the governor, after the House of Representatives on Thursday morning accepted Senate changes including an age cap on the coverage.

The unanimous vote in the early morning was a victory for families of children on the autism spectrum who had lobbied lawmakers throughout the session and pressured legislators when the bill appeared to falter. Rep. Jim Patterson, the bill sponsor, said while he disagreed with the age cap on the coverage, he felt the measure was the best they could get this session.

“We got a lot tonight to make things better for a lot of families,” said Patterson, R-Meridianville.

The mandate would require insurance plans at businesses with at least 51 employees to cover autism treatment, including applied behavioral analysis therapy, which focuses on improving speech, behavioral and social skills.

Parents of children on the autism spectrum have been fighting for insurance coverage of ABA therapy and say it can be life-changing but at $100-per-hour it’s out of many families’ financial reach. Insurance companies and business groups have raised concerns about costs.

The coverage would be capped each year, with the amount dependent on the child’s age. Coverage for children 9 and younger would be capped at $40,000 annually. Coverage for 10- to 13-year-olds would be capped at $30,000. Older teens would be capped at $20,000.

Alabama Gov. Kay Ivey will sign the bill unless a legal review finds problems, spokesman Eileen Jones wrote in an email.

Government insurance plans, such as Medicaid and All-Kids, would also have to supply the coverage but the requirement wouldn’t kick in until late 2018.

The Senate, by a 19-13 vote, added an amendment Wednesday to specify that insurers do not have to provide the coverage to adults.

See AUTISM, B3
McMillan latest in governor’s race

Five candidates now in GOP primary field

John McMillan, Commissioner of the Department of Agriculture and Industries, has filed paperwork to run for governor.

McMillan is running as a Republican. He’s the latest to throw his hat into a quickly growing GOP field that includes Huntsville Mayor Tommy Battle, Public Service Commission Chair Twinkle Cavanaugh, prison guard and former Morgan County Commission Stacy George and Birmingham businessman Joshua Jones.

McMillan recently told a group in DeKalb County he wants to involve more people with expertise in areas such as Medicaid or job growth in helping to formulate plans for the state.

“My theory is that they’re plenty of people in the state that for whatever reason will never run for public office, but have tremendous management skills, and knowledge of state and local government, that can be an asset to us if we take this type of approach,” McMillan said.

Agriculture Commissioner John McMillan has announced he will run for governor in 2018.

A former Baldwin County Commissioner and state representative, McMillan grew up working at his family’s farm and sawmill.

Gov. Fob James appointed McMillan as Commissioner of the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, where he oversaw the creation of the Alabama Trust Fund, created with proceeds from leases of offshore oil operations.

He later served as executive vice president of the Alabama Forestry Association.

McMillan was named to the Alabama State Personnel Board by Gov. James during the 1990s and reappointed to a second term by Governor Bob Riley.

McMillan was elected Commissioner of the Alabama Department of Agriculture and Industries in 2010 and reelected in 2014.

The statewide primary will be June 5, 2018, with a runoff — if needed — on July 17. The general election is set for Nov. 6, 2018.
Health Center South breaks ground on $25M expansion

By: Jim Cook

Health Center South broke ground Wednesday on a new office building that will provide high-tech health care options for doctors and patients and may also generate more than 200 new jobs.

The 200,000 square foot facility will cost $25 million and contractors will finish work on the building in summer 2018. Blondheim + Mixon, Inc. is the architect. Saliba Construction Company, Inc. is the contractor.

“We are thrilled to break ground today on this technologically-advanced building and doing our part to elevate Dothan’s medical landscape for patients and physicians alike,” Dr. Seb斯坦 Heersink, managing partner in Health Center Development, LCC, said.

Jill Williams, director of marketing, said the five-story facility will include covered parking, complimentary Tesla/electric vehicle charging for lessees, over 890 parking spaces, four elevators, four floors with 29- to 36,000 square feet of medical class-A leasable space, several two-story lobbies and convenient next door access to Surgery Center South.

Medical class-A space refers to the highest quality leasable medical space, with high quality standard finishes, state of the art systems, exceptional accessibility and a definite market presence, Williams said.

Williams said a major draw for physicians who may wish to lease office space in the new office facility will be its access to high speed Internet. Offices at the center will have access to 100 Gigabytes per second in both upload and download speeds.

Consistent availability of super fast and reliable upload and download speeds are crucial to medical practices today. The secure and fast online transfer of high resolution MRIs, X-rays, scans and other medical records are not just the way of the future but already here,” she said.

As a point of comparison, the facility’s average upload and download speeds are 3,000 and 10,000 times faster than the average American’s upload and download speeds at home.

“Connectivity this fast opens up all kinds of medical applications and possibilities, like real-time virtual medical conferencing and teledicine, off-site robotic surgeries, and advanced imaging transfer with instantaneous cloud backup,” Williams said.

Williams said the new facility could help Dothan recruit more physicians and offer better health care options.

“Investing in an innovative health care campus with access to an outpatient surgery center will strengthen our community’s health care delivery network and help recruit new physicians and staff,” she said. “Our ultimate goal is to improve the experience for current employees and patients throughout the Wiregrass by providing high quality and cost effective health care.”
Williams said it’s tough to estimate how many physicians could end up working at the new facility, as every practice has different space needs. Williams said that up to 250 people could end up being employed at the facility, however.

Health Center South began as an ophthalmology practice in downtown Dothan in the 1980s. Eye Center South moved into its current location in 1982. Over the next three decades, other practices partnered with Eye Center South, and the Health Center South complex was developed.

The medical campus will soon offer another access point from Ross Clark Circle. Williams said a separate vehicle, pedestrian, golf cart and bicycle bridge is currently being constructed on the north side of the seven-acre lot, offering additional access for patients, their families, staff, visitors and service personnel.
What historic credit bill means for Bham

You've seen it at work at the Pizitz Building, The Redmont, Thomas Jefferson Tower, and several others in the Magic City.

Now experts say they are expecting to see another round of historic renovation projects lining up to take advantage of the Alabama Historic Tax Credit program soon.

The Alabama Senate on May 9 voted 31-0 to pass House Bill 345, a substitute version of legislation that previously passed the Senate Committee for Finance and Taxation Education.

As of press time, the bill was awaiting concurrence from the Alabama House before heading to Gov. Kay Ivey's desk for signature to officially make it a law.

Just like the previous version of the program that lawmakers allowed to expire last year, the new bill would establish an income tax credit against the tax liability of a developer for the rehabilitation, preservation or development of certified historic structures.

But experts say there are some key changes in the new bill's version of the program that could impact Birmingham.

David Fleming, CEO of REV Birmingham, said he feels good about the bill and the benefits of the historic tax credit returning to the Magic City and the state.

"Having that tool back to fuel more revitalization will be a good thing," Fleming said. "I've been encouraged by the way leadership has come together on this and tried to make it something everyone can work with."

The program would run for five years and have an allocation of $20 million per year.

As we've reported, HB345 includes language that makes several important changes to the program from its previous version that ran from 2013 to 2016.

But Fleming said he thinks the program will be workable for developers, even with the changes.

The new program includes requiring a historic structure to be at least 60 years of age to qualify for the credit. The previous program had a 50-year requirement, which is also the standard used for national historic tax credits.

Fleming said there are plenty of structures in Birmingham that fall within the 60-year time frame, so that change may not impact Birmingham as much as other areas.

Some real estate professionals have wondered how that would impact possible projects in Birmingham's civil rights district, but Fleming said the bill allows for properties within a national monument district or on a national register to be workable with the credit.

Another change requires 40 percent of credits to be initially reserved for rural counties of the state. If not claimed within a certain amount of time, those credits will go back to the total allocation for the whole state.

Fleming said he thinks the 40 percent of the credits for rural areas is a good thing, as it should encourage more investment in properties in smaller areas of the state, something that proponents of the program have always hoped to see.

One key factor that differs from the earlier program is the creation of a Historic Tax Credit Evaluating Committee that will review projects and rank them in order of allocation.

Fleming said the months between now and when the program launches on Jan. 1 are crucial to putting in place a clear and understandable process for how the committee will operate.

Others in the real estate community have wondered if the committee may make the process more complicated and political, and possibly hinder further investments spurred by historic renovation projects. Still, most developers and proponents of the credit seem to view the reinstatement of a program as a net positive to the state.

"I think we will start to see a lot of projects line up to use credits," Fleming said.

Fleming said he thinks now that more people have been paying attention to historic renovations after the program was allowed to expire in 2016.

He believes that could spur more interest in using them if the new program is established.

A variety of local developers and even development groups from out of state have been awaiting the reinstatement of the historic tax credit before they pull the trigger on projects in the Magic City.

Developers, including Bayer Properties, which invested $70 million to redevelop the Pizitz building into apartments, commercial space and a food hall, have said the credit was the linchpin that made financing for completing projects possible.
Dr. Grace Terrell has found herself on the forefront of health care innovation for the majority of her career. A doctor of internal medicine for more than two decades, she's practiced privately in North Carolina, served as CEO of one of the first multi-specialty medical groups in the country, helped start a population health management company and even works at the national policy level to improve health care.

In Terrell's pursuit to make the "maximum impact" on health care she encountered Jim Hudson through mutual friends, which lead to a job offer, starting the next part of her career as CEO of Envision Genomics. "They said it's in Huntsville, Alabama, and associated with the HudsonAlpha Institute, and I said, 'I'm in.' I have been wildly enthusiastic about coming down here and working with what I think is the absolute, where health care is getting ready to move," Terrell said. "I'm very excited and feel very privileged to be part of it. The idea that we can take whole genomic sequencing and work with the best team in the country, with respect to genomics medicine and really turn healthcare into something that's going to be far better for a lot of people."
Terrell helped found Cornerstone Health Care in 1993 and served as CEO of the company between 2000 and 2016. Cornerstone Health Care, one of the first multi-specialty medical groups, started with about 40 doctors and 16 practices in High Point, N.C. The company grew to about 375 physicians and other providers over a 12-county area, to include 90 practice sites.

"We were really very much ahead of the curve. We were one of the first in the nation on electronic medical records. We were one of the first medical homes in the country," Terrell said. "We built a couple of hundred-thousand-square-foot facilities that we started running seven days a week where people could get primary care, specialty care, and lab and imaging, and all that, seven days a week and a lot cheaper than they could get at a big hospital."

Terrell then helped found Cornerstone Health Enablement Strategic Solutions (CHESS), a population health management company in 2012, a firm that helps health systems and other medical groups make the transition to "value-based medicine." Both Cornerstone Health Care and CHESS were purchased in 2016 by Wake Forest Baptist Medical Center located in Winston-Salem, N.C.

Terrell said two decades of practicing internal medicine, alongside the task of overseeing Cornerstone Health Care and CHESS, have given her a unique perspective to bring to Envision Genomics.

"Envision is part of a large, vibrant network of thought leaders here in the Huntsville community, and I just love being part of something that is so forward thinking. It has so much promise. This is not pie in the sky, it's a committed group of leaders here who understand that, and really it's fun. It's fun to work with folks when you've got something like this that you can build together," she said. "I think one of the things that I bring to the table, because I am a practicing clinician, who's not from the world of genomics medicine, until now, is to think about genomic medicine within the context of care model design and how do you actually design care in ways that are better for patients."

ENVISION THE FUTURE OF MEDICINE

Envision Genomics was founded in 2015 by Howard Jacob, Elizabeth Worthey, Jill Tapper, David Bick, Shawn Levy, Bruce R. Korf, and Jim Hudson. The company, one of about 27 associate companies collaborating in genomic research at the HudsonAlpha Institute of Biotechnology, focuses on clinical whole-genome sequencing in clinical testing for rare diseases, undiagnosed disorders and hereditary cancers, with the goal of reducing multiple point-of-care tests.

"You only have to do the whole genome test once because that's the blueprint of you. You do that once and that information can be stored and used forever. So, you can imagine a time in the future where everybody gets this, that wants it, as a child or around birth, just like we do a few tests now for things like cystic fibrosis and sickle cell," Terrell said. "We believe that the place to start towards that future is to start with the problems, the rare disorders and undiagnosed problems. A lot of people have these syndromes and they go from doctor to doctor to doctor. For the average person it take about eight years on this diagnostic odyssey for people to find out what's wrong with them, get peace of mind, and sometimes get treatment for it. In the future you can get one test, one time, and not go through those thousands of dollars of tests and years of worry. For even regular folks, with common illnesses, it may very soon make it so that medicines are better."

Envision Genomics works closely with The Smith Family Clinic for Genomic Medicine, also located on the HudsonAlpha campus. The Smith Family Clinic gives patients a comprehensive genome sequencing test, in which patients get a clinical report, pharmacogenomic report, and the opportunity

SEE TERRELL, A19
TERRELL
FROM A17

to participate in a clinical research study.

Working with practices such as The Smith Family Clinic, Envision uses analytical tools, such as their new clinical use program CoDi, to identify what problems are in a person's genome, providing more accurate diagnoses, disease prevention, and better, more personalized medicine regimens for patients. Envision, along with the capabilities of HudsonAlpha, has the capacity to sequence 15,000 clinical genomes a year. They examine all 6 billion base pairs of a person's genome.

"That's happening right now, it's happening here in Huntsville. What Envision is going to do is going to take that work and scale it and work with hospitals throughout the country so that genomic medicine, that's happening right here in Huntsville, can be done across the nation," Terrell said.

"Huntsville is known for being futuristic, everything from NASA and all the other science here, but I believe the future of medicine and where medicine is going, [Huntsville] is also the center of that."

Envision is in the early stages of setting up a network of partnerships with children’s hospitals in hopes to help identify rare and undiagnosed disorders in children. The company is in the process of developing a strategic plan, incorporating partners in their network to provide more effective and cheaper precision medicine. Along with the shared services of partnerships,

Envision plans to release an upgrade of their analytic tool CoDi in the near future, allowing those in the network to work from a collaborative pool of information.

"It really is important to understand that what's happening here in Huntsville is just absolutely world-class, state-of-the-art stuff that's going to change medicine," Terrell said. "The team that is here with Dr. Jacob is the reason I came here. There's nothing like it."
NASA

‘We will continue’
Space Launch System

Shelby backs Huntsville rocket in budget remarks

Lee Roop lroop@al.com

Alabama’s powerful U.S. Sen. Richard Shelby last week served warning on any potential critics of NASA’s Space Launch System being developed in his home state.

“The heavy lift rocket will help us explore farther into space than ever before,” Shelby said, “and with support from this committee, we will continue to make progress towards the creation of this unparalleled launch capability.”

Shelby’s comments came as his office released space budget details from a congressional Omnibus funding bill approved by Congress last week. The bill funds NASA until Sept. 30, when the new fiscal year begins.

SEE NASA, A5

See next page
NASA

FROM A1

Shelby is chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee's subcommittee responsible for NASA funding. The position gives him leverage over the agency's budget.

The Omnibus bill gives NASA $19.7 billion and SLS $2.15 billion. That's a $368 million increase over this year for NASA and $150 million for SLS, which is being developed at NASA's Marshall Space Flight Center in Huntsville.

INSIDE AND OUTSIDE

The pace and expense of SLS development has recently drawn questions from inside and outside the government. NASA auditors Dr. Patrick Shea inspected a nearly 4¾-foot (1.3 percent scale) model of the second generation said this month that software development delays for the booster, Orion capsule, and ground support system at Kennedy Space Center make it "unlikely" SLS will launch in 2018 as NASA had planned.

Also this month, former House Speaker Newt Gingrich, an unofficial space adviser to the White House, told a conference that SLS could quickly become a museum piece because of cost and performance.

But Shelby said funding SLS "helps to maintain American leadership in space." He said that the budget just passed contains $300 million "for development of a human-rated Exploration upper stage engine that will enable crewed missions to travel to the moon and Mars."

BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS

Shelby's office released highlights including:

NASA: Provides $19.7 billion, which is $368 million more than the Fiscal Year 2016 budget and $1.39 billion over Obama's 2017 budget request.

Space Launch System: Funds SLS at $2.15 billion, which is $920 million above Obama's request and $150 million above FY2016.

Michoud repairs: Provides $109 million in new construction funding to repair damage caused by natural disasters, including a tornado hit on the Michoud Assembly Facility in New Orleans. Michoud builds the core components of SLS.

Orion Capsule: Funds Orion at $1.35 billion, $297 million above Obama's request and $80 million above the FY 2016 level. "The funding level will maintain readiness for the SLS and Orion EM-1 test launch in 2018 and a crewed launch in 2021," Shelby's office said.

NASA nuclear propulsion: Provides $35 million for advancing the technologies for nuclear thermal propulsion to make space

The next generation of NASA's Space Launch System will be 364 feet tall in the crew configuration and deliver a 105-metric-ton lift. NASA image
U.S. Senator Richard Shelby vows that the Space Launch System won't be shelved like past NASA space exploration programs.

flight "significantly faster" than current propulsion options.

"The ongoing propulsion development work done at Marshall Space Flight Center will further NASA's exploration goals by supporting efficient transport of cargo and science payloads, and reducing crews' exposure to harmful space radiation and other effects of long-term space missions," Shelby said.

**NASA Small Launch Vehicle:** Provides $30 million for development of a small launch technology platform within NASA's Space Technology Flight Opportunities program. This system will leverage current launch vehicle technologies to launch small satellites into orbit.

**NASA Additive Manufacturing:** Provides $25 million for continued work in additive manufacturing as part of the NASA's Space Technology program activities.

"The work at Marshall Space Flight Center directly contributes to taking a project from conception to manufacturing and testing, resulting in flight-ready hardware for use in current and future exploration missions," Shelby said.

**NASA EPSCoR:** Maintains Fiscal Year 2016 funding at $18 million, which is twice as much as Obama's requested level of $9 million.

**National Space Grant College and Fellowship Program:** Maintains fiscal year 2016 funding at $40 million, which is $16 million above Obama's request.

See next page
HUNTSVILLE

Big budget boost for defense and FBI on Redstone

$400 million included for rocket engine development

Christopher Harress  charress@al.com

Hundreds of millions of dollars are to pour into defense and justice projects on Redstone Arsenal through various appropriations bills passed by Congress last week.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation will receive $76 million to finish the construction of its Terrorist Explosive Device Analytical Center and Hazardous Devices School. Both TEDAC and the Hazardous Devices School will also be fully funded when complete.

The same bill also allows for a ballistic research facility and for the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives' U.S. Bomb Data Center to move to Redstone.

SEE BOOST, A5

See next page
BOOST

FROM AI

and maintains the restart of advanced arson investigator training courses and additional training.

"Within prudent budgetary boundaries, this year's funding bill achieves a careful balance between all of our competing national priorities, including law enforcement and national security, economic development, scientific research, and human space exploration," said Alabama Sen. Richard Shelby. "I am pleased that this bill secures important funding for the Department of Justice and law enforcement programs essential to national, state, and local efforts. The Hazardous Devices School, TEDAC, and NCETR will continue to play a crucial role in protecting our nation."

ROCKET ENGINE FUNDING

The 2017 defense appropriations bill gives nearly $400 million for the building of a next-generation rocket engine. The U.S. continues to rely on Russian rockets to launch satellites into space. The bill also sees $38 million put toward a high-energy laser project.

"This bill strengthens our nation's security with an increase in defense spending," said Senator Shelby. "Supporting top defense priorities, including Alabama's national defense capabilities, demonstrates that we are committed to our military. I'm pleased that our state will continue to play a leading role in serving our Armed Forces. With growing instability around the world, we must provide our military the means necessary to protect our nation."

A list of projects specific to North Alabama are listed below:

**Next generation rocket engine**: $396.6 million, $100 million above the president's FY17 budget request.

**Missile and rocket advanced technology**: $30 million above the president's FY17 budget request.

**High-energy laser research**: $38 million above the president's FY17 budget request.

**Ground-based Midcourse Defense**: $110 million in addition to the president's FY17 budget request. Rejects the president's cuts and maintains FY16 level.

**Prompt global strike capability**: $101 million, $12 million above the FY16 funding level.

**FBI's Terrorist Explosive Device Analytical Center**: Provides no less than $61.5 million for TEDAC and rejects President Obama's requested cut to eliminate these operations in FY 2017. Provides an increase of $13.6 million to hire additional staff for new phases of operations coming online in FY 2017.

**FBI's Hazardous Devices School**: Provides full operational funding for the Hazardous Devices School, and rejects Obama's proposed cuts to these operations. The funding also supports the FBI's Weapons of Mass Destruction Directorate explosives-related training operations.

**Ballistic Research Facility**: Supports the FBI's Ballistic Research Facility, which will become operational at Redstone in FY 2017.

**FBI Construction at Redstone**: Provides $76 million to finish on-going FBI construction projects at Redstone that involve TEDAC, HDS, and other operations and training programs.

**ATF's National Center for Explosives Training and Research**: Fully funds ATF's NCETR. It supports the U.S. Bomb Data Center move to Redstone and maintains the restart of advanced arson investigator training courses and additional training. The bill also allows for up to $2.5 million to be made available for an advanced counter explosive device research program focusing on hypervelocity impact and hypervelocity flight dynamics.
Slow orders, engine glitches hit Airbus earnings

Christopher Harress  charress@al.com

Mobile-based aircraft manufacturer Airbus’ earnings have been cut in half amid a slow 2017 order book and technical difficulties with some of its aircraft, according to first quarter results.

The company, which has its headquarters in France but maintains a U.S. manufacturing hub on the Gulf Coast in Mobile, said that its three-month earnings before interest and tax fell to 240 million euros ($262 million) from 498 million euros a year earlier. The company also fell short of analysts’ predictions that it would earn 326 million euros ($356 million).

In addition to lingering issues with the A400M military transport plane and production delays with its twin-aisle A350 aircraft, Airbus is waiting on a fix for engine glitches experienced on the new A320neo narrowbody jet, which will eventually be manufactured in Mobile.

“Let’s see whether the fixes coming through are finally confirmed,” Chief Financial Officer Harald Wilhelm said on a conference call. “We still need to see the proof. Demonstrated performance so far is not satisfactory.”

Pratt & Whitney, the company responsible for providing Airbus’s engines, has said that a fix for its overheating geared-turbofan engine has been found, but will need to be checked before implementation.

With a possible solution at hand, Airbus is targeting 200 deliveries across the entire company, up from 26 in the first half of this year. In the meantime, Airbus is producing the A320ceo for its customers. The neo option is popular among Airbus’ customers as it offers a 20 percent reduction in fuel costs per seat, among other benefits.

The company’s Mobile hub will begin A320neo production at the end this year, according to an Airbus spokesperson. The company, thereafter, is expected to produce four aircraft a month.

Airbus’ order book has also been slow in the first quarter with the company announcing contracts for six planes net after cancellations.

The company delivered its 26th aircraft from its Alabama-based manufacturing hub last week.

Airbus is also slacking on delivery of its A350 because of an issue with one of its suppliers. American Airlines has deferred its purchase of the aircraft until after 2020, while Continental Holdings and Delta Airlines are both reviewing their respective orders.
JIM ZEIGLER'S RISING TIDE

Long in the weeds, he's suddenly a phenomenon

John Sharp  jsharp@al.com

The last time that Jim Zeigler was on a winning streak like this, Gerald Ford was president and "Bear" Bryant was walking the sidelines at the University of Alabama.

It was in 1974 when a 24-year-old Zeigler was elected as a Democrat to the Public Service Commission. He was fresh off a rare upending of the "Machine" at the University of Alabama, when he took on the semi-secret alignment of fraternities and sororities and won to become the president of the Student Government Association.

Soon, though, it was the defeats that were piling up. Zeigler, a Mobile resident, lost six statewide races between 1976 and 1998. Some of those races were tight, earning Zeigler the moniker "Mr. 49 Percent."

"That's ancient history," said Zeigler, who's now a Republican. "Mr. 49 Percent doesn't exist anymore. I'm now Mr. 60-plus Percent."

SEE ZEIGLER, A6
And so a question arises: Could this new Zeigler propel himself into the governor's job in 2018? Political watchers consider the sometimes-odd Zeigler to be a long-shot prospect who'd be badly underfunded. But he'd likely find strong backing from tea party supporters.

"He's smart politically," said Steve Flowers, a political commentator, historian and author. "He knows what he's doing. He's crazy like a fox."

Zeigler, though, handily won with 65 percent of the vote. His wife, Jackie, then emerged last year to top a crowded race for a seat on the state Board of Education.

All along, Zeigler's support among grass-roots activists was growing. He enjoys a reputation as a conservative firebrand, and tea-party enthusiasts have embraced his unconventional approaches in battling so-called establishment Republicans.

Robert Bentley was chief among Zeigler's political targets. Zeigler filed an ethics complaint against Bentley in March 2016, right after details emerged about the then-governor's romantic relationship with former aide Rebekah Mason.

Of course, irritating the higher-ups was nothing new for Zeigler.

In the early 1980s, while working as a private lawyer, Zeigler pushed to have $200,000 in salary overpayments to judges and other public officials returned to the taxpayers. He was able to win that case.

In 2002, he filed two ethics complaints against Gov. Don Siegelman, four years before Siegelman was convicted of corruption while in office.

"There is nothing fake at
all on his approaches to the problems we are experiencing as a state," said Cody Phillips, the head of the Eastern Shore Common Sense Campaign tea party group in Baldwin County.

MEDIA DARLING
For Zeigler, the once-unremarkable auditor's office has become a prominent pulpit, although critics declare that he's engaging in blatant self-promotion.

Zeigler, who minored in journalism while in college, has given himself the nickname "Waste Cutter" and it’s emblazoned on the many news releases that his office has sent out in the past two years. These colorful missives link to an online biography and bear the script: "Story of how one person with a mission can make a difference."

"His job is to count the inventory," said Flowers about Zeigler's job as state auditor. "It's totally bland and has been talked about being done away with over the years as not being necessary. It's sort of a benign job. But he's flamboyant. He's, quite frankly, demagoguing. But he knows he's demagoguing and that he gets publicity."

Flowers said Zeigler's brand of self-promotion draws inspiration from possibly Alabama's most famous politician ever.

"He sees himself as a George Wallace-type of person who unashamedly jumps on an issue and knows when it's popular," he said.

Zeigler seeks out the television media, and shows a gift for commanding a camera's attention. Hours before Bentley resigned on April 10, Zeigler was holding court before the TV crews, a jaunty U.S.-flag-pattern tie around his neck, offering his insights into the ongoing scandal while other politicians were nowhere to be found.

"He was in his element," said Flowers. "He's a real character and people like characters."

Phillips offers a somewhat different view: It's Zeigler's genuineness that's the attraction, he said. "He is so open in everything he has done and is very outspoken on a lot of different subjects," Phillips said.

"Sometimes people may characterize him as being a little eccentric. But he's highly intelligent and does a lot of research and reading and so forth. He doesn't go half-cocked on things. He does the fact-checking."

'PART OF MY DUTIES'
Zeigler himself became a subject of barbs on social media for what some labeled as showboating in the immediate aftermath of Bentley's resignation.
That sniping has continued during Zeigler’s recent property inventories at the three gubernatorial residences and the governor’s office in the State Capitol.

“This is part of my duties,” said Zeigler about the inventory work, which generated plenty of media coverage. Zeigler himself made sure to keep reporters abreast of things, even firing off a news release to announce his discovery of “Wanda’s Desk,” which was the most high-profile pieces of state property in the Bentley investigation.

“What has happened, because of the early exit of Governor Bentley, is the public and the media are interested in these audits for the first time,” said Zeigler. “I didn’t cook up this situation. I am just carrying it out and it’s getting the natural media interest.”

Zeigler admits that he’s weighing a run for governor. On his Facebook page, he’s posted articles from AL.com and other media speculating about the field of gubernatorial candidates in 2018. In March, he self-published a 284-page book that he’d written foretelling his victory as governor and his subsequent inauguration.

Still, he isn’t ready to officially announce his candidacy. He said he’ll wait to make up his mind after Sept. 26, the date of an expected Republican runoff in the U.S. Senate race. Any earlier date would be “foolish” on his part, he said.

Flowers and others are skeptical that Zeigler will try for governor. They believe he knows that he’s too much of a dark horse.

Zeigler, for example, isn’t likely to win many endorsements from GOP-backed groups like local chambers of commerce or the Business Council of Alabama.

Jess Brown, a retired political science professor at Athens State University, said that if Gov. Kay Ivey runs, she’ll be a formidable opponent for prospective challengers, which include Huntsville Mayor Tommy Battle, who announced plans to run for governor last week.

Flowers said he could see Zeigler running for attorney general if he aspires for higher office in 2018.

William Stewart, a professor emeritus of political science at the University of Alabama, said of Zeigler: “I don’t think he could raise the big bucks.” He said that Zeigler — “if he’s smart” — will stay put as auditor and “easily win another term.” Zeigler is allowed to serve two terms in the office.
Longtime UA employee recognized for service

By Stephanie Taylor
Staff Writer

Longtime University of Alabama athletics department employee Judy Tanner received the Rotary Rose from the Rotary Club of Tuscaloosa during its weekly meeting Tuesday.

Tanner began work at UA in 1976 and served as administrative assistant to Mal Moore and Bill Battle during their tenures as director of athletics. She continues to work with Battle in his position as a special assistant to the president of the university.

“Her tenure includes helping UA work through probation to become the model NCAA citizen, along with 11 championships amongst five athletic teams, countless conference and individual championships and thousands of acts of kindness,” said Rotary member Jackie Wuska, who presented the rose to Tanner. Wuska said the annual recognition is for community service that might otherwise go unnoticed.

The J. Clemson Duckworth Rotary Rose Award for Outstanding Community Service originated with and is unique to the Rotary Club of Tuscaloosa.

The Rotary Rose tradition began in 1944 and is credited to Joe Duckworth, who was president of the club from 1929-30. In 2001, the award was named for Duckworth’s son, J. Clemson Duckworth, who was a member of the club for 68 years.

Each honoree’s name is listed on a plaque displayed in the Rotary Room of the Tuscaloosa Public Library.

Judy Tanner received the annual J. Clemson Duckworth Rotary Rose Award for Outstanding Community Service at the Rotary Club of Tuscaloosa meeting Tuesday. She is pictured with her husband Mark Tanner, left, and former UA Athletics Director Bill Battle. [CONTRIBUTED PHOTO]
New UA dorm should be ready by August 2018

By Ed Enoch
Staff Writer

A new residence hall at the University of Alabama remains on pace for completion next year near Lakeside Dining on the north side of campus.

The 166,989-square-foot, $51.2 million project is still scheduled to be completed by August 2018, said Tim Leop­ard, associate vice president for Construction Administration. Work is under way at the site, which is at the former location of Palmer and Somerville halls.

The 494-bed dorm will be co-ed with men and women on separate floors. The floors include common areas, laun ­dries and meeting rooms. The double occupancy rooms feature private bathrooms. The new hall near Lake­side Dining will also feature a multi-purpose venue and storm shelter capable of pro­tecting 1,500 people.

UA System trustees approved plans for the new dorm last June. The new dorm will be completed ahead of a planned replacement for Tutwiler residence hall on the south side of campus. The $124-million Tutwiler replacement project will house approximately 1,500 students and is scheduled to open by 2021. The new dorms will add a net of about 700-900 beds on campus, according to presentations to the board of trustees. The campus now has 35 residence halls housing about 8,400 residents.

See DORM, A7

Workers continue work on the new $51.2 million dormitory project at the University of Alabama.
UA team prepares for NASA competition

By Drew Taylor
Staff Writer

At about 1 a.m. Monday, Rebecca Dietz noticed something wrong with "MARTE." Dietz, a senior studying mechanical engineering at the University of Alabama, and several other members of the Alabama Astrobotics team were testing "MARTE," a robotic excavator they had built, in the back of Hardaway Hall when the digging belt broke. The team put the belt back together, but the development was an example of how engineers constantly work on their projects. "If we don't break it, we're not testing it right," said Dietz.

See NASA, A5

Online
For more photos and video of the University of Alabama robotics team, see www.tuscaloosasews.com.
Kenneth Ricks, associate professor in the Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering and the head of the team.

For months, the team has been prepping "MARTE," or modular autonomous robotic terrestrial excavator, for the upcoming NASA Robotic Mining Competition next week at the Kennedy Space Center in Titusville, Florida.

The 17-person team will depart for the competition Saturday, where they will test "MARTE" to dig in conditions similar to a Martian landscape.

NASA has been holding the competition since 2010 in an effort to crowdsource ideas for how to move dirt on planets such as Mars. Since its inception, the UA team has won the competition three times and the majority of its members have competed two or three times before.

"This is the conglomeration of about eight years' worth of ideas," Ricks said.

The competition judges robots based on their weight, how much the machines can dig in a 10-minute span and how autonomous they can be, not requiring the need of someone controlling it to make it work.

"MARTE" weighs 45 kilograms, or approximately 99.2 pounds, and is 1.5 meters long and .75 meters wide. Ricks said the best record the robot has completed in its trial run is moving approximately 200 kilograms of sand in 10 minutes, or approximately 441 pounds.

"If we can do that at the competition, we will be thrilled," Ricks said.

The challenge for the team will be ensuring that "MARTE" autonomously travels its first run.

"With 50 teams each year with two chances and 700 attempts, full autonomy has happened only twice," Ricks said. "It's hard."

Joe Kabalin, a recent graduate on the team, said being on the team has given him a lot of opportunities to explore engineering. This summer, he will serve an internship with Caterpillar and then go to graduate school at Georgia Tech.

"It gives you experience outside of the classroom and gives you some hands-on team working," Kabalin said.

Jonathan Blake, a freshman studying electrical engineering, will join the team for his first competition this year.

"It's been a truly great experience working with a team and seeing this project come together," Blake said. "It's been a good experience."

Dietz said she would love to explore building robots for NASA one day, but that projects like "MARTE" have taught her what she wants to do as an engineer.

"I think that teams like ours are good ways to figure out what you like because it gives you areas to try and see if you like something," Dietz said. "If I did this every day for a living, I would be happy."

Ricky said the team and competition is the best education he can provide to his students.

"They just don't talk about something working; they have to make it physically work," he said. "There is no substitution for that."

The competition will last from May 22 to May 26.

Reach Drew Taylor at drew.taylor@tuscaloosanews.com or 205-722-0204.
The study of barbecue

Alabama students explore communication, culture of barbecue

By Ed Enoch
Staff Writer

At lunchtime on Wednesday, people lined up in the parking lot between Bryant-Denny Stadium and Reese Phifer Hall for free plates of barbecue and sides dished up by a University of Alabama assistant professor and his students.

The communications class spent Wednesday morning preparing the meat in smokers. The diners and cooks chatted across folding tables spread with pork butts, beef brisket, smoked chickens, ribs and sausage. Diners retreated to shade trees, tailgates and electrical boxes to eat the sampling of different styles.

The meal, part of an interim course offered between the spring and summer semesters, was simultaneously a community gathering for the pure pleasure of barbecue and an academic dive into the cooking style's culture and role as a conduit for communication.

The four students in the
See BBQ, A5
The Tuscaloosa News
Thursday, May 18, 2017

BBQ
Continued from A1

course are studying verbal and nonverbal communication involved with barbecue as well as cultural practices. The three-week class includes a week devoted to classroom work, one to cooking barbecue, and a week on the road sampling different styles.

This is the first year for the class, which was created by assistant professor of Communications Studies Darrin Griffin.

Barbecue in all its styles serves as a channel of communication for bringing people together, Griffin said. It accompanies celebrations, mourning, community and family gatherings, political activity and activism.

"It's a universal food," student Raya Turner said.

Turner, a 22-year-old communication studies major from California, arrived at 7 a.m. Wednesday to help prepare the food.

The undergraduate was attracted by the chance to travel for the class. Turner looks forward to experiencing the different barbecue cultures as part of the road trip next week.

"I am excited to see why people are so proud of (their cooking)," Turner said.

The tour will travel by bus across the Southeast where pork and hickory are king and also west to brisket country.

The class plans stops in Austin, Texas; Oklahoma City, Oklahoma; Kansas City, Missouri; Memphis and Decatur.

The diverse cultures were surprising, the West Coast native said. Back home, barbecue wasn't a big deal. It meant cooking hamburgers, hotdogs and other food on the grill, Turner said.

Part of the course is looking at the regional distinctions and definitions, Griffin said.

"I am going to let (the students) dictate the journey," he said.

Reach Ed Enoch at ed.enoch@tuscaloosanews.com or 205-722-0209.
The man in front of the man

Want Nick Saban’s autograph? You’ll have to get through Cedric Burns first

Michael Casagrande mcasagrande@al.com

They shout his name from behind the ropes of Greystone Country Club on a soupy Wednesday morning.

Black Sharpie markers line the pockets of the khaki pants. A full box makes the trip from Tuscaloosa to the Birmingham suburbs for the annual pro-am of the Regions Tradition.

He’s Cedric Burns, the guy you’ve seen on Nick Saban’s hip but probably don’t know.

Officially, he’s listed as Alabama’s athletics relations coordinator. Every year since Saban arrived in 2007, Burns has been the one who stands between the few hundred autograph-hungry golf fans and a Saban signature.

Walking up the second fairway, two handfuls of deflated footballs filled his hands. It’s a carefully perfected system — an arrangement between the gallery and gatekeeper. Burns scans the crowd, selects a few items and walks them to Saban between shots.

The pro-am group this year included Steve Stricker. A 12-time winner on the PGA Tour in his first season with the Champions circuit, Stricker was impressed by the following that stalked Saban’s every move.

“He’s a rock star and the people come out to see him,” Stricker said. “I had a couple good conversations with him already, it’s pretty cool to talk to him.”

Yet it’s Burns who perhaps attracts more attention than his boss.

They know all souvenirs run through his trusted assistant.

Saban’s perfected the walk-and-sign method in years of these events. Burns also knows when to present the items and when to hang back. Practically everything goes through the middleman, and the regulars know the etiquette.

“Mr. Cedric,” they call out with hopeful optimism. Even as Saban stands over his ball, about to hit, fans hold their treasures over the ropes in case Burns looks their way.

“Here’s a baseball, Cedric,” one calls out in a sales pitch. “Nice and easy to sign.”

The rules are simple. Kids first, adults are considered after

See BURNS, B3
The Birmingham News
• Friday, May 19, 2017

BURNS
FROM B1

The young have been served. Among the friendliest guys you'll meet in the halls of Alabama's football complex, Burns is firm enforcing the one-per-fan policy.

The guys with huge bags of boxed memorabilia obviously for resale are typically bypassed. Still, mini helmets and footballs like those presented to Burns on Wednesday appeared on eBay with price tags well above $100.

"He's really good. He's very fair," said Lannie Bittinger, a veteran of this dance. "I know he has a lot of people out here, everybody throwing something out there so it's very tough. But he's very good with it. And Nick signs all day, or Coach Saban, I should say."

Bittinger has been driving over from Atlanta for 15 years of Regions Pro-Ams. The goal is a few Saban signatures a year that he says are for Christmas presents.

Hats, footballs, end zone pylons, jumbo golf balls, toy cars, flags, even a 2 foot-by-2 foot print were among the prized possessions seeking the nine script letters scribbled by Alabama's football coach. Last year, playing partner Rocco Mediate was left speechless by the Jesus candle that was altered to include Saban's face instead.

Walking behind the group is Saban's daughter Kristen and her husband Adam Setas. They were around to see Burns receive, present and deliver 18 autographed souvenirs on the fifth hole alone.

"I don't think anybody could do what he does the way he does it," said Kristen Saban-Setas as she walked down the sixth fairway. Greystone isn't the easiest course to walk, yet the crowd doesn't lose steam as the temperature climbed Wednesday morning.

Danny Davis of Moulton was hanging in there on the front nine. He's already got a football signed but hoped for more. Davis collects Saban autographs, though he said he's not one of those out to sell his haul.

Davis isn't just a fan, he proudly said he's an "obnoxious one." There's a museum in his home dedicated to his 10 Saban signatures he's gathered over the years. This is his first Regions Pro-Am hunt.

"Usually I just hang out around the campus and just catch him," Davis said. "I bought a couple over the internet."

The kids-first policy didn't help his cause Wednesday, though he understood the reasoning.

"Cedric," Davis said, "is great."

This is just another day in a long career Burns has enjoyed with the Alabama football program. He doesn't do interviews, though he was quoted a few times in Warren St. John's 2013 profile of Saban in GQ. His run as an assistant to Alabama coaches dates back 36 years at this point — reaching all the way back to the end of the Bear Bryant era.

You'll find Burns behind Saban in the live postgame interviews after big games. He follows his boss on the sideline if there's assistance required.

No news conference begins before Burns delivers the sponsored soda bottle to the podium. There's always a smile for the gathered reporters, though his decades of stories remain confidential. That loyalty is certainly related to his longevity.

The work isn't always glamorous and pro-am autograph duty appears trying. Eager autograph seekers had to be hushed by Burns on the third tee when Stricker was trying to hit. There was still golf to be played between signings. Yet after 11 years of Saban appearances at the Regions Tradition Pro-Am, the fervor for the coach's autograph remains.

With it, you'll find Cedric Burns scanning the crowd for the most deserving fans. As long as the box of Sharpies have ink, guys like Moulton's Davis will be there hoping for one more script Saban.

"There's never enough," Davis said walking up the hill on Greystone's front nine. "It's Alabama football."

AL.com correspondent Alec Lewis contributed to this story.
Hunt for Saban ball, autograph least of his worries

Joseph Goodman
jgoodman@al.com

Nick Saban is a pretty good golfer, but he still chunks a few shots into the water every now and then.

On Wednesday, in the Pro-Am of the Regions Tradition, Alabama's football coach put his second shot of a par 5 into a creek. Naturally, an Alabama fan scooped the ball out of the water and then proceeded to try and have it signed by Saban. Why? Because that's what Alabama fans do.

"Hey, coach, remember that ugly shot you hit back on hole 5? I retrieved the ball, and now want you to write your name on it."

I didn't have anything better to do, so I followed that guy around to see what happened. Not sure who's weirder, the guy who goes into a creek for Saban's lost ball, or the guy who thinks that'd be something worth writing about.

Turns out, the guy who went after Saban's ball is in need of some prayers and positive thoughts these next few months.

Michael Graydon is the Alabama fan who found Saban's missing Titleist. Like Saban, Graydon is a car salesman. Unlike Saban, that's his full-time gig. In July, Graydon's daughter, Wryn, is scheduled to have a kidney transplant that could save her life.

Wryn turns 2 on July 6. The surgery is scheduled for July 13.

"It's really scary," said the 35-year-old father.

Graydon shared his story in between unsuccessful attempts to have his golf ball signed. Graydon's daughter is alive today thanks to Children's of Alabama. Due to a rare disease, congenital nephrotic syndrome, little Wryn had both of her kidneys removed.

GOODMAN
FROM A1

when she was 2 months old.

Healthy kidneys filter out the good from the bad, but Wryn's kidneys were pumping away everything.

"My dad is a doctor, and he told me her potassium levels were lower than someone who is dead," Graydon said.

Graydon and his wife, Haley, were on a trip for their six-year anniversary when they received a call that something was wrong with their daughter. They rushed home, "and drove 100 mph from the airport to Children's hospital."

Haley and Michael held their 2-month-old baby and cried. Then Wryn stopped breathing.

"She flat-lined," Graydon said. "And about 12 doctors were there to save her life."

Last year, the Regions Tradition raised $1.1 million for charity, and most of it went to Children's of Alabama. Wryn's medical bills will exceed that amount after her July surgery. Insurance and the state have helped with the cost, says Graydon.

Wryn's kidney donor is her 62-year-old grandmother, Carol. It's uncommon for someone older than 60 to donate a kidney for a toddler, but Graydon said his mom was tested and "they told her she had the kidneys of a 20-year-old."

Until the surgery, Wryn will continue with her dialysis treatments. They take approximately 11 hours every night. She's an early riser, so the treatments usually begin around 7:30 p.m.

"Her spirit is incredible," Graydon said. "They say she'll have way more energy when

See Next Page
she gets her kidney, but she already has tons of it. We’re kind of worried about what we’re going to do.”

Teach her how to play golf, probably. Graydon loves the game, and he’s played at Greystone Country Club enough to know you don’t hit driver off the 623-yard par 5 fifth. Hitting from the tips, Steve Stricker went with a five wood off the tee and placed it in the middle of the fairway. Stricker’s playing partner, Saban, tried his driver and put it right. His attempt at a recovery shot found the creek.

A tournament official and Saban’s public relations coordinator looked for the lost ball for about a minute. Anxious to continue playing, Saban took a drop and hit a new ball near the green. Several Alabama fans went hunting for Saban’s lost ball, but in the wrong place. Graydon found it after the crowd following Saban moved down the fairway. "I’ve been in there plenty of times,” Graydon said. "I knew where to look.”

For the next two holes, Graydon tried without success to approach Saban. He even momentarily interrupted Saban after one of the coach’s errant chip shots rolled off a green. "What’s up, guys?” said Saban before three-putting.

Graydon was going about it all wrong, of course. If someone wanted an autograph from Saban on Wednesday, they first had to go through Cedric Burns. Burns is Saban’s driver, but sometimes he acts as a buffer between Saban and his fans.

After some coaching, Graydon saddled up to Burns at Hole 6 and offered him a bottle of water. By Hole 7, Graydon had his autograph. "What the heck?” said Saban, looking down at the ball he was about to sign. "This is my ball.”

It’s an unusual souvenir from one of the greatest college football coaches of all time. In Alabama, mementos like that become family heirlooms.

Joseph Goodman is a columnist for Alabama Media Group. He’s on Twitter@JoeGoodmanJr.
Forbes recently named the University of Alabama at Birmingham No. 69 on its list of the best 75 large employers in the United States.

Three other Alabama-based companies, American Cast Iron Pipe of Birmingham, AAA Cooper Transportation of Dothan, and Austal USA of Mobile, are among the best midsized employers in the country, according to the magazine.

"UAB is changing the world for the better across all areas of our mission in education, research, health care, community service and economic development," UAB Chief Human Resources Officer Alesia Jones said in a statement. "We support our faculty and staff with resources, facilities, learning opportunities and an array of benefits including multiple choices in health insurance plans, parental leave, expanded sick leave for probationary employees, paid leave benefits for organ donors, an increase to the minimum wage and plans for expanded child care on and off campus. UAB employees invest themselves in their work and take pride in UAB's growth and reputation, and we invest in their success."

UAB is the largest single employer in Alabama with more than 23,000 employees and an annual economic impact exceeding $5 billion in the state.

Forbes considers a large employer, one that employs more than 5,000 people. A midsize company is considered one that employs between 1,000 and 5,000 workers.

Forbes America's Best Employers report, both large and midsized, culled data from a survey of 30,000 U.S. employees, which asked them to rate how likely they were to recommend their organization to family or friends, as well as to recommend companies other than their own.

Birmingham-based American Cast Iron Pipe, an engineering and manufacturing firm, ranked No. 294 out of 301 of the best midsized employers in the country, according to Forbes.

Dothan-based AAA Cooper Transportation ranked No. 268, and Austal USA, of Mobile, an aerospace and defense firm, ranked No. 206.
Costco Wholesale, Google and REI topped the list of large employers in the country. Other notable organizations recognized included JetBlue Airways (12), Facebook (13), Microsoft (50), Unilever (87), Apple (90), Charter Communications (119), Lockheed Martin (194) and Century 21 Real Estate (214).
Bank gives two large gifts to UAB
By: Tim Steere

Wells Fargo recently gave the University of Alabama at Birmingham two significant gifts that will support two programs on campus.

The banking giant, through $250,000 donation, will establish the Wells Fargo Scholars Program to support a five student each year. A selection committee made up of faculty and staff from the Collat School of Business will select the scholars, and the most highly qualified students based on merit and financial need will receive the scholarship awards.

To date, three students have been selected as Wells Fargo Scholars for the 2017-18 academic year.

The second gift, a $150,000 grant, will help support the construction of the UAB Football Operations Center over three years.

“We believe in thoughtful and strategic giving here in Birmingham,” said Leigh Collier, Wells Fargo mid-South region president. “Supporting UAB is a long-term investment in the future of our city and will prepare students like Jaleel, Joy, Brianna and more than 19,000 UAB students just like them to become the leaders of tomorrow.”
Innovate Bham program hits key milestone

Birmingham residents interested in the technology sector are now getting a second chance at a career, and metro area companies are seeing a fresh pipeline of talent.

Innovate Birmingham Workforce Initiative graduated its first class last week, and program leaders can already say that half of the students graduated with a job offer from a reputable metro area company.

The initiative, which is a boot-camp-style program led by University of Alabama at Birmingham with 15 partner organizations and 34 employer sponsors at the helm, now boasts 18 young adults from Jefferson County who have earned their certification.

The goal is to train 925 people over the next four years and get them CompTIA certified. That's good news for the IT enthusiasts who didn't get accepted the first go-round where only 1 in 7 applicants were accepted. Another piece of good news for them is in the next session, program leaders want to evolve the professional development component of the program, giving participants more opportunities to learn how to work better with others in the workplace, whether it is at the water cooler or via email.

Stephanie Rebman

Birmingham was just one of 23 communities selected to receive the $6 million America's Promise grant from the U.S. Department of Labor. The fact we were chosen to be a part of this shows Birmingham already has promise in this arena, with only good things to follow.

This resource will be a major player in the Magic City and will continue to put our growing technology sector on the national map. The energy surrounding the first cohort's graduation also will feed wonderfully into the upcoming announcement about Birmingham's innovation district.

Abby Guerin, director of workforce development with Innovate Birmingham Workforce Initiative, said it best last week when summarizing the benefits the business community will see from this program in the coming months and years.

"This is the pipeline in connection to their community and we are here to bridge that gap," she said. "I think what we have the opportunity to really mold folks as they are needed, and that's where having the employers involved from the beginning is their chance to meet these folks and get to know them. They're helping essentially to build their own pipeline as well."

We look forward to seeing the partnerships this initiative will continue to form in town and what impact it will have on Magic City residents pursuing a lasting and promising career in technology.
UAB Health CEO on the AHCA's impact

Looming changes in the federal health care arena have spurred criticism among many in Birmingham's health care scene about what the plan to repeal and replace the Affordable Care Act could mean for Alabama.

The current plan, the American Health Care Act, was recently passed by the U.S. House, would make a number of substantial changes to Medicaid, health insurance requirements and employer regulations.

While the bill still requires approval from the U.S. Senate, some Alabama hospital executives have voiced concerns about the AHCA and its potential impact on the state's health providers. The BBJ recently spoke with Will Ferniany, CEO of the UAB Health System to gauge his thoughts on the AHCA and its potential effect on the state.

What's your initial takeaway from the revised proposal? The good thing about this bill is it's got to go to the Senate. This is not repeal and replace. This is repeal and make worse. I'm not a big fan of the Affordable Care Act either. Neither of these bills do anything to control health care costs. I really believe the best thing to do is to throw both of these out and start over. I don't think you can fix it from here. The underlying foundation is broken.

Here's an analogy. Apple is a wonderful system, built from the ground up. Windows is built on MS-DOS, which makes it clunky, and you can't get rid of it. Well, there's things with the Affordable Care Act that make it clunky that we can't get rid of. They should just start from scratch. This bill is really bad for Alabama. Anywhere you turn, it's bad for Alabama.

What's your outlook on the Medicaid situation under the proposed plan? If you're a 60-year-old couple, not eligible for Medicaid and on the exchange today, while making $40,000 a year, your insurance will go up by $19,000 a year. Who can afford that? They're going to drop off and not have insurance.

We have one of the lowest-cost Medicaid programs in the country. We spend $5,400 per beneficiary. Rhode Island spends $9,500. They got locked in at a high level and we get locked in at a lower level. So, we will be perpetually be a low-level state. Under the current system, we put up 30 cents and they put up 70. Under the current law, we can add benefits and only put up 30 percent of the cost. With the new system, if we wanted to add benefits, we would have to put up 100 percent of the cost. We didn't expand Medicaid. It's gone. States that expanded Medicaid are better off because they're locked in at their current level.

What's the biggest problem confronting providers under this bill? There are a couple things that are really problematic for providers. I really believe insurance subsidies versus tax credits aren't the problem. It's how much they are and how they're done. You have to remember this bill is designed to cut federal revenue. Somebody has to pay for that.

This is going to cut a trillion dollars in the Medicaid program over 10 years away from the federal government. Who's going to pay that? It's going to have to be hospitals or the general fund. Right now, a lot of people don't sign up for Medicaid. They show up at the hospital and we determine that they're Medicaid eligible. If they're eligible, Medicaid pays us retroactively. The new bill prohibits that. Unless people show up at the hospital, they don't know if they're eligible.
CRE EXEC ADDS TO UAB COLLAT PROJECT

When it opens next year, the new UAB Collat School of Business building will have another feature to improve business education, courtesy of a Birmingham commercial real estate professional.

Chad Hagwood, senior vice president and regional manager for Capital One Multifamily Finance, has contributed a gift that will create the Chad Thomas Hagwood Finance Lab.

According to information from UAB, the lab will be a 40-seat state-of-the-art space to provide finance and real estate students with hands-on experience with business transactions, and will also house the student-managed investment portfolio Green and Gold Fund.

"Students will have a world-class facility to learn and grow in," Hagwood said. "And I think that's a tremendous opportunity, not only for UAB, but for future generations of business leaders who are in their development stage."

UAB said Hagwood is the first alumnus to give a cumulative $1 million to Collat, which includes the creation of an endowed scholarship and naming of a classroom in the new building.

As we recently reported, the $37 million 110,000-square-foot business school project is one of several transformative construction developments in the works on UAB's campus right now.
THREE THINGS WE'D LIKE TO SEE IN BHAM'S INNOVATION DISTRICT

Birmingham is on the verge of one of the most important projects in its history. The project could dramatically change the metro area's economic fortunes, elevate Birmingham's profile in the global world and be a huge catalyst for job growth, among other factors.

The idea is to create a true innovation district in the city. The idea's foundation began to form in late 2015, when Brookings Institution's Bruce Katz visited the area and was blown away by several facets of Birmingham.

Namely, Katz was impressed by the concentration of research and innovation assets in Birmingham's city center. He made it clear both in that visit and a subsequent one in late 2016, that the Magic City had a generational opportunity to take advantage of those assets.

At some point in the near future, UAB, the Birmingham Business Alliance and other stakeholders will unveil official plans for the innovation district. While that plan could take a variety of forms, here are a few ingredients we would like to see:

1) It should have geographic components, but should also transcend geography.

While it might be tempting to just designate a huge swath of the metro area as an innovation district, we know that's not the path to success.

As Katz noted, the current urban migration - coupled with Birmingham's unique downtown assets - presents a golden opportunity we must capitalize on. For those reasons, the district does need some geographic parameters.

But Birmingham can - and ideally should - have an innovation district in the city center that includes the city's neighborhoods and surrounding suburbs.

For instance, we'd love to see dedicated connections between the district and public housing developments to create a workforce pipeline similar to the one being developed by the ongoing Innovate Birmingham training program, which recently graduated its first students.

We'd also love to see suburban partnerships that create landing spots for companies rising out of the district, as well as partnerships with suburban schools.

2) Strong, designated leadership.

Birmingham has had its share of big ideas that faltered over the years. Many failed because of a lack of collaboration. Others fell victim to politics. Some represented duplicated efforts and missed opportunities for synergy.

But many also lacked the vocal, strong leader that can address any issues.

While collaboration is key, Birmingham needs an innovation chief - someone who will be the ringleader and catalyst for making the idea work. It's a huge responsibility, but there are several qualified candidates in the metro area.

3) Birmingham's plan shouldn't just be a district or a series of related programs, but should represent a way of thinking and collaboration.

One thing that was clear from Katz's talk is how successful innovation districts and communities approach problems and challenges. Along those lines, we hope Birmingham's innovation district will spark a new collective way to approach the challenges Birmingham is facing.

That means public-private partnerships, collaboration between cities and teamwork among companies and nonprofits to address problems or capitalize on opportunities.

If Birmingham simply used this opportunity to designate an area as an innovation district and make strategic investments in that area, the program could probably be successful.

But if we, as a metro area, embrace all facets of the idea - especially collaboration - the innovation district could truly be the turning point in Birmingham's economic history.

We hope it's the latter.
UAH researcher develops new suite of phone apps to monitor physical mobility, stability of older people

By: Staff

A new suite of phone apps developed at The University of Alabama in Huntsville (UAH) uses Android smartphones to monitor the physical mobility and stability of older people.

That’s important because research has shown that small changes in the time required and the intensity of common everyday motions can be early indicators of health issues such as stroke or falls.

The applications were developed by Dr. Emil Jovanov, the 2014 Alabama Inventor of the Year, Dr. Aleksandar Milenkovic and doctoral students Mladen Milosevic (now at Philips Research, Boston, Mass.) and Priyanka Madhushri from the Electrical and Computer Engineering Department at UAH.

An Android phone loaded with the software developed at UAH, is worn in a chest-level harness. The patented software interfaces use sensors already built into the smart phone to create a device that is a sensor, recorder and communicator of mobility and stability data. All records are sent automatically to the personal medical record of the user on the mHealth server at UAH.

Over time, personalized data points could indicate trends that can inform a physician’s diagnoses and create the opportunity for early intervention. The apps also can track the progress of older people who are taking part in strength, stability and mobility improvement programs.

“We wanted to have something everyone could use in the comfort of their own home,” says Dr. Jovanov, who in 2000 was the first researcher to propose a system to wirelessly integrate sensors on or in bodies and communicate through the Internet for ubiquitous health monitoring. “The data automatically goes to your personal records, so it makes the jobs of nurses easier, and doctors could easily access these records and monitor progress between visits.”

The new software uses as a framework the standardized Centers for Disease Control tests for mobility. The Time Up and Go (TUG) test measures the time it takes for someone to rise from a seated position and walk a measured distance. The 30-second chair stand test measures the number of times a person can rise and be seated in the allotted time, and four-stage balance tests evaluate balance during standing. The application suite supports all tests recommended by the CDC.

The personalized assessment of mobility and stability can inform healthcare workers about a variety of health conditions, including the possibility of future falls.
“The reason we especially want to prevent falls is because in the elderly, a fall often triggers a downward spiral of declining health,” says Dr. Jovanov. Falls in some elderly patients may be due to prescribed drugs that can cause instability, or that interact with other drugs to do so. The monitor could provide early warning and a simple change of the drug might prevent falls.

Development of the apps started five years ago, initially focused on achieving a mobile operation that could perform the TUG test with a higher degree of precision than a human tester.

“Then we discovered that we can also use the app to isolate the phases of the TUG process,” Dr. Jovanov says. “It turns out that some of those unused parameters provide very good assessment of mobility and indicate possible future falls.”

For example, how far a person leans forward when getting up from a seated position is a measurement that directly correlates with the potential for falls. The sTUG app uses the phone worn in the chest harness to monitor angles and angular velocities at the chest.

A personalized model is currently under development by doctoral student Madhushri to assess the forces involved and energy used during the transition. The next generation of the software will allow the personalized assessment of performance versus a personal optimal transition, and will indicate the overall strength and wellness state of the user.

“Now we have a much greater set of parameters that physicians can use in their diagnoses, using height and weight to make a personal model to assess the forces and torques in the hip, knee and ankle during transition from sitting to standing,” says Dr. Jovanov. That allows doctors to assess how smoothly patients are accomplishing basic movements.

“We can run the test at home on the smart phone, and analyze changes to assess possible indications of change of health status,” Dr. Jovanov says.

For example, the monitor can be valuable in flagging the small changes in mobility and stability that research shows immediately follow mini-strokes.

“In the case of strokes, you have changes in both speed and stability,” Dr. Jovanov says. “Very often, a sequence of small strokes signals that a big stroke is coming. If you detect early the effects of the smaller strokes, then the physician may be able to prevent the big stroke.”

UAH researchers collaborated with Huntsville’s Center for Aging and Dr. Karen Frith from UAH’s College of Nursing to test the monitoring device in an elderly population aged 70 to 90-plus. During the successful testing, they found the monitor could play a vital role in a Center for Aging program that educates older adults about how to improve their mobility and stability.
“This device can give you immediate feedback about your progress in the program,” says Dr. Jovanov. “We had test subjects who needed 38 seconds to complete the TUG test at the beginning of the program, and they improved to just 19 seconds.”

Testing led to other developments, including using the data to create a personalized, optimal stand up metric for a given patient’s weight that can be used to measure improvements.

“A computer model shows how much force is needed for the personalized optimum transition and assesses forces in each transition during monitoring, which allows us to see exactly, based on specific transition data, how much force you have and how much progress you have made,” Dr. Jovanov says.

The new apps are either patented or patent pending, and are part of Dr. Jovanov’s mHealth suite of personalized medical monitoring projects, a 16-year endeavor that explores and has patented technology innovations that can improve people’s health and lives.

In addition to the new apps, a smart pill bottle that reminds and records when users take medication and when supply is getting low, a smart water bottle that reminds and records times of hydration, a mobility application for wheelchair-bound patients and enabling technologies for wearable personalized medical monitoring systems are among the products produced by the mHealth laboratory in UAH’s Engineering Building led by Dr. Milenkovic and Dr. Jovanov.

With increasing numbers of aging Baby Boomers and a limited supply of physicians and healthcare workers, the mHealth mobile health monitoring systems are considered to be architecture of choice for a new generation of personalized and predictive healthcare.

“The idea is that one day, you will be able to walk into your local Walgreens or CVS and purchase these devices inexpensively, or install the application on your smartphone,” he says. “They will help you to become proactive and more engaged and work with your physician to create a personalized medical monitoring and recording program that will help you to assess and improve your health and wellbeing.”
Senior logistician course available at UAH

By: Cherish T. Gilmore

The University of Alabama in Huntsville College of Professional and Continuing Studies is now accepting applications for a two-week graduate level logistics management education program called the Senior Logistician Advanced Course.

The course is open to Army civilians who are in career program 13, 17 or 24, grades GS 13-15, currently in an occupational series 0346 position and have a minimum of three years of service in a permanent Army civilian position at the time of application.

“We need the best trained civilian logisticians to provide what our Army needs to fight and win our nations wars,” Lt. Gen. Larry Wyche, Army Materiel Command’s deputy commander and Redstone Arsenal senior commander, said. “The course may be rigorous, but the challenge and outcome for our sons and daughters on the battlefield will be worth the sacrifice.”

The Senior Logistician Advanced Course is scheduled to be hosted in Huntsville July 17-28 and will provide the knowledge and skills necessary to keep pace with technological, professional and mission advancement. Applications must be received by May 26.

Logisticians will learn information to prepare them to anticipate potential changes in the business world to coordinate and implement anticipatory responses. The curriculum is also designed to challenge students in core logistics scenarios.

The training application is available on the ACT website (https://actnow.army.mil). Select “Communities” on the left side of the screen, then select “Communities” from the drop-down. Next, on the right side, select “Civilian,” then the career program (either CP 13, 17 or 24). On the landing screen, under “Important Bookmarks” is the application link titled, “CP-13/17/24 Application.” A resume, no longer than three pages, must accompany the application.

Applications will be reviewed and evaluated using a panel process. The panel will evaluate each applicant based on the following areas: applicant’s statement of interest, supervisor utilization plan, experience, education, supervisor ratings and previous training.
The bridge at Fort Dorchester High was old and rickety, so engineering students built a new one

By: Paul Bowers

A group of engineering students at Fort Dorchester High recently replaced the rickety footbridge in their school's parking lot with a custom-designed new one that's wider, sturdier and a lot nicer to look at.

"These kids have busted their butts," said engineering teacher Ben Bertolet, standing on the finished product Tuesday afternoon.

"They've come in here on Saturdays, they've worked during their lunch. When they poured concrete, they were here at 6 a.m. ... They really made a commitment to this thing, and not for financial gain but for integrity. It's something good for the community."

The old bridge over the culvert toward Bagwell Stadium was a continual frustration for the football fans who pack the bleachers. When rain filled the culvert, as it seemed to do every game day last season, many had to wait and squeeze through a bottleneck opening to get across.

The new bridge was the students' idea. When the engineering program received a $500 grant from the Charleston Defense Contractors Association, senior Max Eichman knew how he wanted to spend it.

"I already went to (Principal Bert) Postell a couple of years ago and said, 'Let's build another bridge.' So getting the extra money really brought that idea back in my mind," Eichman said. "It's always been way too small for what it's used for."

The school will hold a ribbon-cutting ceremony for the new crossing Friday. The final price tag was about $3,000. Bertolet said the students also got money and tool donations from Bosch, school maintenance worker Pat Branham and Bertolet Construction Corp., their teacher's father's business. The Lowe's Home Improvement by Wescott Plantation also offered a discount on supplies. Labor was free.

Working with Autodesk Inventor design software, the students came up with a custom design that fit the dimensions and met building codes. International building codes require pedestrian walkways to handle 90-pound-per-square-foot "live load," according to Bertolet. This one?

"More. It's over-engineered," Bertolet said.

All three high schools in Dorchester County School District 2 are certified to offer STEM classes (science, technology, engineering and math) through Project Lead the Way, a national nonprofit curriculum group. Some of the seniors who worked on the bridge project at Fort Dorchester plan to pursue engineering as a career.
Nick Russo, who helped mix the concrete ramps for the bridge, is heading to the University of Alabama in Huntsville to study aerospace engineering.

Rick Comps, who took Bertolet's biotechnical engineering class, is joining the Air Force to learn mechanical work. And Eichman, who took all five of the engineering classes offered at Fort Dorchester, will enroll at the University of South Carolina this fall to study civil engineering.
Goostree made indelible mark while at Alabama

Former UA trainer posthumously inducted into Alabama Sports Hall of Fame

By Aaron Suttles
Sports Writer

There was a tinge of sadness in Jimmy Tom Goostree's eyes Friday afternoon on what otherwise was a joyful occasion. It's the pain only a son who's lost and misses his father can understand.

But there was more than sadness. His eyes revealed intense pride for his father. And as for the sadness? Well, that existed only because his dad wasn't around to accept his just reward.

Jim Goostree, passed in 1999, but his friends and family came together over the weekend to celebrate the man who made his mark on the University of Alabama athletic department. For his career achievements, Goostree was posthumously inducted into the Alabama Sports Hall of Fame as part of the 2017 class.

Serving as an athletic trainer for 27 years at UA, Goostree experienced some golden years of Alabama football. He also served as the head trainer for both the Blue-Gray and Senior Bowl all-star games for 15 years. In 1984, he received a promotion at UA and during his time in that role he supervised the renovation and expansion of Bryant-Denny Stadium, the building of the indoor practice facility and football buildings. He was also over the Tide Pride donation program.

The Goostree's are well known in Tuscaloosa, and with each person to come up to Jimmy Tom Goostree expressing congratulations in the build up to last weekend, all the experiences came rushing back.

"I've been thinking about it a good bit...," Jimmy Tom Goostree said. "It's humbling. We're all excited about it. I look forward to it because being able to see some people, former athletes and coaches, people in the athletic arena that I may not have seen in years.

"I often tell people that I didn't realize it at the time when I was growing up and now as an adult I reflect on some of the memories and wonderful things I was able to experience. I've lived a life that most people only dream of. You know, go to football practice. Be on the sidelines as a ball boy. Be the bat boy for the baseball team. All of those type things. To be in the weight room as a 14, 15 year old and watching Jan Johnson, an Olympic pole vaulter, work out, and then go out on the main arena floor and play basketball. Just priceless stories that with this going on this weekend have really come to the forefront of my memory.

"I was at a meeting last week with a couple of friends of mine and after the end of the meeting we were talking to one of the individuals about Nick Saban's pay raise. We got to reminiscing about our families always going to the games, and one of the guys said when he got to a certain age his father said there wasn't tickets for him anymore so he had to sell Cokes in the student section. And my other friend said he sold programs. He said if you sold 125 you could watch the football game. And I'm sitting there thinking and I said, 'Well, I was the ball boy. I was on the sideline.' I didn't think anything of it at the time. Now to be able to have those type of memories is just incredible."

Those memories keep him close to his father, and this past weekend, while filled with a tinge of sadness, also brought his beloved dad back to the forefront of everyone's memories.

"I told somebody the other day that I regret that he's not here," he said. "I regret that his friend and long-time assistant Sang Lyda isn't here to be able to experience it with him. Of course the special relationship he had with Coach (Paul W. "Bear") Bryant for 25 years, it's kind of sad that none of the three are here where they could kind of, as dad would say, waller in it."

Reach Aaron Suttles at aaron@tidesports.com or at 205-722-0229.
Q&A: Avery Johnson talks recruiting, staff changes and more

By: Cecil Hurt

University of Alabama men’s basketball coach Avery Johnson was available for a sit-down interview with Tuscaloosa News sports editor Cecil Hurt on Tuesday afternoon and touched on several topics ranging from the anticipation for the 2017-18 season to the status of freshman forward Braxton Key, who has still made no announcement about whether he will return for his sophomore season. Here is a transcript of that interview.

Q: First, has Braxton Key given you any update on his status recently?

A: This is exactly how things have gone. Braxton came to me after the season and shared with me that he wanted to declare for the draft without signing with an agent. We supported that 100 percent and we supplied Braxton and his family with all the information available. We shared with him exactly what would happen in the process. In our last conversation, he confirmed that what I had said would happen has happened, exactly as I told him. As of now, he is still in a holding pattern for his final decision.

He has been to at least one draft tryout camp (Boston) and he has been working out a lot in Charlotte (Key’s hometown) with some of his old high school teammates. He did well academically for the spring semester. So we’re just waiting on him, and he has to make a decision by May 24.

Q: Pending that decision, what is your roster situation for next year?

A: ArMond Davis, as you know, has had a change of heart and decided to come back for next year. That leaves us with a scholarship and we are looking at a transfer who could sit out and be eligible next year (2018-19). If Braxton decides not to come back, then we might look at the possibility of a graduate transfer who would be eligible right away but we are not at that point yet.

Q: Moving on to your staff, could you discuss the decision not to renew Bob Simon’s contract (as associate head coach) for the upcoming year?

A: Coach Simon was here for two years and did a really solid job for us. I enjoyed working with him but I did make the decision not to renew his contract. We wish him all the best in his coaching career in the future.

Q: What was the process that led to hiring Yasir Rosemond from the Georgia staff to fill that position?

A: We were contacted by a tremendous number of candidates. You then narrow that down to 10 or 15 coaches, you take your list of about seven different things you are looking for in a new coach and you see who checks the most boxes. Yasir checked all of the boxes. Obviously, recruiting is critical and you ask yourself ‘what can he bring to the table? How can he help us? How can we help him?’ Because recruiting isn’t one guy, it’s all of us (on the staff) working together. With that said, he’s going to have a great deal of success. He has a great attitude, a
great work ethic. He has great chemistry with the players. J.J. Frazier was tweeting today about Coach Rosemond, how much he would miss him. He has some very strong connections overseas that can help open up our recruiting in that way.

If the job is 90 percent recruiting, the other 10 percent also counts. You’re looking for chemistry. You’re looking for an individual that represents the institution in a class manner. You’re looking for that right fit. I think Antoine Pettway, John Pelphrey and Yasir will be a dynamic staff. A lot of where we are today is because of Antoine’s growth as a young coach. He’s had an incredibly accelerated growth in the past two years and he is our No. 2 assistant now. But I think he’ll be a head coach somewhere in the near future.

This hiring completes our staff although we are still looking into the possibility of hiring a coaching consultant for basketball. We’ll let everyone know when we’ve explored that a little more thoroughly.

Q: Have you confirmed your dates for a foreign tour this summer?

A: Yes, we will be playing three games in Canada starting on August 2. We’ll play two games in Ottawa and one in Montreal and that should give us 10 days of practice that will benefit our team tremendously. Those contracts are signed.

We are still finalizing our non-conference schedule but if we can get a couple of the games we are negotiating, it should be one of the best non-conference schedules we’ve seen around here in a long time.

Q: Two questions in one about your recruiting class after the All-Star game circuit. Do you expect everyone to report and do you foresee playing Collin Sexton as a point guard?

A: We expect everyone to be on campus May 28. As far as who will play what position, I’m looking at it more as guards, forwards and centers rather than breaking it down as 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5. Collin can play along with Dazon Ingram, or John Petty or Avery (Johnson) Junior and I’m not going to worry about calling one of them a point guard and one of them a shooting guard. We’ve got guards. That’s how I look at it.

Q: Since the Final Four, there has been a tremendous amount of excitement about the upcoming season in the SEC and now several schools, notably Kentucky and Missouri, continue to add top recruits. What do you foresee?

A: I like where the SEC is going. I always thought this could be a premier league, we just needed to recruit a little better as a conference, not just Kentucky. Now you are seeing that. Missouri is recruiting well, and Florida, Mississippi State and a lot of others. We think we have a potentially strong class. I think we are well-poised as a league to get seven or eight teams in the NCAA Tournament next year, maybe more. There are a lot of ways in which we are going to have to stay competitive in the future, whether that is recruiting or facilities.

Q: A final question on a different note — how has the passing of Coach (Ben) Jobe (Johnson’s college coach at Southern University) continued to affect you over the last few months?
A: I think about him every day. In the (assistant) coaching search, I received a nice note from a young coach at Talladega College telling me how much Coach Jobe had meant to him. He told me that Coach Jobe used to quote me saying ‘It’s easy being born. It’s easy drawing your last breath. What’s hard is everything in between.’ I don’t know if I said that or he did, but Coach gave me the credit, which is just the sort of man he was. And for me, he was a phone call at least every other day, a great resource to draw on. He was a great person and a day doesn’t go by without me thinking of that.”
Avery Johnson hires assistant basketball coach

By: Cecil Hurt

Yasir Rosemond, a member of Mark Fox’s basketball staff at the University of Georgia since 2014, will join Avery Johnson’s staff at Alabama, replacing Bob Simon.

The news was reported originally by UGASports.com.

Rosemond will join John Pelphrey and Antoine Pettway as the full-time assistants on Johnson’s staff. Prior to joining the Georgia staff in 2014, Rosemond was an assistant coach at Samford in Birmingham. He has been a solid recruiter in the state of Georgia, recruiting forward Derek Ogbeide and guard Teshaun Hightower to Athens.

Alabama reached out last week for permission to speak with Rosemond about the opening.

An Atlanta native, Rosemond also served five seasons at Oregon, his alma mater, under Ernie Kent. The first two of those years he was director of basketball operations, the latter three an assistant coach. While on the Ducks’ coaching staff, Rosemond helped assemble a top-25 recruiting class in 2008 and also coached Aaron Brooks, who earned All-America honors in 2007. Brooks is beginning his eighth season in the NBA, with stints on the rosters of Houston, Phoenix, Toronto, Sacramento, Denver and Chicago.
UA soccer fall schedule to be 'a challenging one'

The University of Alabama soccer team will play 12 home matches, including an out-of-conference contest with Florida State, and eight on the road this fall. UA released its schedule on Monday.

"I am very excited about the 2017 schedule," said third-year UA coach Wes Hart. "It's a challenging one for sure. It's definitely the toughest schedule we've had in my three years here."

The Crimson Tide will host five matches at the Alabama Soccer Complex to start the season: Middle Tennessee State (Aug. 10), Jacksonville State (Aug. 18), Samford (Aug. 20), South Florida (Aug. 24) and Florida State (Aug. 27).

"It's going to be a fun challenge playing against FSU at home," Hart said. "They have been at the pinnacle of college soccer over the last decade."

UA will play South Alabama (Sept. 1) and Troy (Sept. 3) in Mobile, then visit Kennesaw State (Sept. 7). Alabama's final home match before the start of play will be against Tennessee Tech (Sept. 10).

Alabama's SEC home slate includes games against LSU (Sept. 21), Tennessee (Sept. 29), Auburn (Oct. 8), Mississippi State (Oct. 13) and Missouri (Oct. 22). UA will visit South Carolina (Sept. 15), Florida (Sept. 24), Texas A&M (Oct. 5), Arkansas (Oct. 26) and Ole Miss (Oct. 26).

Alabama will also host Chattanooga in a non-conference match on Sept. 17.

South Carolina, Florida, Arkansas, Auburn and Florida State all finished last year ranked in the top 25.

The SEC Tournament is scheduled for Oct. 30 - Nov. 5 in Orange Beach.
Tide softball schedule stacked in 2018

By Tommy Deas
Executive Sports Editor

The University of Alabama’s 2018 softball schedule will be stacked, with at least 21 games scheduled against teams seeded in the top 16 of this year’s NCAA Tournament, including at least 11 against teams seeded in the top eight. UA will open the season in February at South Alabama and then play in the Gulf Shores tournament, which has a field that includes Virginia Tech.

In SEC play, Alabama will have home series with Ole Miss (seeded 12th), Florida (No. 1), Tennessee (No. 8) and Texas A&M (No. 9).

Alabama will play No. 4 seed Florida State in a tournament in Tuscaloosa, sixth-seeded Washington in a tournament in Seattle and 15th-seeded Baylor in a tournament at Southern Miss.

Other home out-of-conference home opponents will include Georgia State, Samford, Northern Iowa, Virginia Tech. Boston College and Fordham University.

The top 12 teams in the conference make the SEC baseball tournament in Hoover each year. Alabama last missed the conference tournament in 2012. Alabama has made 28 SEC tournaments dating back to 1977. Nathan Alstadt, freshman infielder, along with manager Cody Lee, Chandler Dare and Sydney Littlejohn are enrolled in graduate school, which doesn’t have similar honor lists, but both posted perfect 4.0 grade-point averages.

Academic honors

Alabama softball placed freshmen Elissa Brown and Bailey Hemphill, along with manager Kylie Bengston, on UA’s President’s List for the spring semester. Dean’s List honorees were Rachel Bobo, Gabby Callaway, Reagan Dykes, Carrigan Fain, Caroline Hardy, Claire Jenkins, Marisa Runyon, Merris Schroder and Demi Turner, along with manager Cody Lee.

Chandler Dare and Sydney Littlejohn are enrolled in graduate school, which doesn’t have similar honor lists, but both posted perfect 4.0 grade-point averages.

All-Tournament

Freshman first baseman Bailey Hemphill and junior pitcher Alexis Osorio were named to the SEC All-Tournament team for their play last week at the event in Knoxville, Tennessee. UA defeated Arkansas and Texas A&M before losing to Ole Miss in the semifinal.

Osorio struck out 15 batters and gave up one run in a 10-inning, complete-game win over A&M. Hemphill batted .571 (4-for-7) with two home runs and four RBIs. She also drew two walks and was twice hit by pitches for a .727 on-base percentage.

Alabama (42-16) drew the No. 16 seed in the NCAA Tournament and will host Minnesota, Louisiana Tech and Albany at Rhoads Stadium in the Tuscaloosa Regional.

UA will play Albany at 4 p.m. on Friday in game that will be televised on the SEC Network. Minnesota will face Louisiana Tech at 1:30.

BASEBALL

Baseball eliminated from SEC tournament

The chase for the postseason is over for the University of Alabama baseball team. It was eliminated from contention for the SEC tournament during the weekend against Florida, meaning its season will end on Saturday against Vanderbilt.

The top 12 teams in the conference make the SEC baseball tournament in Hoover each year. Alabama last missed the conference tournament in 2012. Alabama has made 28 total appearances in 40 SEC tournaments dating back to 1977.

Head coach Greg Goff said on Sunday he didn’t expect any problems keeping the Crimson Tide motivated during the season’s final weekend.

"Not these guys," he said. "They’ve been answering all year. I love these guys. I love and respect these guys and how they play, what they do every day. That’s not going to dictate what we’re going to do up there at Vanderbilt. We’ll go up there and try to win three games."

Academic honors

Four Alabama baseball players were named to the President’s List for achieving 4.0 during the spring semester, the athletic department announced on Monday. Freshman catcher Alex Webb, freshman infielder Camden Bauer, freshman outfielder Logan Carey, sophomore outfielder Keith Holcombe and senior pitcher Nick Eicholtz were all on the Dean’s List with a 3.5 or better. Senior reliever Mike Ocsypko earned a 3.75 GPA in the final semester of his MBA program.
Talking golf, football

Saban answers questions about golf game, national title loss at Regions Pro-Am

By Aaron Suttles
Sports Writer

HOOVER - The man famous for instituting the 24-hour rule at the University of Alabama has been asked often recently to relive his team's painful last-second loss in the College Football Playoff National Championship.

To Nick Saban's credit, he's handled each question with graciousness. The game, played more than four months ago, continues to garner a great deal of attention despite Saban's desire to focus on the now.

Prior to his Regions Pro-Am golf outing Wednesday afternoon, Saban met with reporters. He was asked two questions about his golf game, two questions about rub routes (which was the play Clemson ran to score the winning touchdown) and another question about whether he had spoken with Atlanta Falcons head coach Dan Quinn following the Falcons' overtime loss in the Super Bowl.

The Quinn question was asked by an Atlanta-based reporter, nevertheless, reporters aren't exactly making it easy for Saban to forget the way his season ended.

"We have talked about it," Saban said. "He spoke at our clinic. We have a good relationship. He worked with us for a couple of years in Miami.

See SABAN, C4
SABAN

Continued from C1

We know how we want to move forward from it. I think there’s a lot of lessons to be learned when bad things happen. There’s always lessons to be learned, regardless of whatever happens.”

Saban, who continues to answer each question patiently, although his patience on the topic might be running thin, expounded on the way the season ended and even got philosophical.

“I think the big thing for our guys is we won (26) games in a row,” Saban said. “I don’t think we took the kind of ownership late in the season that we needed to to be able to be successful, and there’s certainly a lesson to be learned in that because the teams that have been able to accomplish that have been good and finished strong. We didn’t finish the way we wanted, so there’s a lot of lessons to be learned in that.

“Having success is like climbing a mountain. Very few people get to the top. Those who get to the top, don’t stay at the top very long. So the lesson in all that is you just got to keep climbing. You’ve always got to get better, there’s always bigger challenges and everybody’s trying to knock you off the perch.”

Nick Saban, Alabama head football coach

“Having success is like climbing a mountain. Very few people get to the top. Those who get to the top, don’t stay at the top very long. So the lesson in all that is you just got to keep climbing. You’ve always got to get better, there’s always bigger challenges and everybody’s trying to knock you off the perch.”

Reach Aaron Suttles at aaron@tidesports.com or at 205-722-0229.
Donahue was among the best defensive coaches in the country

Former Alabama coordinator posthumously inducted into Alabama Sports Hall of Fame

By Aaron Suttles
Sports Writer

Ken Donahue loved Tennessee.
He played his collegiate football there and was twice an assistant coach of the Volunteers (1956-60, 1985-1988).
But boy did he also enjoy beating his alma mater and home state football team, too.

"My dad was in charge of the Tennessee game every year so he would scout the team. Winning that very often was exceedingly fun," his son Ben Donahue said.

As the University of Alabama defensive coordinator, Donahue went 13-7-1 against Tennessee.

He was known as one of the best defensive coordinators in the country.
For his outstanding career, Donahue was inducted into the Alabama Sports Hall of Fame last weekend as a part of the 2017 class along with other UA greats Jim Goostree (athletic trainer and assistant athletic director) and former fullback Kevin Turner.

Donahue passed in 2001.
"We're greatly honored. There were so many great years, 21 years coaching Alabama. So we're grateful to be honored," Ben Donahue said. "My dad was so proud to be coach of so much reward. He took so much joy in coaching, mainly in seeing players succeed. But even when he retired and he'd come back to a game people would see him in the stands and say, 'Thank you, Coach Donahue for your years.' It's good to be remembered."
He was an assistant coach for 38 years with stops at Memphis State, Tennessee (twice), Mississippi State and Alabama.

He moved his family to Tuscaloosa from Starkville in 1964 after legendary coach Paul W. "Bear" Bryant got a recommendation from Gene Stallings. The rest is history.

During Donahue's direction, Alabama's defense led the SEC in least yards allowed seven times, rushing defense nine times and pass defense three times. He was voted the Working Coach of the Year in the SEC twice (1975 at Alabama and 1985 at Tennessee).

Ben Donahue has fond memories of the family's time in Tuscaloosa.
"Those were some good years, 64-65 all the way through 1984, so that's 21 total seasons," he said. "I would go to the games at Denny Stadium, it wasn't Bryant-Denny Stadium back then. I would go to the games at Legion Field. Occasionally I would go to a game at Legion Field and after the game my dad was take us out to eat and then we would drive home that night and listen to the LSU game on the radio because he was scouting them.
"For a coach it's always about the next game. Coaching was hard work but it was and it was always rewarding.
"He would've been happy to be here. He was modest but he could receive a reward and be grateful for what people appreciated in him. He certainly loved all the coaches there at Alabama. There's a great number of coaches that went through while he was there. So he would be happy to see the relatives and the players that played for him.
We're happy to be there just to say thank you."

Reach Aaron Suttles at aaron@tidesports.com or at 205-722-0229.
At Alabama, Auburn and beyond, NCAA’s staff size survey just doesn’t add up

Kevin Scarbinsky  kscarbinsky@al.com

How weak a document is the NCAA’s preliminary survey of Football Bowl Subdivision staff sizes? It’s terribly flawed in its methodology, not to mention its basic math.

The survey, as first reported by CBSsports.com, purports to give a general look at the number of people working on the sport of football at all FBS schools in 2016. It lists staff members in different categories: On-field coaches, strength and conditioning, graduate assistants, football operations and off-field/recruiting.

For Auburn, the survey lists 10 on-field coaches, five strength-and-conditioning coaches, four GAs, 10 football operations staffers and eight off-field/recruiting staffers — for a total of 41.

The first of several problems with that number: 10+5+4+10+8=37. Not 41.

The survey’s totals for Georgia and South Carolina don’t add up, either. Literally.

Dennis Dodd, who reported the story for CBSsports.com, wrote that the NCAA said its numbers came from “mere website research.” That explains a major part of the problem with the survey. Official program websites don’t tell all.

Look at the current athletics department staff directory on AuburnTigers.com. It lists 26 names under the Football department, but it’s not up to date because new
offensive coordinator Chip Lindsey is not yet included. The directory also lists eight other staff members under different departments with the word “football” in their title, including academic support staff.

There are no grad assistants listed, although clearly the program has GAs and the NCAA found that number elsewhere on the same website. More on that in a minute.

Based on the overall athletics department staff directory of the Auburn website, there are 34 staff members working with the football program. The four grad assistants not listed there would bring that total to 38. The unlisted Lindsey would make 39, but even that number has to be low because not everyone who works with football has the word “football” in his or her title.

Maybe the NCAA staffer who compiled the Auburn number miscounted because three staff members — the director of football recruiting operations, the head football strength and conditioning coach and the head football athletics trainer — are listed twice in the school’s staff directory.

But wait. There’s more to confuse the NCAA and you.

Under the separate Football section of the athletics department website, it lists 10 on-field coaches, including Lindsey, and 29 support staff members, including four graduate assistants. That would total 39.

OK, so it’s now 2017 and the NCAA looked at the numbers last year, but that still doesn’t excuse the association’s inability to add.

At Alabama, the NCAA survey found no grad assistants, although clearly the program does have GAs, even if they’re not listed on the official RollTide.com staff directory or on the coaching staff directory in the website’s Football section.

At present, that overall staff directory has 32 people listed under the Football department, and there are 10 other people in the directory with “football” in their title. That would be a total of 42, not counting graduate assistants.

The directory lists seven football analysts but doesn’t include the recently hired Chris Weinke. It also doesn’t break down academic support personnel by sport.

How many football staffers did the NCAA survey find at Alabama? It found 31. Even Nick Saban would have to chuckle at that number. Curiously, the survey listed just one person under strength and conditioning, even though the program’s official website lists five strength-and-conditioning coaches with football in their title.

Let’s hope the NCAA staffers doing the math for APR scores aren’t the same ones who worked on this staff size survey.

All joking aside, it’s not easy from the outside to determine exactly how many people work on the expanded football staffs at Alabama, Auburn and beyond. The difficulty in obtaining accurate data is going to make it even harder for the NCAA to assess whether the numbers are getting out of hand and the playing field is too unbalanced between the haves and have-nots.

The NCAA’s first attempt to quantify the subject doesn’t inspire much confidence that the issue will be resolved promptly and fairly.
Sabian wary about effects of early signing period

By Aaron Suttles
Sports Writer

Nick Saban is the voice of college football, and not just in this region of the country. So when he speaks, people listen. It was only natural, then, for the veteran head coach to be asked his opinion on a couple of college football issues during the SEC post-spring coaches teleconference Monday morning.

The approximately 10-minute conversation didn't break any new ground, so to speak, but there was information to be gleaned.

Alabama's 2018 recruiting class will consist of 22 student-athletes, Saban revealed. Saban also voiced his opinion on the new recruiting calendar that allows prospective student-athletes the option to sign in December instead of having to wait until February. Those recruits who've not yet decided may still sign in February as usual. "I think evaluation is important, and I think the sooner you have to make decisions on these guys, the greater opportunity you have to make mistakes," Saban said. "So, we're trying to make sure that we accelerate and do a great job in the evaluation process, and I still think..."
the summer, June, is going to be a real important time for a lot of these guys. But a lot of guys are committing earlier and earlier, and I'm sure the biggest fear was that having an earlier signing date was that it is going to become the signing date and it would accelerate recruiting in the season, make more guys take visits in the season.

"These things will probably be true. I don't know if all those things are good things. I don't know if accelerating the calendar, like we're talking about, letting guys visit in the spring, is all that good either. Football is a developmental game. A lot of guys you look at when they're seniors look a lot different when they were sophomores and juniors. By doing all of this, we sort of minimize the opportunity to be able to evaluate some of those guys, which affects their opportunity, too. So, we can talk about all the opportunity we're giving guys early. But we're also eliminating some opportunity for some late bloomers."

For a recent example of a player Alabama found late in the recruiting process, look no further than running back Josh Jacobs.

A recent rule floating around the American Football Coaches Association is one that would allow a student-athlete to play in up to four games in a season and still be redshirted. Saban, who constantly reminds that football is a developmental game, is in agreement with the proposed rule.

"I would absolutely be in favor to that."

In more immediate news to the 2017 season, the remaining portion of the 2017 No. 1-ranked recruiting class is scheduled to report to Tuscaloosa for summer enrollment soon. Sixteen members of that class are already enrolled, having gone through the spring semester and spring practice. Saban said all the remaining members of the class are making progress toward fully qualifying.

"That's a work in progress with a lot of guys," Saban said. "Nobody really qualifies until they graduate. But our assumption is that everybody's making the kind of progress that they need to make to be able to qualify."

Reach Aaron Suttles at aaron@tidesports.com or at 205-722-0229.
OUR VIEW

No more kid gloves with criminal cases involving campus booze culture

Alcohol or physical abuses in college fraternity initiation rituals are finally getting the treatment they deserve from prosecutors around the country — as criminal cases. Prosecutors on May 5 filed criminal charges against 18 Penn State students in the death of a 19-year-old sophomore who drank excessively and suffered severe internal injuries during a fraternity hazing.

Members of the fraternity watched him collapse and left him for hours on the floor, even walking over his body instead of calling for help. The victim died of traumatic brain injury and a ruptured spleen.

In the Midwest, 22 fraternity members at Northern Illinois University were convicted of misdemeanors in a hazing-related death in 2015.

The criminal justice system's harder line is long overdue. Colleges and universities have traditionally used campus security and private disciplinary hearings to keep such problems in-house and out of the headlines. That left students accountable for their crimes, put other students at risk and apparently provided minimal deterrent value in curbing outrageous behavior. Faculty-student disciplinary committees are not trained in criminal law and not competent to judge guilt or innocence.

The changing attitude during the past decade comes on the heels of congressional studies and reports from respected organizations about high incidences of sexual misconduct, psychological trauma and serious injuries accompanying fraternity hazing and drunken escapades. Attorneys have changed the landscape, too, willing to take on wealthy fraternities. A generation or two ago, hazing was accepted as part of the fraternity and sorority experience. Authorities looked the other way at initiation rituals that involved excessive drinking, and resulting deaths or allegations of sexual assault were often labeled accidents or misunderstandings. Today, there are growing calls for the fraternity system to be disbanded altogether as universities question the net contribution they make to campus life.

Civil lawsuits that are open for public scrutiny reveal chilling details about fraternity activities. Those lawsuits are partly responsible for forcing administrators to stop relying on internal disciplinary procedures as a deterrent. Parents, too, are coming forward more often to demand justice for their children, unafraid of the consequences and willing to expose perpetrators as criminals.

On the positive side, fraternities can create leaders, foster lifelong friendships and provide excellent networking opportunities. University of Kentucky professor of communications Alan DeSantis notes in his 2007 book about fraternities and sororities that 85 percent of U.S. Supreme Court justices since 1910 were fraternity members, and 18 of the nation's presidents belonged to frats.

Fraternity alumni who want to remain proud of their associations should work alongside administrators, prosecutors, lawyers and families to clean up the organizations. Repeatedly tragic results only reinforce fraternities' image as big contributors to the college booze culture.

This editorial first appeared in The St. Louis Post-Dispatch.